

A TASTE OF ART



blueknob hall
gallery

Blue Knob Ceramic Studio
Blue Knob Cafe

Gallery & Cafe hours:
Thurs 10am - 3pm, Fri 10am - 3pm
Sat 8:30am - 3pm, Sun 10am - 3pm
Ceramic Studio: Thurs - Sat 10am - 3pm
Ph: 0266897449 www.blueknobgallery.com

Artist of the Month – Anne Cook



by Maureen Whittaker

Anne Cook is a self-taught artist who works primarily in acrylics and has been painting since 2014.

Anne's strong use of tone

and contrast draws upon the influence of the Depression era social realism style of painting and latterly the American realist, Edward Hopper.

Anne likes to work around



a range of different subject matter and for this month's exhibition has produced a series of small landscapes that display the use of both vivid and subdued palettes.

Anne has also completed several portraits, the most notable being her large-scale portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the American Supreme Court justice and

leading voice for gender equality, women's interests and civil rights.

If you would like to check out the 'Notorious RBG' and some of Anne's other works, they will be hanging at the Nimbin Artists Gallery from 10th August.

The gallery is now open again seven days a week, from 11am to 4pm.

Blue Knob Gallery presents two exhibitions of new work



Left: 'Kati-Thanda (Lake Eyre) Reflections' by Pauline Ahern
Above: Mythical Bird embroidery by Catherine Dunham
Right: Wavy Weft felt shawl by Sachiko Kotaka

'The Fibre Show – Warp & Weft' and 'Looking Back – Moving Forward' by Pauline Ahern in The Solo Space.

These are the first exhibitions for Blue Knob Hall Gallery since re-opening after being closed for a few months.

Over that period, cafe tables were moved into the Gallery space due to Covid regulations and required numbers. It created a different atmosphere and was enjoyed by those who used it.

Every year the Fibre exhibition has surprised and delighted visitors and the stand-out work this year is the exceptional quality of weaving by three artists – Wendy Cartwright, Kim Jones (The Wild Weaver), and Stephanie Seckold.

The exquisite bodice by Stephanie is made from her home-grown cotton. It has been hand-spun, hand-woven, trimmed with hand-made lace and dyed

with natural indigo dye. This is a very contemporary heirloom piece for these times.

Sachiko Kotaka's wonderful felted pieces, which can be worn or hung on a wall, are once again a testament to her experience, technique and creativity.

This year the artists have brought us a variety of work among which are felted garments, re-purposed clothing, embroidery, tapestry, knitting, crochet, wood, basketry, standing lamp, handmade books and sculpture.

Another outstanding exhibition that is all about the materials and crafts that our lives are made of.

Pauline Ahern is a mixed media artist using where possible found and gifted objects, exploring many mediums to create quirky unique pieces. Her work is also a testament to the imagination and craft of a well-known and loved local artist.

As overheard by an admirer of her work, "Nothing is safe from Pauline!" Her ability to transform found objects and materials into works that can make powerful statements and amuse us at the same time is a wonderful attribute for any artist.

Both these exhibitions will run concurrently until the 26th September and will be open to visitors and complying with the regulations required for numbers allowed in our gallery space.

Blue Knob Cafe has continued to stay open over this period, due to the great support of Paul and the volunteer staff who have helped us thrive during a difficult time.

The Cafe and Gallery are open Thursday – Sunday from 10am – 3pm for seated dining and takeaway.

Due to Covid regulations, the Cafe and Gallery will be operating with limited numbers for dining and viewing the exhibition. For any further information regarding the Gallery and Café, please call us on (02) 6689-7449 or email: bkhgallery@harbourisp.net.au

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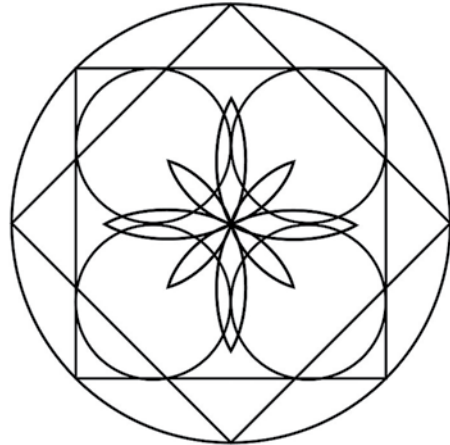
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Special exhibition in Kyogle



by Ruth Tsimbinis

Many special things happen at the Roxy Gallery, and the next exhibition falls into the special category. From 5th to 29th August, 'The Finale' by Barbara Murray will be on exhibit. Now this is special as it will be the first retrospective Barbara has had of her many years of being a creative maker in writing, embroidery, painting and drawing. Also special is the Roxy gallery will be re-opening its doors on Sundays from 10am to 2pm from the beginning of this exhibition. Barbara began her interest in art at the age of four, and now in her 80th year she is still creating, experimenting and interested in learning new things.

'Agapathars' by Barbara Murray

Nathaniel Harvey and his exhibition

Beginning with using charcoal from under the washing copper on her family dairy farm was an amazing revelation to her. Broken pieces of fibro (probably asbestos) around the yard became her slate, along with every blank wall. Her schooling at the nearby Bush School was inspiring, due to a great teacher who introduced her to Australian artists and art history. Going on to work and raise her own family on her own farm at Grady's Creek, Barbara continued exploring and nurturing her own creative skills both as a painter and a writer. This exhibition, 'The Finale' is a retrospective of her many years exploring her love of the arts.



Nathaniel Harvey steps up

It has been wonderful to see the many faces visiting the Roxy Gallery to view the current exhibitions installed in the Steppin' Up Gallery located in the foyer entrance to the Roxy Gallery, as well as the main upstairs Gallery area. Nathaniel Harvey is a young Kyogle-based artist who has installed his first hometown exhibition in the Steppin' Up Gallery. The Steppin' Up Gallery has been created to support young emerging artists by providing them with a space to showcase their art practices and gain experience in presentation and installation of their art in a gallery environment.

Nathaniel Harvey has taken this opportunity up and approached the Roxy Gallery to hold an exhibition of some of his works during the July to August period. Nathaniel works in varying mediums to capture his creative vision and draws influence for his art from films and the gaming culture. His art reflects energetic responses to the world, rich narratives that are complex and uncompromisingly unique. Along with his paintings, Nathaniel is exhibiting some of his multimedia screen works that highlight his skills as a scriptwriter, actor, producer and video artist.

Artist talk

Lismore-based artist Anna Nordstrom will talk about her amazing art practice on Sunday 9th August, 2-4pm at Lismore Art Space. Her work involves using found objects and transforms them into what can be called two-dimensional sculptures. Anna's work has been shown extensively in Australia, and last year she was invited to show at the Florence Biennale XII in Italy. This is an informal talk where the audience is encouraged to ask questions. If you have an interest in art, this is a talk not to be missed! Best of all, this is a free and Covid-compliant event, but please let us know you are coming by going to: www.lismoreartspace.net

Serpentine re-emergence

by Fiona McConnachie

Our current show, 'Re-Emergence' has attracted a lot of interest, especially the window display of Casino artist Shane Morris' hand-built (and operational) miniature trains 'Waka-Choo' and 'The Goose'. The other works on display are a great representation of the talent we have in our local area: Jeht Burgoyne's encaustic paintings and new member Matt O'Brian's works are stand-out pieces, and Janet Hassell's beautiful landscapes are well worth seeing. We have been having a strong response from the public since reopening, and the current show has been very successful with a few sales to date. There are more visitors every week as we return to normal, yet respect and comply with Covid-19 safety requirements. Thank you for your support with these extra

challenges as we continue to move forward. We have been hosting a series of raffles on behalf of the North Lismore Plateau Protection Association Inc. This is to help raise funds for the legal battle over the "development" of the North Lismore plateau. The latest winner was Lily Ryan who is now the proud owner of an Oral Roberts' painting, 'Cheeky Cockatoo'. The Serpentine is very proud to be able to help with this very important issue, and tickets for next draw can be purchased at the gallery. Do help support this protest and have a chance to win a truly amazing piece of art. The painting being raffled this time is 'Original Warrior', by Oral Laurie (Young Oral) and is displayed in the Serpentine's window – come along and check it out. The next exhibition for our members is called 'What's Next?' and the theme is photography.

Works of any medium exploring photography are welcome for this exhibition. Opening night is Friday 14th August from 5pm 'til 8pm, so bring your works to the gallery between 4th and 12th August. Please call us if you have any special installation requirements. Here is the link to invite guests and share the publicity: What's Next FB event link We look forward to seeing your work and an evolving exploration of photography. Please feel free to make contact with any queries or questions. Our address is 17a Bridge Street, North Lismore and our phone number is 6621-6845. Keep up with our latest news by going to our Facebook page (Facebook.com/SerpentineArts) and we can also be contacted via email at: gallery@serpentinearts.org or: serpentineartsgallery@gmail.com



'Original Warrior' by Young Oral

Looking back, moving forward

The exhibition 'Looking Back, Moving Forward' contains an eclectic collection of Pauline Ahern's artistry. She has many talents and interests, with a driving force to reuse materials which would otherwise become landfill. Pauline knows every op shop between Cooktown and Cygnet as she scours the country on road trips, filling the campervan as she goes. Much of Pauline's work presents her views on everyday events affecting us all, the environment, women's rights, pollution, waste, refugees, international politics and more. She is a mixed media artist and

explores new genres from mobiles and staybiles, rusting on fabric to repairing music boxes. Her piece on Julian Assange has been gifted to an exhibition hosted by Phillip Adams. Pauline creates the unique trophies for the annual Nimbin Swimming Pool Olympics. Some competitors have even created a trophy shelf to display her work. Many people have a flag or banner sewn by Pauline to brighten up their entrance and life. Her work will be exhibited at Blue Knob Hall Gallery during August and September, Thursday to Sunday 10am to 3pm in conjunction with the Fibre exhibition.



Body language

As a direct response to the UN International Year of Indigenous Languages, the National Gallery of Australia has developed a major children's travelling exhibition, 'Body Language'. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, identity is a source of strength and reliance. Language is fundamental to the expression of cultural identity, including visual language which comes in many forms. Aboriginal people traditionally painted on rock surfaces, scar trees, barks, on the



'Stockman and horse' by David Wallace

body and in the sand to tell the stories of ancestors and creation. Aboriginal symbols are an essential part of a long artistic tradition in Australian Aboriginal Art, and remain the visual form to retain and record significant information. 'Body Language' will explore the iconography of language as expressed through symbols and patterns, and include works by 32 Indigenous artists that explore these themes. It will be showing at the Lismore Regional Gallery from 29th August until 8th November.

I don't think people are ever going to wake up in time

by Bernadine Schwartz

For well over a decade I've been keeping a close eye on global warming, and in the early days I found it was difficult to find any comprehensive information, not only in the library, where you were lucky to find one or two books, but even on the internet.

Today there's an entire shelf of books devoted to the subject, but most look like they've been collecting dust. Yet I'm faced with a barrage of emails with every one worthy of making headline news but never will, so I'd like to share a few I've received lately.

In March this year the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) added another species to their Red List, officially declaring the Australian Smooth Handfish extinct, a fish that was once common enough to be one of the first species described by European explorers.

Even though one hasn't been sighted in nearly 200 years, it's worth mentioning because it's the first time any bony fish species on the planet has been listed extinct during modern times.

In July, the Northern Right Whale was officially declared critically endangered, with fewer than 450 left in the world and to avoid extinction they can't afford one single fatality a year. Already 31 have been lost since 2017, caused



Gran San Bernardo in the Italian Alps
Photo courtesy Firstpost

by collisions with ships and being caught in fishing gear and from June last year to now, eleven calves have died.

How this whale got its name is a shameful story. After being harpooned, they would float to the surface and obviously this made them much easier to retrieve, and so they were called the right whale to hunt.

I don't think people care any more today than they did back then, when most are living in a world where out of sight means out of mind, and particularly this time of year, when sightseers are gathering to be entertained by the annual migration of humpbacks and their calves.

Most will be oblivious to the fact that some of these magnificent creatures probably have a belly full of plastic and probably won't live to see another year, and then when the season comes to an end, everyone

goes home and they're forgotten about 'til next year.

Since the unprecedented death of untold bee colonies throughout Europe, Bayer have been struggling to sell their product, but despite scientists having proclaimed it the most lethal and toxic insecticide ever produced, it's still not going to stop them.

Now they've set their sights on Africa, flooding the market with cheap insecticides and not surprisingly, beekeepers are already reporting plummeting bee populations.

The Northern hemisphere is experiencing a repeat performance of last summer, with extreme temperatures and another record breaking heatwave that brought scorching temperatures and caused unusual natural events, such as the Italian Alps, that have turned a distinct pink caused by prolific blooms of algae.



Climate change turns the Italian Alps pink
- Teller Report

A remote town in Siberia called Verkhoyansk is one of the coldest spots on Earth, where it drops as low as -60° during winter, yet it reached a remarkable 100.4° Fahrenheit, 32° higher than normal last month, and will be the highest temperature ever recorded in the Arctic circle.

All these extreme temperatures and weather events aren't going to go away, particularly when the completion of a major new climate study confirmed the world can't possibly stay below 1.5° Celsius, and I'm not sure that people truly understand how hostile conditions will become if we pass that crucial figure.

The study, sponsored by the World Climate Research Program, was conducted by 25 experts from around the world, and took four years to complete using only authoritative and scientific methods that gave the most accurate results

to date.

According to the study, global temperatures could rise on average, between 2.3° and 4.5°C and will undoubtedly cause irreversible damage to the planet, and it's tragic to think all of the above news items could have been prevented, if society had been more than just diligent recyclers or sticking a few solar panels on the roof.

The only success story that comes to mind is the grand illusion created by governments and world authorities, that the world has been and still is putting up a good fight, when truth be known, we haven't even started.

It's certainly not helped that not only the filthy rich maintain a standard of living they're accustomed to, but most of Western society as well.

Then everyone can continue pretending right up to the very end: isn't life just wonderful?

Big ideas wanted

Arts Northern Rivers is calling for proposals for ambitious ideas ready to be developed into contemporary arts projects.

The winning idea will receive \$5,000 seed funding in addition to a tailored project development package; a unique opportunity to work closely with Arts Northern Rivers to leverage further funding opportunities and gain access to industry networks.

The Your Big Idea project aims to foster a culture of innovation and experimentation, emphasising the creative talent residing in the Northern Rivers.

Arts Northern Rivers welcomes proposals from the cutting edge of visual arts and experimentation, performance, theatre, live art, music, sound, dance or interdisciplinary contemporary arts practice.

Proposed ideas need to have a public outcome at a site within the Northern Rivers and be led by a Northern Rivers-based artist or team. Project partners are encouraged and can be sought locally, nationally and internationally.

During the inaugural Your Big Idea project in 2018, the selection panel included industry leaders Lisa Havilah, Director of Carriageworks; Jeff Khan, Artistic Director and CEO of Performance Space; and Roslyn Helper, Director of Underbelly Arts.

In a tight race, the panel selected two winning ideas from Caroline Wales and NORPA. Caroline's big idea for Ballina's Pop-Up Festival of the Arts, Ballinale, was to convert self-storage units in the Ballina Industrial Estate into immersive interdisciplinary



spaces.

Peter Wood, Arts Northern Rivers Executive Director, said: "Caroline's Storage-Space Festival idea was exactly the sort of innovative thinking we were looking for.

"This year it's great to be encouraging artists to keep producing experimental work and support new creative developments, particularly during Covid-19 and its impacts on the arts and cultural sector.

"We're looking for a boundary-pushing concept, something original and something at the cutting edge of contemporary arts practice."

Applications will be assessed by a panel of highly regarded industry leaders soon to be announced.

The panellists will select a winner at the Your Big Night event to be held in November after five shortlisted applicants have pitched their big ideas.

Applications are open now and close on 12th October. For more information and to submit a proposal, visit: yourbigideanr.com

Proposal for economic restart

by Hayo van der Woude

Think of capitalism as a tool that accelerated human evolution.

It descended into hyper-capitalism after WW2, and terminal gridlock just as Covid-19 arrived. It is akin to the finale of a never-ending Monopoly game. All the assets are with the last player.

Covid-19 is a timely and essential global catalyst to free us from enslavement to capitalism. The longer we take to adapt to the virus, the greater the opportunities to create an equitable world.

A Monopoly game is restarted by dealing equal cash to all players. Contrary to dogmas, governments are learning that in the hands of those with little, it creates immediate liquidity and commerce.

This is both the greatest opportunity and the greatest dilemma for any government. Courage to do the unconventional, to defy opaque corporate coercion, will be scarce.

The IMF and Reserve Bank urge far greater stimulus. So let's restart the game with government dealing equal cash to all. Simply replace JobKeeper, JobSeeker, and countless other pensions, with mouth-watering payments for every adult – akin to Universal Basic Income (UBI).

To help businesses and individuals further, start dismantling and rebuilding the income tax system, targeted at 10% paid fortnightly in advance, to fund UBI payments. All tax to be based on gross takings for simplicity, and catching all. No ifs or buts.

Individuals also pay 10% on all income above UBI.

To top it off, small business, as opposed to corporates, would sit down with government to rewrite laws and regulations, decimating costs and obstacles to productivity.

Peak corporate borrowing sparked the 2008 GFC. Economies declined, to now include the wealthiest people, similarly over-stressed.

Assets hocked to banks have peaked. Half the world's income is directed solely to repaying them.



A stressed humanity spends half its time working for banks – collective insanity.

Outside the monetary box we're in, interest rates are always zero, and there is no money creation, nor inflation. Banks aren't required. Government must control currency, primarily as a means of exchange, ensuring circulation, as opposed to accumulation for profiteering.

This is the foundation for evolving a new economy, possible only with participation of all parts of society.

The logic of this can become apparent only after an honest public appraisal of capitalism's systemic failures – impossible within corporate mass media.

Politicians fear that those who have little will abuse a generous system. Yet the best human qualities exist here, when survival isn't threatened. Too long in the trenches of political and corporate warfare blunts politicians' sensitivities and ethics.

We are the losers by blocking progressive competition. Commerce will blossom when the virus destroys sick corporations and industries.

Remove the stifling regulations and survival fears of the young. Let them upskill and learn by trial and error, fulfilling their urge to make meaningful contributions to a thriving society.

Collective individual ethics and wisdom are superior to fallible government imposition.

Herbal manufacturing – fresh plant tinctures

Several months ago, I wrote about the “percolation method” of making a tincture from dried plant material. Tinctures can also be made using fresh plants, sometimes called “specific tinctures”. The method is different for fresh plant material.

Today I’m making a tincture of Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) which is in flower now. Flowering is the best time for harvesting of fresh plants in general, as the active constituents are at their maximum. Tincture-making is very simple, and is known as the “maceration method”. This means the herb is imbibed in a liquid (in this case a mixture of water and alcohol) to extract its medicinal properties.

I harvested the Herb Robert on a sunny day after several days of rain. The rain washed the plants nicely, and the morning sun and breeze removed the moisture. I used to wash the herbs before making a tincture, and spread them out to dry the water.

I was intrigued to read in: <https://theherbarium.wordpress.com> that it’s better not to wash as it can start to extract some of the goodness from the plants. They say even if there’s a small amount of soil, it doesn’t matter as it will be filtered out in the final stage.

I had trouble getting my head around this concept, but I did cut the roots off the Herb Robert and used all the aerial parts.

Herb Robert is a very pretty plant, with a feathery leaf structure and reddish stems in a rosette structure. Some of the mature leaves have a beautiful red colour, like an Autumn flush. The flowers are small and bright pink.

The seed pods are fascinating. They form small capsules with a pointy end, and as the capsule opens it explodes and flings the seeds far and wide. Be warned this can create a weed problem (possibly for your neighbours).

Herb Robert was believed to be named after a French abbott who had legendary healing skills. It is a



Nature’s pharmacy
by Trish Clough, herbalist

member of the cranesbill family, and as such is astringent and useful with moist conditions in the body, including diarrhea.

It supports the immune system and improves the liver and kidney functions. It contains germanium, also found in garlic and ginseng, which is a natural carrier of oxygen in the body. Other uses include headaches, viral infections, gout and bleeding.

After harvesting, I cut the herb into tiny pieces and weighed it. Less liquid is needed to macerate if it is finely cut. I then measured the required liquid (called “menstruum”, which in this case is 30% alcohol and filtered rainwater which I just collected the day before).

Each herb has different requirements for the alcohol percentage, depending on whether the active constituents are more soluble in water or alcohol.

I made a 1:3 tincture, which means a weight-to-volume ratio of 1 part herb to 3 parts menstruum. It’s difficult to submerge all of the herb in less liquid than this, although sometimes a 1:2 ratio is possible, depending on the plant and the comminution method.

It’s possible to put it all in the blender, but I felt the Herb Robert was too delicate for this method.



My plant material plus the menstruum almost filled a two-litre jar, and I placed a few quartz crystals on the top to ensure the plant material was fully submerged under the liquid. And possibly to give it some nice energetic properties.

It will take two weeks of maceration with daily shaking of the jar. After this I will pour off and filter the tincture ready for use.

Trish Clough is a Lismore herbalist who has been practising for more than 30 years. She now conducts her own clinic practice in Club Lane in Lismore after owning ‘Traditional Medicinals’ for 20 years. Trish is available for consultations by appointment on 0452-219-502 or email: herbalist.trish@internode.net.au The information in the column is meant for general interest only and should not be considered as medical advice.

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Those tantric birds

View from the loo
by Stuart McConville

The pre-dawn gloaming recedes to reveal a pink and grey sky, chilled with the expectancy of another rainy day.

Birdsong emerges with the cacophonous cackling of the kookaburras, the roosters’ defiant vocal battle. The maestro composers, the butcher birds, prove yet again that they can warble with the best of them.

A myriad of smaller birds energetically squeeze out their high-pitched chirps and squawks. The melancholy of the low-throated rainforest doves provides a bass note to one of nature’s finest symphonies.

This morning I’m listening anew. What’s it all about, I ask myself? Sex of course. Morning is the time for it... The family of kookas are probably saying, “If you can hear this then you are too close to our girls!”

The butcher birds might say, “C’mon boy, I’m just

over here”. The roosters are showing off to their females by saying, “I’m the greatest lovmaker... right over here miss Henny.”

Birds are just out there having fun and chasing birds.

Most animals are polygamous or at least serially monogamous, looking for and finding new genes to combine with as many times as they can over a lifespan.

They commit to each other for the purpose of breeding and rearing young (and maybe a nurturing, healing relationship too) without attaching themselves emotionally, so they can better ensure the survival of their species.

Humanity is more complex. Our fragility has ensured that we use collaboration as our main survival technique for the bulk of our evolutionary timeline.

We paired off, often for life, as a means of building a team geared to survive.

Most organised religions realised this long ago and

wrote it into their dogmas to promote the marriage ideal.

Even in these turbulent times, survival is a lot easier and we can choose freely between a monogamous or polygamous lifestyle.

Our base instincts tend to lead us towards polygamy, old conditioning and values developed as social constructs by religions pull us the other direction by making polygamy sinful.

As organised religion becomes weaker in our society, we are less likely to feel intimidated about choosing for ourselves which lifestyle we lead.

Ironically, this new-found freedom has the power to bring us even closer to God.

N.D. Walsch said: “Any attempt to restrict the natural expression of love is a denial of the experience of freedom – and thus a denial of the soul itself.

“For the soul is freedom personified. God is freedom, by definition – for God is limitless and without



restriction of any kind.

“The soul is God, miniaturised. Therefore, the soul rebels at any imposition of limitation, and dies a new death each time it accepts boundaries from without.” – *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue* (1998)

Ancient Tantric philosophers understood this and accepted that people are free to choose either path, and that both have spiritual significance at different stages of our lives. Left (polygamous) and right hand (monogamous) path Tantra are valued equally as two facets of the same coin; to cater to the complexity of human sexuality.

Stuart runs Pooh Solutions compost toilets and consultancy, 0427-897-496 www.poohsolutions.com

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A singular death

by Dr Jacqueline Boustany

RIP to my dear dad who passed in our care on the longest night of the year. We as a family were deeply honoured to share this experience with him, and he taught us the art of peaceful surrender to the highest degree.

I sincerely appreciate the help of our local community and palliative care nurses who helped allow the process to occur gently at home surrounded by the people who loved him. It was particularly wonderful to see his interaction with my children in the last days and for them to see this as a natural process.

He even waited for my kids to come home before he passed, and in this awareness of the moment of death, it is not unusual for someone to hang on to life against medical odds until a relative or friend arrives at their bedside, or until a special anniversary or birthday.

Being a doctor, I have seen my share of death, usually to verify after the event; however I have never been part of the active dying process and learnt a few things along the way I would like to share.

If this is distressing to anyone I apologise, but it may also help understand and resolve some issues before this inevitable outcome occurs.

This is often the most dramatic realisation: even when you know it will happen, it is still an emotionally charged reality check, where you have the opportunity to greet your own mortality and hopefully learn to celebrate every breath we take.

It focuses attention on our priorities and what we want to be remembered for, what resonance we want to leave behind.

Dying people often feel compelled to confront and resolve unfinished issues from their past, particularly with family members. They may want to write a letter or send an email, or meet with the person in question.

They may also have a desire to visit childhood haunts or go through old family photographs. These experiences can be profoundly healing, and often enable the person to let go and die at peace.

When we think about the last part of our own or someone else's life, consider these questions:

- What are the most important lessons that life taught you?



- What are your favourite memories?
- What legacies do you want to leave behind?
- What experiences have been the most precious?
- If you could relive a moment all over again, what would it be?

One especially important matter is to complete the Advance Health Care Directive for both the person who is ill and the caregiver, so that there is an official document when one is too sick or too confused to speak for him/herself.

Then they can consider how proactive they want treatment to be, and if life is coming to an end, what would be comforting and make dying feel safe?

So what does it feel like to die? Palliative care nurse Margaret Campbell says, "Roughly from the last two weeks until the last breath, somewhere in that interval, people become too sick, or too drowsy, or too unconscious, to tell us what they're experiencing."

The way death is talked about tends to be based on what family, friends, and medical professionals see, rather than accounts of what dying actually feels like. They could have:

- Different sleep-wake patterns;
- Agitation, twitching, delirium or hallucination;
- Fewer and smaller bowel movements and less pee;
- More or less pain depending on their state of consciousness;
- Changes in blood pressure, and heart rate with less oxygen and skin mottling; and
- Body temperature ups and downs that may leave their skin cool, warm, moist, or pale.

For those who die gradually, there's often a final, rapid slide that happens in roughly the last few days of life – a phase known as

"active dying."

During this time, as James Hallenbeck, a palliative-care specialist at Stanford University writes in *Palliative Care Perspectives*, people tend to lose their senses and desires in a certain order. "First hunger and then thirst are lost. Speech is lost next, followed by vision. The last senses to go are usually hearing and touch."

We were encouraged to talk to Dad and hold his hand, and already I miss his soft skin.

Dying people typically want to hear (and say) four things, writes Dr. Ira Byock, professor of palliative medicine, in his book *The Four Things That Matter Most*: "I forgive you. Please forgive me. I love you and thank you."

From what I have learnt, this process tends to take two to three weeks, as the brain slowly shuts down to the most basic elements of life. My dad had hiccups in the last few days that I could time my watch on, as the brain stem gave the last signals to the diaphragm to breathe, but this seemed to be more distressing to me than to him.

When some people become too weak to cough or swallow, they may start to make a noise in the back of their throats called the death rattle. The sound can be deeply disturbing, as if the patient is suffering.

As far as doctors can tell, this probably doesn't hurt either. There is medication to settle most of these symptoms, especially pain, and in fact this is a time where you can have as much medication as you like!

Apparently over 90% of funding that goes to your personal care is spent in the last years of life, and I would love to see this level of care extended much earlier for those in despair.

I have never been to the chemist as much as I have in the last year of my father's life, so I can certainly see the pharmaceutical benefit in denying euthanasia.

In the final stages, after they've stopped eating and drinking, after they've lost their vision, most dying people then close their eyes and appear to be asleep.

Studies on the brain at this point, show a synchronisation of different frequency brain waves, known as coherence, which we use in heightened states of consciousness like when we are relaxed but focused and the electrical activity from different parts of the brain are working together.

There are reports of what is called Lazarus moments, when the person is suddenly awake and clear, recognising people they may have

previously not, or staring at a point in the room with a sense of amazement, joy or wonder.

This half waking/ half dreaming state is not uncommon and the person may also talk about moving in and out of 'reality', and describe other-worldly realms. They may speak of being 'visited' by dead relatives, friends, groups of children, religious figures or even favourite pets, saying these apparitions have come to "collect" them or help them let go.

Research led by Christopher Kerr at a hospice centre in New York found that 88% of the dying patients interviewed had at least one dream or vision. Those dreams usually felt different to them from normal dreams, like they seemed clearer and more real.

"The patients' pre-death dreams were frequently so intense that the dream carried into wakefulness and the dying often experienced them as waking reality."

72% of the patients dreamed about reuniting with people who had already died; 59% said they dreamed about getting ready to travel somewhere; and 28% dreamed about meaningful experiences in the past. The dreams were mostly comforting and helped decrease the fear of death.

"The predominant quality of pre-death dreams/visions was a sense of personal meaning, which frequently carried emotional significance for the patient," Kerr's team reported.

James Hallenbeck often compares dying to black holes. "We can see the effect of black holes, but it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to look inside them. They exert an increasingly strong gravitational pull the closer one gets to them. As one passes the 'event horizon', apparently the laws of physics begin to change."

This is what I felt sitting next to my dad, as his substance dropped in to an intense density of emotional resonance, sucking us all in to where time stops. All that mattered was the essence of him and what he had achieved in his life, particularly his heart and its effect on us, as it was the last thing to let go into the void.

I hope he passed through this singularity with grace and ease to leave his impression on the hologram of life and moved into the white light on the other side, contributing his knowing to the whole.

I'm still waiting to hear back as he promised, but I feel the echo within and hope I can emulate his love, patience and calm stillness as his ultimate legacy.

Spirit calling

by Robin Stein

I have been a psychic medium all my life, with a foot in both worlds.

Throughout many nights while my body slept, I was taken into spirit for classes to assist me to hone my healing skills. Now that I'm older, I still travel into spirit at night to teach. And talking to my relatives in spirit has always been easy for me.

When my partner Allan passed just over a year ago, I felt him on my right side within an hour. I turned quickly, only to find he had slid between my ribs and into my heart where he wanted to stay. But my son came to collect him, telling him he must come into spirit first to be fully healed.

As soon as that had taken place, he was perfectly free to return to



me, or to go anywhere at all that he chose.

His healing took 8½ months and it was my mother who was his main healer. He told me he'd never, ever felt this good in all the years in his body. He very happily returned to me with his guitar under his arm.

Now he sits next to me, wherever I am, composing his latest song. We talk constantly, often laughing off our heads, just as we did for the 25 years we were together. He will remain with me until it is my turn to leave.

I decided to write this 'last' article

because while talking openly about the strong connection I have with spirit, so many have told me they had always been terrified of dying. But listening to all my stories about spirit, they are no longer frightened at all and will welcome their time when it comes.

My pain levels have been rising very rapidly and in a very short time, the pain has begun to rule my life, preventing me from doing most of the things I need to do daily. I'm totally unable to take pain killers.

So my Mum has been coming to me nightly from spirit to get me out of pain enough so I'm able to sleep! CBD worked great for me for six months, but it has stopped working for me altogether now and I'm in strife.

So I asked my Mum if she would go right to the highest level of spirit for me, to ask on my behalf if I could renegotiate my contract.

She didn't return for two days, but as soon as she did, she stunned me with the word from spirit, who told her, 'from the top,' that Allan can bring me into spirit whenever I am ready, totally without penalty.

This was granted because of the clean way I have lived my life, telling my Mum that I've done everything

and more that spirit has asked me to do without question.

This means that as soon as I am ready to leave, Allan and I will leave together. Word came last night that my Mum and son will accompany us, to make sure I arrive safely. And I feel incredibly grateful and very happy about this.

During the 8½ months Allan was being healed, he created a property for us. Each person arriving in spirit is able to create the home of their dreams, and Allan created our home using my lists of all the trees, shrubs and exotic plants that I'd plant when we had our own property. It has an orchard, a veggie garden, a spring and even paddocks for me to rescue horses.

Recently, Allan was called back into spirit to work briefly alongside my son and Mum. After questioning him about what he'd been doing, I actually guessed it was something for me.

Then he told me that so many people were gathering to welcome me, a pavilion had to be built and he'd been called to help to decorate it for me.

So the date I will leave for good will be on my son's birthday, on 24th August. And last night I was

asked, "Many jazz musos have arrived to see me, so if a mic and amp etc. are provided, how would I feel about putting on a show for everybody?"

Of course, I'd very much love to do that, with many of the incredible musicians I've been lucky enough to work with over the years.

Every few nights, I do a rehearsal and many of my family arrive to support me, often with 15-20 people in the room. They also ask for requests!

What will happen to my body? Please understand that this is absolutely nothing like committing suicide, which would definitely incur penalties.

When I walk away from my body, my heart will slow down and eventually stop, so it will be very gentle for my body. And I know I will join my family and friends without ever looking back.

So I wish all my friends well. The spirit world is only a whisper away, so if my name is mentioned, I will come. And if healing is needed, I will still be able to heal and soothe, or to help in any way I can.

Very good wishes everyone. Of course, we will all meet again one day.

Koala Kolumn

by Susannah Keogh, Care co-ordinator

Heska and Bloom

While we have all been enjoying the incredibly beautiful Spring weather here in the Northern Rivers, our koalas have not had it so lucky.

Unfortunately for them, these warm days change their behaviour to reflect Springtime movements which means moving around a lot more than during the quiet months of Winter, as they look for a mate and claim their territories.

Because the sun is rising and setting (their most active time) during peak hours on the road, we have seen a huge spike in vehicle strikes. The number of dog attacks have jumped too, meaning our hospital has been overwhelmed by trauma cases both night and day.

The pictured joey, Bloom, had to be separated from her mother who protected her from injury during a car hit. Bloom's mother, Heska, has a dislocated hip and fractured pelvis which required significant surgery if she was to make a full recovery.

Due to the pain Heska was in, and the fact she would not be able to support the weight of a seven-month old joey as she recovered, the difficult decision to separate them was made.

Bloom was placed in care with another joey named Ivy who is the same size and development. Unfortunately, her first night was very difficult and her carer Sam had serious concerns for her as she didn't sleep or eat.

The following night, Sam introduced her to one of her older joeys, Hope, who was a very calm girl of about three kg. Bloom was immediately in her arms seeking comfort and they have been inseparable ever since.

Once Bloom is a bit more confident in home care, she will spend less time with Hope and



more time with Ivy but for now, she is sleeping and eating really well.

Heska was taken to Veterinary Specialist Services in Carrara for surgery on her hip and is currently in recovery. It will be a long road for her and our clinical team before we can be confident in her health, but we are hopeful.

A special thank you to Mark, the driver of the car that hit Heska and Bloom. He stopped and waited for our rescuer to arrive which is something that is quite rare – most drivers do not stop.

We do not blame people for hitting koalas with their cars or having their dogs attack koalas in their yards, but what is done immediately after the incident is more important.

We ask all of you to please put our phone number in your phone so that if you see a sick or injured koala, you can call us without hesitation. Some of these cases are very time sensitive and every moment counts in ensuring the koalas are seen by our clinical staff.

Our hotline is 24 hours, seven days a week and we encourage you to call if you have any concerns for a koala's welfare: 6622-1233.



by Kerry Hagan

On a lovely July afternoon, Nimbin Garden Club had the pleasure of visiting the beautiful property of Anna and Olof at Terania Creek.

Anna and Olof are both strong proponents of permaculture and in the short time they have been there, the results of careful planning and hard work are already showing.

A vast array of veggies are thriving and many fruit trees have been planted.

With a glorious backdrop of the Nightcap, it was a delight to wander through the many vegetable gardens, past newly constructed retaining walls and hear about their many plans for future expansion of food production.

We are all looking forward to a future visit and seeing these projects come to fruition. Thank you Anna and Olof.

Our August meeting will be at the home of Anne Marie on Webster's Creek community on Saturday 15th



August, 2-4pm at Lot 10, 924 Blue Knob Road, Blue Knob. The entrance is the first driveway on the right after Webster's Creek.

Please bring a cup, a chair and a plate to share. Car pooling would be great. Visitors and guests are always welcome.

Swimming pools touring



by Sue Edmonds

Some people take photos of letter boxes as they tour our wide, brown, burnt beautiful land. Others visit war memorials; outdoor exercise equipment holds an interest for some, others have an interest to visit public toilets in playgrounds.

Recently painted wheat silos in Victoria have become a "must see". Climbing active and extinct volcanoes is a hobby for some. My current interest is to visit as many public swimming pools as I can squeeze into, without wetting the car.

First stop was Casino, and it's a great pool, well maintained with a huge slippery slide taking you down into the depths of what was once the diving end of the main pool. A pool attendant supervises at the top to make sure you go feet first.

There's a pool for toddlers with concrete mushrooms to climb on and painted motifs. Altogether it's a wonderful pool and garden, well patronised with an excellent



Casino's kids pool and slippery slide. Below: Glen Innes pool.



mural on the outside inviting you in. 8/10.

World War Two created a bonus time for public swimming pools. It was concluded to have memorial pools in little towns, and Tenterfield was the second we visited. Two out of two... good start, except Tenterfield was closed, due to the expanding bush fires in the region.

So on to Glen Innes.

Glen Innes has a lovely modern pool, 33m long, shorter than the usual 50 metres. A wading pool has been constructed from the remaining metres which is great for stretching all the body bits that need a workover.

Both pools are heated and have transparent plastic walls on three sides to keep out the icy winds of the Dividing Range.

Local collaboration keeping theatre alive



Sarah-Jane McGrath, Gray Wilson, Elyse Knowles and Kylie Fuad at Star Court Theatre

by Jenny Dowell, Publicity officer

How do actors keep busy while stage lights are dimmed and curtains closed?

Director of *Educating Rita*, David Addenbrooke and Lismore Theatre Company's Artistic Director, Kylie Fuad came up with the idea of engaging their actors in a filmed, rehearsed, abridged reading of *Macbeth*.

Elyse Knowles (Rita) will play Lady Macbeth and Gray Wilson (Frank) will take on the role of Macbeth. They will be supported by a small group of LTC actors in this 45-minute version of Shakespeare's play.

"The stage remains set for *Educating Rita* while these

marvellous actors bide their time," said Director David Addenbrooke, "but there's only so much rehearsing they can do so the idea is to engage them in a new project to keep them fresh and involved."

The innovative project is a collaboration with Star Court Theatre. Covid-19 has hit Star Court Theatre hard as they have had to close for several months. This small business, run by Sarah-Jane Loxton and Sharon Rigby, is trying to stay afloat in these turbulent times for the arts.

Sarah-Jane, a local performer herself, is keen to bring live performance back to Star Court once it is safe to do so. In the meantime, Star Court Theatre has

opened its space for Lismore Theatre Company for this project.

"I've loved being part of various performances with Lismore Theatre Company including last year's production of *The Vagina Monologues*, so it's wonderful to work with the Company again – this time in our theatre space," said Sarah-Jane.

LTC has brought several plays to the larger Star Court Theatre stage in the past and in this time of the one person per four square metre rule, the cast can safely come together to keep creating while the company waits to re-open Rochdale Theatre for *Educating Rita* once it is safe to do so.

"With social distancing an issue, our own Rochdale Theatre stage was too small for 12 actors, so we are delighted that Star Court Theatre agreed to let us use their stage," said Kylie Fuad, "and we will film the performance to be available on-line."

The rehearsed reading of this abridged version of *Macbeth* will be filmed on 22nd August and released on-line shortly afterwards for public viewing. Audiences are encouraged to follow the Lismore Theatre Company Facebook page for updates.