

Australia Day or Invasion Day

I was in Darwin on the 26th, probably our bogan capital.

Lots of blackfellas here, and I was talking to a beautiful looking old white haired lady munching on some wild honey her mob had got from a tree they were sitting under.

"Australia Day," she says to me, her mouth half full.

"Australia Day or Invasion Day?" I asked.

"Both," she said, grinning.

Michael Balderstone
Nimbin

Bushfire conspiracy theories

Australian bushfires are on everyone's minds these days. Many theories abound regarding their cause.

Some say we are creating too much CO₂ and it's hot and dry from global warming. Others point to the privatisation of dams to sell water to China or mismanagement of water leading to gross water waste.

Others say it's due to poor fuel/hazard reduction and inadequate back-burning, or the action of a supposed 200 arsonists.

But none of these explain their catastrophic dimensions with 70m high flames, strong gusts blowing in multiple directions, 50-500m fireballs and how fast the fires are spreading.

Veteran firefighters have never seen anything like it.

Photos are coming out on the internet of laser weapons (DEW) shooting down from the sky into the fire causing it to explode, one by the NSW Fire Dept.

The same thing happened in Paradise, California, where houses collapsed to the ground, but trees nearby were left unscorched. Cars

NGT welcomes letters and other contributions received by email or post prior to deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length, and articles for accuracy. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of NGT.

melted into the ground, rivers boiling. Are these real or photoshopped, you wonder?

Others say that chemtrails sprayed from the sky for the last decade (to cool down the planet) are comprised of the same ingredients (aluminium, barium, strontium) as used in sparklers on fireworks day.

Hence the explosive nature of the fire and the extreme high temperature (sparklers burn up to 3,000°F).

Others, such as Professor Emeritus Martin Pall, explain that 5G increases terpene content of foliage, making it highly flammable.

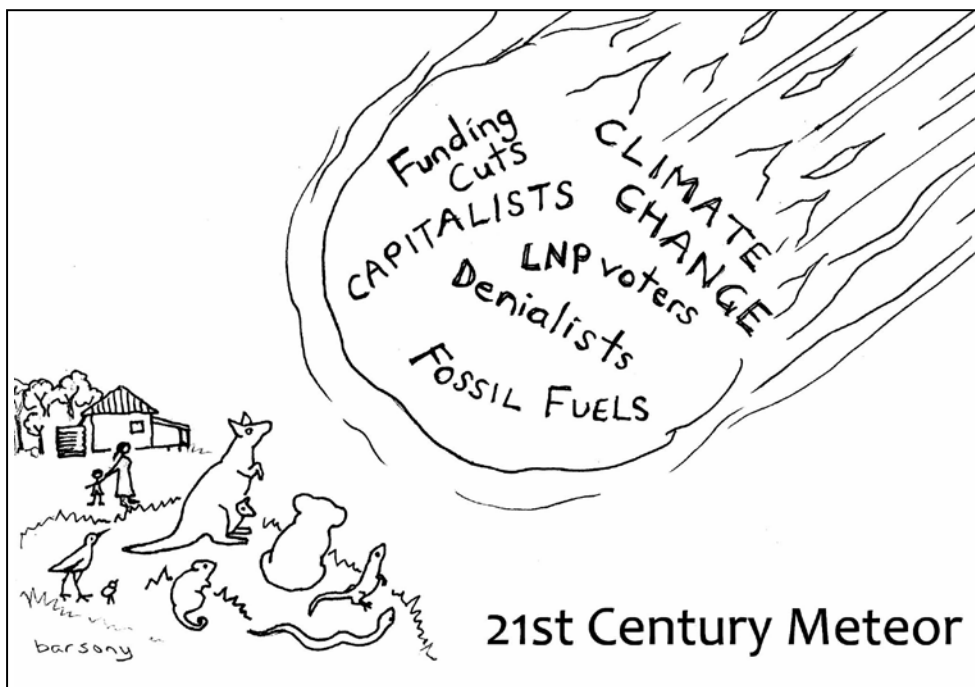
Certain pundits are saying these bushfires are being orchestrated to punish Australia for not signing the Paris Accord.

Could this be the reason these fires are burning; to make Australia an example to the rest of the world?

Or is it because the high speed railway line they wanted to build from Melbourne to Brisbane leading to smart cities needed the area to be cleared of houses and bushland/wildlife habitat?

Who knows? All I know is we all want the fires to stop and never occur again. But until we know the cause, how can we stop it recurring?

Menkit Prince
Uki



It's not easy

How good is Scotty from marketing, our PM?

Let's be honest, offending all the volunteer firefighters by saying, "They want to be there" before he takes a "well-deserved" holiday, while his country is on fire, is not easy.

He hopefully woke up a few Nat/Lib members and voters, which no scientist or left wing 'propaganda' could have achieved.

It's hard yakka allocating \$500 million to the war memorial, \$250 million for the PM plane, \$50 million for a Captain Cook replica Endeavour, not to mention the budget blow-out of our new war machinery.

Must be exhausting cutting funding to Headspace and Foodbank, and then doing a big announcement later that we are pouring all this money into them. No change to on-going cuts to the ABC, Libraries, CSIRO etc.

Avoiding issues like the Uluru statement, the suicide epidemic of veterans, farmers, disabled and elderly people (waiting for up to two years for NDIS results) and the unemployed (stressing out about false robo-debts).

Fighting human rights and medical care for asylum seekers, failing to assist Assange etc. is nerve-racking and made him shorten Parliament sitting

time, even while there was no cricket to watch in the background.

But it's not all about Scomo, the issue here is much deeper. Where have the morals and ethics gone?

Whistleblowers are penalised, journalism is under threat, while politicians, bankers and others can rip off the nation without any consequences, and in some cases even being promoted.

More than 18 million hectares have burned so far, and a billion animals killed. We need a moratorium on logging and mining. Protecting our water should be a no-brainer on the driest and fire prone continent.

It's urgent to change our ways, sustainable energy and hemp can create lots of jobs, income for small farmers and clean taxes. We all feel the urgency of our dilemma. It's time to act now!

Chibo Mertineit
Nimbin

Open letter to Kevin Hogan

Dear Kevin,

You are part of a government that stopped the revised carbon emissions target in Barcelona last year.

Australia has the second largest carbon emissions per capita in the world, behind Saudi Arabia.

Scott Morrison has been

an advocate for the coal mining industry from the beginning, and now it seems he is behind the logging industry also.

He advocates land clearing as a solution to bushfires, which is a covert way of the logging industry accessing forests that are now restricted. This is a ludicrous idea, and displays the ignorance of the party you represent.

I implore you to find a solution, short-term and long-term, to the devastating fire situation which is obviously a result of worldwide policies pushing economic gain over environmental sustainability.

Panels of scientists in the field have come up with a solution, and politicians need to listen to them.

If you don't use science to build a bridge, the bridge falls down, and that will be the fate of the National Party.

Yagia Gentle
Nimbin

Men dying for help

Three in four suicides are men, yet most government spending on suicide prevention is targeted at women, according to recent analysis by the Australian Men's Health Forum (AMHF).

The Government announced \$64 million of funding for suicide prevention last week, but most of that funding primarily targets postvention services, which have a focus on supporting people who have attempted suicide, or have been affected by the suicide of someone close to them. Postvention services tend to reach more women than men.

We know more than 50 per cent of male suicides occur in the context of relationship breakdown, employment challenges, financial difficulty, and issues of drug and alcohol

addiction. If we're serious about suicide prevention, we need to engage men when they are experiencing these challenging life circumstances, before a suicide attempt happens, because most male suicides occur at the first attempt.

Glen Poole, CEO of the Australian Men's Health Forum said: "While we do not advocate for funding to be taken away from women at risk of suicide, most Australians will agree that blokes should be getting a fair share of the Government's suicide prevention, that reflects to the fact that three in four suicides are male."

The Guardian recently reported that prostate cancer now kills more people than breast cancer. Hell, why don't we just give 80% of all funding towards prostate cancer to women too?

Andy Gough
Larnook

Open letter to ScoMo

Dear Mr Morrison,

You state that Australia remains committed to countering Islamic State in Iraq and therefore 300 ADF troops will stay in Iraq, even though the Iraqi government has ordered out all foreign military forces.

At the Herzliva conference in 2016, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Herzi Halevy, reaffirmed Israel's long standing position that ISIS is preferable to the continuation of the Assad regime in Syria, and that the Israeli military is considering "direct support for ISIS as a matter of policy, and not just rhetoric".

How can Israel support ISIS in Syria but combat them in Iraq? How can the US and coalition forces be confident that Israel's access to military intelligence does not get transmitted to ISIS?

Anyone in Australia found guilty of aiding and abetting ISIS faces life imprisonment, so why are representatives of Israel (an ally of ISIS) allowed to go scot free, and why do we regard Israel as our bosom friend?

When you received the Jerusalem Prize you said, "We stand with our friends and under this government, that is what will occur. We've set up a trade and defence office in West Jerusalem to deepen ties on trade, defence industries, investment and innovation."

Don't these words make you complicit in supporting terrorism?

Gareth W R Smith
Palestine Liberation Centre
Byron Bay

Notices

Botany talk

On Friday 21st February, 7pm at the Tuntable Hall, esteemed botanist Rob Kooyman will be giving a talk on our deep time Gondwana rainforests, with special reference to bushfires in the Nightcap Range. There will be an opportunity for questions after the presentation.

Annual General Meeting

Nimbin A&I Society AGM will be held Tuesday 10th March, 6pm at the Showgrounds. All welcome.

Sea Shepherd fundraiser

Thursday 12th March at Tuntable Falls Community School. Indian vegetarian feast served from 5pm. \$10 plate/\$5 kids bowls/\$25 family deal. Cakes/Chai also available. Sea Shepherd merchandise stall. All proceeds to Sea Shepherd. Further info call school on 6689-1423.

Canoeing

If there are any canoeists out there who would like to join me on a whitewater trip on the Nymboida River this year, contact Michael Smith at: koonorigan@gmail.com

Free notices

Keep it short, under 50 words, and to the point, and if your notice is non-commercial and of interest to our readers, get it to us by deadline, and we'll run it for you for free.

About us

Managing editor Bob Dooley

Assistant editor Sue Stock

Sub-editor S Sorrensen

Layout Peter Chaplin, Andy Gough, Bob Dooley

Photographers Sue Stock, Bob Dooley, Chibo Mertineit

Distribution Peter, Coralie, Sue, Bob, Rob and Lisa, Daniel, Dominique, Aengus, Rodney, Rosie, Trevor and Dave

The Nimbin GoodTimes acknowledges the Bundjalung people, the traditional owners of the land and waters on which we work and live, and pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Bookkeeper Martha Paitson
Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com
And find us on Facebook

NGT is published by the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin.

NEXT DEADLINE:
Wednesday 26th February

Email nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

Goodbye Auntie Viv

by Gilbert Laurie

Mum/Auntie Viv was born in Maclean on the 27th December, 1940 and initially lived the early years of her life on Ulangundi Island.

As a young girl, the family moved to Pippie Beach Mission and later moved to Cubbawee Mission at Tuncester.

Mum loved fishing and was excellent at getting beach worms, a skill which she later passed on to many. Mum and Auntie Irene Harrington (nee Roberts) were the first Aboriginal students to attend Lismore High School.

After school, Mum's first daughter, Carmel was born in 1956 and then she met and fell in love with Herbie King a couple of years later, and the couple then conceived another six children, Lorna (Dec), Monica, David, Gilbert, Jacque and Tania.

Mum and Dad then relocated the family to Surrey Hills in Sydney in the 60's for work purposes, but Mum returned home shortly after when she and Dad separated.

When Mum returned to Lismore, she became heavily involved in the community, and she and her Uncle Frank Roberts were on the Start-Up committee of the Namitjira Haven rehabilitation facility, which is still

running today.

Mum attended and actively protested against the Pine Gap Nuclear facility in the early 80's and then went and worked for the Human Rights Commission, later known as the Anti-Discrimination Board, in Canberra under Bob Hawke's government, actively involved in the identification and investigation of issues relating to the ongoing abuse of Aboriginal people.

Mum then returned to Sydney where she was employed in various Aboriginal organisations, including managing hostels which housed Aboriginal people. Mum was strong in her culture, and ensured she passed her knowledge on to the next generation whenever she could.

She then eventually returned back to her own country and purchased a house in Lismore Heights where we lived for a short time, and following that we then moved back to Yamba where we lived for many years, living the idyllic beach life.

Mum moved to Nimbin after her children had grown up, and lived at Nimbin Rocks and became a much-loved, well-known respected elder in the community, supporting and guiding people and imparting her knowledge and wisdom on to all she spoke to.

Mum loved her family including her grandchildren and great-grandchildren,



and was loved by many.

In the latter years of her life, Mum's health deteriorated rapidly and she passed away peacefully in the Caroon Nursing home where she was residing, on the 22nd January, 2020, aged 79.

The funeral service for Vivienne Dorothy Laurie-King will be held at St Andrews Church, Zadoc Street, Lismore on the 7th February at 11.30am, and the burial service will be held at the Lawn Cemetery at Goonellabah.

A wake will then follow at the Namatjira Haven, White's Lane, Alstonville.

Vale 'Digby' Moran

14/7/48 – 13/1/20

by David Lowe

The popular and highly respected artist Albert 'Digby' Moran has died suddenly in Lismore at the age of 71.

He is remembered as a humble, spiritual and selfless man, always with a ready smile and words of encouragement for young people.

Digby was born in Ballina in 1948. His mother was a Bundjalung woman and his father Dunghutti.

Young Digby spent his formative years in the mission community of Cabbage Tree Island, in the midst of the Richmond River, between Broadwater and Wardell in northern NSW.

Surrounded by a large, supportive family, he remembered his childhood on the river as an idyllic time.

At sixteen he left to work as a cane cutter and then as a boxer with Jimmy Sharman's travelling troupe, following in the footsteps of his father Teddy, who had been a heavyweight champion of the north coast. Digby also played rugby league for Lower Woodburn.

His first step was an art course at Ballina TAFE in 1991, but it was 'too European' so Digby started to create art in his own cultural style.

"Painting gives me great pleasure and brings me peace," he said. "It is a way for me to tell the stories that were told to me by my grandparents and elders when I was growing up," he said.

Digby's work soon brought him acclaim in the Northern Rivers and then beyond.

In 1995 he had his first work selected for inclusion in the Telstra National Aboriginal and Islander Art Awards in Darwin. Digby exhibited in this competition multiple times, winning the People's Choice Award in 2000 for 'Mullet Spawning'.

A travelling Australia Day ambassador for many years, in 2010 he had a solo show at the NSW Parliament.

Despite his growing fame, Digby



Photo: Denise Alison

Moran remained firmly connected to his own country. "You'll never catch me painting things like barramundi or crocodiles," he said. "Water is a big part of all Bundjalung Dreaming. I have always been a saltwater man."

With his studio based in Lismore, Digby was an important contributor to numerous shows in his own region, including at Lismore Regional Gallery and Tweed Regional Gallery. Both galleries acquired his work.

Country was very important to Digby Moran. In a 2013 interview he said, "I love walking around the coast especially at Goanna Headland, Evans Head, just to feel the energy of the place."

Traditional carved trees and shields from the region informed Digby's art practice, particularly the distinctive interwoven diamond shapes of his ancestors.

In addition to his gallery projects, Digby was an active public artist, with well-known large scale works including 'Someone's Always Watching You' outside Ballina Woolworths; an 85-metre mural inspired by the local natural environment at the Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre; and a major temporary sand sculpture, made in conjunction with Richard Clarke, on the grass outside Lismore's City Hall coinciding with NORPA's production 'Djorra' in 2017.

In 2018 a major solo show of this new work opened at Lismore Regional Gallery. 'Growing Up On The Island' became the most highly attended exhibition in the Gallery's history, apart from the Archibalds.

Guided by what he described as spiritual instruction, Digby devoted a lot of energy to teaching children of all ages about art and creativity, both in Australia and the UK.

He also worked in drug and alcohol rehab at Namatjira Haven, showing others how art can help find a way out of the darkness, as it had done for him.

As news of Digby Moran's death spread, social media was flooded with memories from those who knew and were touched by the artist in different ways.

Digby's partner Kerry Kelly said she was devastated by his loss. "He is loved by so many people and will be sorely missed. Thank you all for supporting him," she said.

The Lismore Regional Gallery has opened a special display of work honouring Digby's artistic legacy, including a condolence book which visitors are welcome to use to share memories with his family.

Digby Moran leaves behind three daughters, a son and many much-loved grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The Northern Rivers community will not be the same without him.

MAGIC POTION

KOMBUCHA

NATURALLY Fermented Tea

RICH in **PROBIOTIC** bacteria, Beneficial Acids & Enzymes.

RAW and **LIVING**

DETOXIFIES • STRENGTHENS IMMUNE SYSTEM • IMPROVES DIGESTION

WWW.MAGICPOTIONKOMBUCHA.COM.AU

Locally Produced & Available at: Nimbin Co-Op, Nimbin Pizza & Trattoria, Nimbin Bush Theatre

Water is life...

NIMBIN WATER BEARERS

0491 700 105

nimbinwaterbearers@gmail.com

Bulk delivery of drinkable water.

FIND YOUR BALANCE

ASHTANGA YOGA

with Ayla

Get FIT, Strengthen your BODY, Clear your MIND, Increase PRANA while connecting with COMMUNITY.

Every Monday 6pm

Birth & Beyond, 54 Cullen St, Nimbin

\$15 or 10 classes for \$120

Walk-ins welcome or contact Ayla on 0439215963 or at rawbodyyoga@gmail.com

whatever you're looking for

we can help you find it

nimbin

more than you can imagine

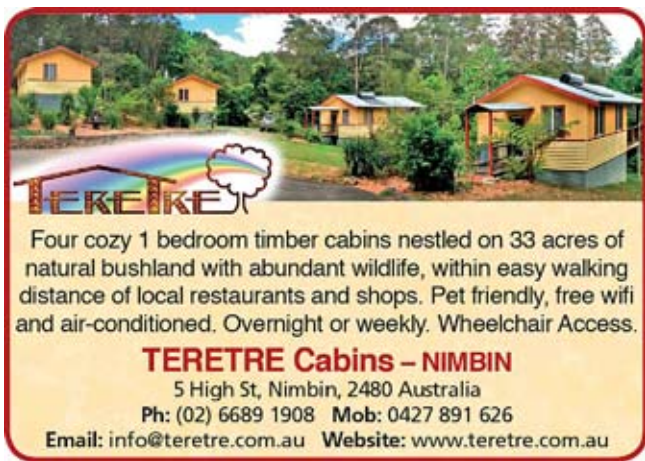
nimbin visitor information centre

46 cullen street nimbin nsw 2480

02 6689 1388

nimbin@lismore.nsw.gov.au


visitnimbin.com.au



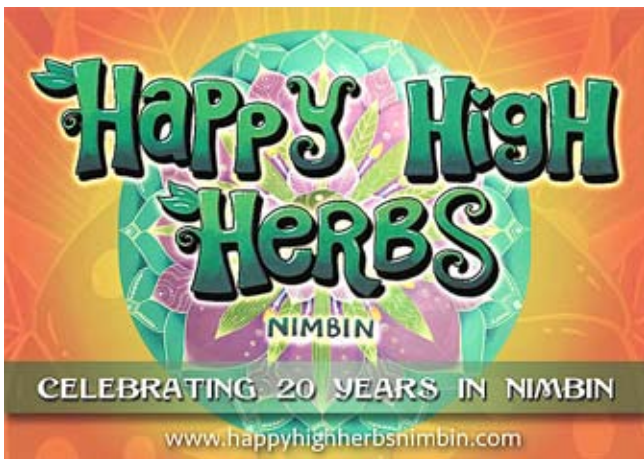
TERETRE Cabins – NIMBIN
 5 High St, Nimbin, 2480 Australia
 Ph: (02) 6689 1908 Mob: 0427 891 626
 Email: info@teretre.com.au Website: www.teretre.com.au



CANNABIS
 THE NUMBER ONE PLANT
 FOOD BETTER PROTEIN THAN BEEF
 FUEL CLEANER ENERGY THAN CRUDE OIL
 FIBRE STRONGER TEXTILE THAN COTTON
 MEDICINE SAFER EFFECT THAN PHARMACEUTICALS
 RECREATION HEALTHIER CHOICE THAN ALCOHOL
 OPEN EVERYDAY 51 CULLEN STREET 02 6689 1842
NIMBIN HEMP EMBASSY



DR TRAY
 CRANE TRUCK
 UTE & TRAILER
 Est. 2019
1300 DR TRAY



Happy High HERBS
 NIMBIN
 CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN NIMBIN
 www.happyhighherbsnimbin.com



- FLOOR SANDING -
 New & old floors, verandahs, decks
 • Free quotes & advice
 • Prompt service
 • Quality work assured
 • All areas serviced
 Rob Clark ph 6632-3342 or 0410-016-694
 ABN 93 105 831 192



SEPTIC TANK PUMPING
 GREASE TRAP CLEANING
 LIQUID WASTE REMOVAL
 OILY WATER PROCESSING
 NIMBIN & ALL SURROUNDING AREAS
 Local Since 1932
RICHMOND PUMPING
 6621-7431 After Hours 0407-433-405

Interested in becoming a Councillor?

by Cr Vanessa Ekins

Who cares about potholes? I don't, although I did manage to avoid some on a recent Tuesday afternoon 3.30pm drive to Nimbin.

A handful of councillors and council staff met at the old museum site to discuss plans for development. These include 12 shops, medical centre, toilets, cafe, rocks viewing platform, garden space, laneway and enclosing fences. We talked about hours of business and locking down the laneway, loading zones, car parking and keeping the fig tree.

We reconvened at council chambers in Goonellabah for a quick dinner and briefing from council staff on three development applications and our reconciliation action plan. The weekly briefings are an opportunity to ask questions of staff and have input into plans, strategies and developments.

Afterwards several councillors and staff had a glass of wine and chat and I was home by 9.30pm, a typical Tuesday evening for a Lismore city councillor.

What else does a councillor do?

Councillors ask tricky questions. Will there be enough water? Where does shit go? One quarter of the people in our region live off the grid and can answer these questions – the rest of us might need to dig deeper.

What do you think about potholes? Are three wheelie bins too many? Is it reasonable to spend as much money on an art gallery as a sports field?

On the surface these appear to be simple questions, but you would not believe the varied views.

How do we find solutions?

Addressing these wicked problems means talking with people, informally on the street, in the supermarket, at a party or answering more formal emails and phone calls. My inbox includes 13 emails from residents about three different development applications, calendar invitations to attend aboriginal and floodplain committee meetings and community consultation workshops.

It takes at least five hours a week to deal with email and most of the meetings are held during the working day which limits paid employment.

Formal council meetings occur on the second Tuesday of each month and the business papers can consist of six separate documents over 200 pages each. It can take 5 to 10 hours of reading, thinking and preparation for one meeting. A good meeting involves public access at 6pm which can go for hours when a controversial topic is on the agenda.

Meetings usually finish by 9pm and include the cut and thrust of adversarial decision making. Some say that if no-one is happy with a decision, it's the right decision.

Are you interested?

Being a councillor is a big time commitment and the reading can be a bit dry, but it's also interesting, if you like talking about sewerage and footpaths.

Council's job is to plan future housing, ensure adequate water, sewer, waste and transport systems including walking and cycling, protect farmland and our natural environment and waterways.

The councillor's role is to prioritise these sometimes conflicting projects and allocate limited resources to their



implementation. This is juicy stuff but I reckon you will need to set aside a minimum of 15 hours a week to perform your role as councillor.

There are nights of tossing in bed worrying about decisions to be made, but there are also days visiting parts of our beautiful region that are hidden and private and meeting people that you will never encounter in normal work and leisure activities.

We live in an area of such rich biodiversity, our people, our economy, our plants and animals are diverse. It is a real privilege having a say about how we live here together.

Why would you?

Start coming to council meetings or watch the live stream on the second Tuesday of each month and think about becoming a councillor.

Decisions about traditional roads, rates, rubbish, and libraries, pools, sports fields, art galleries, nature reserves, parks, dogs, recycling, reconciliation, economic development, land use, subdividing farmland, footpaths etc are made by 11 people who rely on professional advice from staff and most importantly, input from the community.

If you care about potholes, it could be you.

Our region is on the way to recovery

by Cr Darlene Cook

How amazing have the recent rains been for all of us? The joy of seeing the green of new grass and leaves coming to life has lifted my spirits from the depression I have been experiencing throughout the drought months and fires.

The knowledge that the RFS could declare the Mt Nardi fire safe gives us hope that our region is on the way to recovery. We can all now take those steps towards healing – of ourselves, our lands and our communities.

As part of the post fire recovery actions, many politicians have been visiting affected areas to gain first-hand information from those directly involved.

With Janelle Saffin, I attended a community meeting in Nimbin on 13th January which was also attended by Yasmin Catley, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Jobs; and Trish Doyle – Shadow Minister for Emergency Services.

Community representatives spoke at length about individual experiences during the fires; what we have learned and how we must record those experiences for future reference. Charlie Cohen contributed his recollections about the conditions the RFS and community defenders worked through and the resourcing problems that arose from emergency management by people not actually on the fire ground.

Yasmin and Trish accompanied Charlie for a tour around the fire-affected roads to see for themselves the extent of the damage.

Greg Warren the Shadow Minister for Local Government also visited



Greg Warren's visit to LCC with (l-r) Janelle Saffin; Shelley Oldham LCC GM; Cr Darlene Cook; Greg Warren, Shadow Minister for Local Government; and Scott Turner, LCC Manager Assets

Council during January to discuss what actions and funding were needed from that department, as well as from Office of Emergency Management, to assist Council to best support our Nimbin community during the recovery.

February Council Meeting

At the next Council Meeting on Tuesday 11th February, the DA for the redevelopment of the old Museum site at 60-62 Cullen Street will be presented and debated. The extent of the proposal, the negotiations over a parking agreement, and other conditions will be considered by Councillors.

If you are interested in this issue, please come along and either register to speak about the proposal, or just be there to observe.

Another matter on that meeting agenda will be the application by the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce to streamline the processes for the release of funds from the Nimbin Special Business

Rate Variation Levy to the Chamber for activities in the village.

Coming up also in February are the community workshops to help inform our Community Strategic Plan and land use priorities. Share your vision and ideas for the region for the next 10-20 years. Register at: https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/planning_for_lismores_future

There are workshops at Clunes Hall 6th Feb; Nimbin Birth and Beyond Hall 10th Feb; Dunoon Hall 12th Feb; Perradenya 13th Feb; and The Channon Hall 17th Feb, all at 5.30pm

The quarterly Nimbin Advisory Group meeting will be held at the Neighbourhood Centre on Thursday 27th February. If there are other issues you want to raise with Council, please contact the Neighbourhood Centre or the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce and let them know.

I can be contacted by phone on 0427 895 316 or email: Darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au

Road map to recovery

by Janelle Saffin,
Member for Lismore

State Member for Bega, Andrew Constance MP called our bushfire crisis humanitarian. Harry and Meghan in their then Royal message called it ecocide.

It is both: humanitarian and ecological. This requires concomitant responses.

We have internally displaced persons with domestic animals and wildlife in scorched earth scenarios and our recovery does not speak to displacement. See the University Centre for Rural Health's findings from its Community Recovery After The Flood study, accessible here: <https://ucrh.edu.au/after-the-flood>

The bushfire disaster that has ravaged families' homes, their land, their lives and ravaged their communities' cultures and their economies, is like no other we have experienced in scale, intensity and damage. In some areas it burnt out already drought-decimated land.

I get asked: Who is in charge? Who is mobilising and deploying our assets and capabilities? What is our battle plan? How do we now future-proof our communities?

I can only say no one person; it is multi-agency, with more senior people being overlaid, but without the ultimate authority, even Ministers.

Recovery Co-ordinators can only use their powers of persuasion and Local Government's role in recovery is not resourced, nor clear, but must be. Give them the money upfront to organise the infrastructure rebuild plan – fund first, justify later.

As for future proofing, there is no one blueprint that speaks to sustainable security for humans

and the land and the best I can point to as a possible launching pad is the Australian Government's 2018 Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, accessible here: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Documents/sdg-voluntary-national-review.pdf>

And with bushfire inquiries to come, my hope is that local knowledge is heeded.

The recovery model as observed does not have the elements of humanitarian-ecological relief and rebuild embedded.

People who are impacted have to front up to get some assistance, assistance that is exclusive, with criteria that 'weeds' out the ineligible, yet with some still in dire need.

So what do we need?

To ensure that people are not passed from one agency to another and that they deal with one person (case manager) who can link them up and access all they need.

We need those who help government and non-government driving over every road where someone who was fire ravaged, lived or lives. Seek them out.

We need cash in pockets and in communities. We need rapid response humanitarian teams. We need rapid deployment humanitarian shelters. We need rapid deployment clean-up teams. We need rapid deployment rebuild development teams.

We need to ensure that Forestry Corporation and National Parks & Wildlife Service share or cover the cost of fixing fire-damaged fence-lines they share with private landholders, and keep open and maintain fire trails.

We need to bring in what I call the

T-Teams – Tools and Tea, to do the practical stuff needed today. Yes, fix the fence, shed, or the bridge, and boil the billy to have tea and talk. Mental Health needs are not always immediate but practical stuff is.

We need to see our Australian Defence Force boots on the ground ASAP. Let them do the assessments and decide on action. Do not hamstring them with bureaucratic bunkum that excludes, even where the need to help is self-evident.

Helping one local helps community

We need water tanks and water sources (that are left) tested ASAP and cleaned.

We need soil tested for toxicity, especially on our farmlands.

We need WIRES and similar organisations' volunteers to be accredited, so they can go in fast and extract injured koalas and other wildlife.

We need ramped-up communications. It is shameful that some of our communities and Rural Fire Service teams were incommunicado during this crisis.

We need to calibrate government agencies and assets with non-government helpers.

Where is the relief money? Every human agency should be in every impacted community seeking out those impacted and putting that money into their accounts.

Yes, some of this is happening but more ad hoc than planned and coordinated, and I note the one-stop shop information initiative through the Service NSW Bushfire Customer Care service, but it does not get us where we need to be for recovery.

The community response with donations and support is wonderful,



Nimbin Rural Fire Service Brigade Senior Vice-Captain Charlie Cohen tells Labor MPs how his fellow volunteer firefighters and local defenders saved properties and rainforest at Siddha Farm from the Mount Nardi National Park bushfire. Pictured are Lismore MP Janelle Saffin, NSW Deputy Opposition Leader Yasmin Catley and NSW Shadow Minister for Emergency Services Trish Doyle.

but the community rightfully expects that every dollar be spent on this crisis. Our oversight agencies – State and Federal – need to be vigilant to ensure this happens.

I have not seen one rapid deployment shelter – like South Australian company Humanihut's six and seven-metre huts – which in recent years have helped house thousands of refugees in the Middle East.

These portable huts are designed for housing displaced people in extreme conditions and they have a 20-year lifespan.

Disaster relief in the face of this humanitarian and ecological crisis must be inclusive, so all fire-impacted people are factored into the relief, recovery and rebuild efforts.

We do this well in the response phase, sans some additional firefighting assets which are needed.

I welcome the relaxation of some of the standard eligibility criteria for the Special Disaster Grant – Bushfires, providing up to \$75,000

for fire-affected primary producers and hope this signals a future change for disaster relief criteria.

I do not know of many local farming families who do not need to derive regular off-farm income in order to survive and keep their farms viable.

We should say proper thanks to our Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters through some out-of-pocket payments for fuel costs, and wear and tear on their private vehicles. This approach would preserve our volunteer Rural Fire Service as a very Australian cultural phenomenon.

We need to provide relief, recovery and rebuild accordingly in this humanitarian and ecological disaster.

We need to craft a preparedness plan, now, for the advent of more natural disasters.

We Australians can do this. Rethink and then recalibrate how we deploy our aid and our assets. The business-as-usual model is not fit for purpose.

On the same PAGE

by Kevin Hogan, Member for Page



Great to drop in and see Yogi (pictured) at the Nimbin Bowling Club recently. I gave them a new Australian flag. They are a great local bowl, and an important part of the community.

The Federal Government is continuing to roll out funding as part of its response to the drought and fires, recent announcements have included:

Lismore City Council has been granted \$1 million for bushfire recovery and

a further \$1 million towards drought assistance.

Much more money will flow once all the damage assessments are done. This is a fast-tracked payment to get repairs underway.

The funds can go into rebuilding infrastructure, hire staff to help with the recovery, or staging local events to attract more tourists and business to the region.

We have also committed an initial \$50 million for wildlife and habitat recovery.

Funding will be directed by experts along with local knowledge and expertise towards:

- Care for and rehabilitate injured wildlife;
- Secure viable populations of threatened species;
- Control feral predators, other pest animals and noxious weeds that are a major threat to vulnerable animals and plants at this time;
- Scientifically map and understand the true impact of these fires; and
- Work with landowners to protect those precious remaining unburned areas, which will serve as 'arks' and allow our native plants and animals to recover.

Businesses and organisations that have sustained damage as a result of the fires can access up to \$50,000 in grant funding.

Also, small business loans for affected areas are available up to \$500,000 interest and repayment free for the first two years.

These are also offered to farmers, primary producers and non-profit organisations, under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

A specialist Support Line is being established, but in the meantime businesses can visit: www.business.gov.au or phone 13-28-46.



LOCAL EXPERIENCE MATTERS - INTEGRITY COUNTS

#ASKJOHNWILCOX

Do You Have Questions About Real Estate?

0428 200 288

Nimbin Hills REAL ESTATE

Facebook or Instagram **#ASKJOHNWILCOX**

John... What's my property worth?