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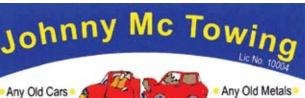
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Web: www.nimbinlaw.com.au Email: nimlaw@spains.com.au Meet Huey, the super dog by Cat Bunting, Laura Hill

and Jodi Commins

Huey's story has touched the hearts of many locally. It has a sad start but then a heartwarming twist, showing the strength of the human spirit amongst the Nimbin community.

Last Tuesday, Huey was allegedly deliberately run over by a car on Tuntable Falls Road. The police are investigating.

Despite suffering extensive injuries, Huey somehow managed to make it home. His hip was pushed through its socket and his spine was exposed, amongst other multiple injuries.

Devastated to see Huey in such a state, the family sought urgent medical help. They were told Huey's hip required emergency surgery in the Gold Coast and bills would exceed \$5000.

They were delighted to hear Huey would survive, yet unsure how they would find such a large amount of money.

Feeling extremely sad for what had happened, a few of us came together and began

far, thanks to the generosity of so many, we have raised \$2500 online. Additionally, the vet has received donations directly.

Huey's family have been blown away by the support they've received and cannot thank everyone enough.

A massive thanks to everyone who has donated. We couldn't have done this without you!

A special thanks to Francis Hood, the Hemp Embassy and K.I.T.T.E.N Rescue in North Lismore, who have all supported this cause very generously.

It goes to show when the chips are down, Nimbin's massive heart and community spirit cannot be broken. We are a community who rally round to help those in need. And we will not tolerate animal cruelty. It's simply not

If you'd like to make a donation you can contact Keen Street Veterinary Clinic on (02) 6621-9811 and donate directly, quoting 'Huey Hill.' Or you can donate online, through the Facebook campaign, titled



'Huey the much loved dog in Nimbin.'

I'm pleased to report Huey is on the mend. It's a slow road, but the family are working hard, providing 24/7 ongoing support to Huey.

With the help of a hip sling, they are even helping him to take a few steps each day!

He is healing well, has had his stiches removed and is enjoying sleeping by the fire receiving lots of extra love.

Grant to support Nimbin's emergency services

Lismore City Council has allocated \$685,000 to help make Nimbin bushfireready, from its \$1.3 million Federal Government Bushfire Recovery grant.

The funding will improve emergency service infrastructure around the village, and enhance the facilities at Nimbin showgrounds.

Mayor Isaac Smith said, "These upgrades are crucial to make sure our community is safe in times of emergencies."

\$240,000 of the grant funding will be invested in constructing turning circles for emergency vehicles on strategic roads in Nimbin; increasing the water supply capacity during bushfires by placing tanks in strategic locations; and helping to upgrade technology at the Rural Fire Service's fire sheds.

The final details of these projects will be determined after consultation with the Nimbin community and Rural Fire Service.

Showground upgrade

The Nimbin Showground, which played a crucial role as emergency evacuation centres during last year's bushfires, will receive funding of \$445,000 to upgrade its

President of the Nimbin Showground Phil Williams said: "Showgrounds are always where the community comes

· Rural roads & driveways

Wastewater systems

House & shed cuts

Dam building & clean outs



Lismore Mayor Isaac Smith with Nimbin Showground president, Phil Williams

together, and nowhere was this more evident than the Nimbin Showground in November when hundreds and locals and their pets and animals sought refuge."

Among nominated projects to be included in the upgrade are:

- · New awning and concrete slab adjoining main pavilion;
- · Enclose existing large shelter and install roller doors;
- New awning and concrete slab to existing storage sheds;
- Rebuild holding yards and shelter for cattle/horses; New kitchen in the main pavilion; and
- New floor coverings to area in main

Cr Smith said, "This grant will allow us to upgrade the facilities to make sure we can keep our community safe and are prepared for any future bushfires.

"I would like to acknowledge Kevin Hogan and the Federal Government for providing the grant, which allowed us to prioritise where the money was spent, after consulting with the community."

Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan, who made the announcement at Nimbin Showground, said the projects were great news for the Nimbin community.

· Horse arenas

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 - · Float and more
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Cecil Street safety improvements



A year after the tragic hit-and-run death of Tonia Jansen and serious injury to her partner, Stage 1 work by Lismore Council is now almost complete on Nimbin's Cecil Street.

Construction is nearing completion of

a raised pedestrian crossing and refuge, and the northern section of a footpath which will continue on the southern side to Nimbin Preschool and Showground.

The design of the improvements was enhanced by a community consultation

process in January.

Stage 2 and 3 work will involve repairing the road culvert over the creek to include a pedestrian walkway, and installing signage. It is expected to be completed by the end of June.



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Hemp Olympix handbook now online

It was MardiGrass time in Nimbin, and, for the first time in decades, the streets of Nimbin were not full of people and celebration. (Some cops still showed up. Habit.)

There were no performances, no medical cannabis forums and... no Hemp Olympix! Oh dear.

However, Hemp Olympix officials and comedians Alan Glover and S Sorrensen celebrated the one-year anniversary of the release of their book A Spectator's Guide to the Hemp Olympix (Australian edition) by putting that book online.

Yes, folks, if you can't get to the Hemp Embassy in Nimbin to buy the hardcopy edition, A Spectator's Guide to the Hemp Olympix is now an ebook. You can go online and download A Spectator's Guide to the Hemp Olympix for just under \$10.00. (Includes full colour pictures and foreword by Juan Antonio Cannabranch.)

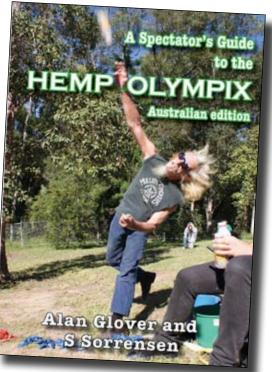
This book will take you into the hazy world of Hemp Olympix, tracing the history of the Cannabis Games of Neanderthal times to the modern Hemp Olympix of today.

You can also educate yourself to the rules and etiquette of the three main Hemp Olympix disciplines: Joint Roll, Bong Throw and Yell, and Iron Growerperson's Event.

You get to know the stories behind such great sporting champions as Bob the Joint Builder, Young Sal and Garry the Plumber.

The A Spectator's Guide to the Hemp Olympix ebook is available from Barnes & Noble, Rakuten Kobo, Apple Books, Scribd, Tolino, 24symbols and Amazon kindle.

Read Chibo's history of the Hemp Olympix on Page 12.



Sustaining ourselves and our communities in crisis

by Aidan Ricketts

ne thing we can be sure of is that things are never going to return to 'normal'. Even the concept of a new normal has become a kind of elusive idea. We can now see clearly that our future collectively is going to continue to be a series of shocks, shifts and crises.

Normal was not that great anyway, quite simply it was normal that got us here and it is normal that needed to change. History is path dependent which means that the preconditions of each emerging phase are found in the immediately preceding phases.

Each time we shift or change, that becomes the new starting place from which path dependence proceeds. It's kind of like when you skip along boulders in a creek bed, each new boulder you land on is the place from which you must make your next move.

We have lurched from bushfire to flood to pandemic, and we are well on our way to that big economic collapse I have been warning of for the past few years. We may be watching the US unravel and we may see other nations fill the power vacuum left by Trump's abdication of reason. Unpredictability is a permanent state in the world, but it certainly does seem to be accelerating in 2020.

So in the absence of having certainty, control or of being able to know what we are preparing for we need to look at how we can prepare ourselves and our communities for uncertainty itself.

On the personal level, I am sure that our adaptive capacity and resilience is strongly linked to our closeness to nature, and our physical embodiment. Nature, the universe, science and our bodies are the true things that provide us with real experiential knowledge about our world. These things are real and embodied. These are the life world.

Abstracted from the life world to varying degrees are the structures, institutions, and systems that humans have generated to organise themselves, others and the life world. It is these abstract systems like corporations, the share market, the financial system, and government and law that have created various maps, tools and guides, but we must never forget that they are maps

and not the territory itself.

That our maps of the world's capacity to sustain growth, absorb carbon pollution or protect us from pandemic have been flawed should not surprise us. But what we need to ask ourselves moving forward is whether we will be trying to restore the damaged lifeworld or merely reinstate a flawed map. This is why there is no return to normal, normal got us to this crisis.

So on a personal level, we may not be able to foresee the nature of the next shock, shift, collapse or crisis but we can focus on aligning ourselves as closely as possible with the reality of the actual embodied lifeworld (environment, community, family, self) that surrounds us as our best way to face whatever is coming.

It has been fascinating seeing people doing exactly this during lockdown; the outbreak of wholesomeness has been remarkable. The shortages of vegetable seeds and seedlings, flour and yeast and people's newly-discovered joys at a life slowed down have been true positives.

At the community level as well, we need to use this crisis to see what real-life institutions really serve us, and which ones are part of a broken map.

I have been really impressed at the community led response to Covid-19. The (so far) success of physical distancing in Australia is because the community, people, unions, businesses, activists and everyday people (with exceptions of course) have embraced the need to each take some personal hit for the greater good. Everyone I meet is carrying some kind of brick in their backpack, some more than others.

But at the societal level we are also seeing what serves us. Our public health system clearly, co-operation rather than competition, expert advice and scientific data, a social safety net, and putting people and health before the economy.

What hasn't served us? Endless tax cuts that drain our government and social services, Murdoch's capricious and anti-rational media empire, overconsumption, extreme individualism, trickle down economics, and the belief that the economy was the only important thing in life.

The big question that has not yet played out fully yet is what happens to us as a democratic society. Do we learn that it is values of community coherence, sharing and compassion that get the herd through the crisis or do we make the mistake of thinking that it is obedience to a paternalistic government that is needed in times of fear.

I strongly believe that Australia has done well at flattening the curve because of an underlying community sentiment in our culture. Self-isolating has worked because we as a community embraced it, not because of laws requiring it, not over policing nor hefty fines.

Policing could have achieved almost nothing unless the vast bulk of the community was already in support and ready to make the sacrifices. Don't let us learn the wrong lessons and think that we were saved (if we were) by policing, by laws or by yet another invasive App.

Let's know that we did it as a community. Let's come out of this stronger as a strong and united community rather than simply as a population that needs governing. Of course there will always be aspects of both, but we do know that ultimately blind subservience to authority is not a reliable form of community resilience.

There is a role for government for sure, but proper government that does tax the rich, that does implement a good health system, that does look after the needy and vulnerable and that does invest in a cleaner more sustainable environment. The climate crisis lurks in the background of the instant crises, but in so many ways underlies all of the failings that we need to address.

Nature, embodiment, community and good governance, these things we need more than ever, what we have learned we don't need, is over consumption, out of control corporate power, unaccountable government, and reckless neo-liberalism strip-mining our governments to pass money to the rich.

Thanks for being part of our very real alive and morally responsive human family. Major shakes are coming our way as the lifeworld shows us all the places where our maps failed to match the territory. Let's be enthusiastic about building new better maps that respect the earth and our people and don't waste our time trying to restore the 'normal' that got us here.

All the best to you, your community and our planet.

NCS solar panels up and running

by Cath Marshall, Principal

With all the news focused on Covid-19 and the understandable accompanying anxiety and uncertainty, it is wonderful to have some good news to report.

Nimbin Central School's long-awaited solar energy project is finally up and running.

162 new panels were installed at the school over the last school holidays, providing 65.4 Kw of solar power to be used to power the school and to feed back into the grid.

It was such a big job that the panels needed to be split over three roof areas!

This was a joint initiative with the Department of Education and the local Nimbin Central School community.

It was largely driven by the school community and the P&C, with the



students led by the SRC, also raising funds to support the project.

Well done all – another example of what collaboration and vision can achieve.

There was a range of other work undertaken at the school over the holidays, including exterior painting, carpet and soft furniture cleaning, the MPU roof being replaced and a freshenup of our play equipment.

Our dedicated cleaners, Marc Le Bars and Julie Riley, and our general assistant, Alan Wraight, are to be congratulated and have earned our sincere gratitude for the hard work they put in to assist these projects and to ensure the school is ship-shape and sparkling for our students when they return to us soon.





by Scott Sledge, president

Treally don't know where to start. So much has changed in our world. Our human responses to this pandemic leave me wondering if we will ever get back to something we might call "normal".

We are required to "self isolate," and I do, but I don't like it. On one hand, I am impressed that so many people can get behind a cause if they believe that it is the right thing to do. On the other, I fear we don't really know what we're doing.

On 25th April we commemorated the ANZAC casualties of war and I read again All Quiet on The Western Front, which describes the horrible experiences of soldiers in the WWI trenches. I am glad that our present struggles are not so bloody and that we generally seem more compassionate as we "battle" the Covid-19 virus. But I feel anxious.

In Nimbin, the streets are quiet with few visitors and only a few locals. The NEC shop, which serves as a focal point for tourists who want to know about the town's unique perspective, is closed. Police stop travellers, asking them to justify their movements: unless we have "a good excuse," we are all subject to fines for being out away from home, usually \$1000 for a first offence.

Our locals used to congregate at the NEC and on the bench adjacent to the footpath to talk about issues and refresh acquaintances. Not now.

The Nimbin Community Centre, which manages our building, has offered us rent relief, and we hope the lost revenue will be supplied by the State and/or Federal governments. The politicians have promised some financial assistance, but mainly in the form of hand-outs to businesses to pay

wages so that the workers in closed shops will have an income and will not join the dole queues. The NEC shop, staffed only by volunteers, will have to rely on the NCC to find assistance for community non-profit groups to get past this period called The Lock-Down.

NEC can't have our regular monthly meetings, so we "gathered" on-line via Zoom in April. We plan to have our May meeting also via Zoom on Wednesday 13th. Let us know if you want to be invited, contact Secretary Triny Roe. We have postponed our AGM until 10th June, hoping the restrictions on gatherings will be eased by then.

We continue to monitor current events with regards to good works and bad. In the first category, I congratulate Lismore Council for starting a pedestrian walkway along Cecil Street in Nimbin – an action that may prevent more people being killed while walking on the road. Thanks to Cr Darlene Cook for responding to our entreaties on behalf of the community.

NEC has sent a submission on the Federal government's review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which is due for revision: the EDO has put in a great proposal for a complete overhaul so that the Federal government has oversight of the many different jurisdictions in Australia

We wrote also to the NSW government regarding the Auditor General's report that verifies our concerns that changes to state environmental laws have resulted in widespread and uncontrolled land-clearing by a factor of 1300%. That is alarming and needs to be reversed as we face greater threats of drought and catastrophic bushfires as a result. The land needs re-forestation to become more shaded, cooled and capable of retaining water, but the opposite is happening.

I am distressed that evil-doers continue to ravage our native forests and dig up, transport, sell, and burn fossil fuels. Our politicians call these activities "essential services," despite wide acceptance that renewable energy is a cheaper and currently the best option.

While we are in lock-down, the forests are being destroyed and the education we started to achieve about climate change has been pushed off the agenda by a near obsession with this

pandemic. OK, I get that Covid-19 is dangerous and seems to affect older people more than any other group – some young people are calling it the "Boomer Remover" – but much remains unknown about the virus and the disease it causes.

We do know, however, that while our forests are being destroyed, younger people are getting the worst of this situation financially, as the jobs which they perform are often in businesses closed indefinitely.

Greens politician Adam Bandt said, "From encouraging our climate to collapse to lifetime debts for education, from unaffordable housing to an unfolding extinction crisis, the government doesn't seem to care about young people having the same safety net that previous generations enjoyed. Now the looming recession is going to hit young Australians hard."

When we emerge from this crisis what will our world look like? I heard PM Scottie from Marketing say that his government was "cutting red tape," noting that project approvals running at 19% in the December 2019 quarter were being approved at a rate of 84% in the March 2020 quarter. If we run those figures together we get... 1984! I am calling this pandemic Covid-1984.

There are some good aspects: air pollution is way down as cars and planes have drastically reduced their frequent travels. People in Beijing can see the stars at night. We can all breathe cleaner air... unless it contains droplets of the Covid-1984 virus. Why does it take something like this to achieve the united action that could save us from catastrophic climate change?

I feel inspired that humanity has the ingenuity to protect us from a deadly threat, but fear that once we get a vaccine, the powers that be will still be in power and those who control the world's finances will still have too great a share of the money. How can we change the power structure so that we can save the world's environment and enable our offspring and theirs to inherit a world of beauty and biodiversity?

I think our young ones will find a way to share the planet with other humans of all sorts for a sustainable future, and I plan to support them.

What's on the other side of this crisis? Dystopia, utopia, or back to "normal"? What will our Brave New World be like? What can we do to help create it?



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www.thrivehealthcarenimbin.com



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Nimbin Bowling Club and the Greenskeepers Bistro thank members and the community for your continued support. We will re-open when permitted.

Until then, we will sell packaged alcohol, cartons and 6-packs only, observing the social distancing protocol. Hours of operation: 4-6pm, 7 days.



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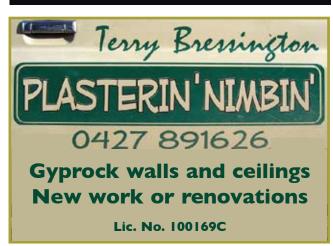
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In your neighbourhood...

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News

Covid-19 - NNIC opening hours

NNIC continues to be open for face to face services, PC and copier access, support services and food relief, but with slightly reduced hours and days, Mondays to Thursdays 10am to 3pm. Centrelink Monday to Thursdays, 10am to 2.30pm.

As from Monday 11th May (unless something unexpected arises), we will be returning to our normal operating hours 10am-4pm Mondays-Fridays, Centrelink Mon-Fridays 10am-2.30pm. Physical distancing and hygiene measures will continue to be in place.

If you need NNIC services and support but you are either in compulsory self-isolation, or feeling unwell, or feeling nervous and wanting to maintain social isolation, then you can call us on 6689-1692 and we can arrange a telephone appointment with our community worker for you so you do not have to come in personally.

Tools library and seed exchange

These are both still operating at Sibley Street by apppointment only. Because only one person may be on site (other than Steph) at any time, please contact Steph at: sibley@nnic.org.au to arrange pick-ups or drop-offs.

To join the Tools Library, call NNIC on 6689-1692 to arrange a time to come in and complete the paperwork.

You will need at least one photo ID and two documents showing your current address, plus \$22 (NNIC members) or \$27.50 (non-members).

DV and child safety

Please keep your eyes and ears alert to everyone around you, to make sure everyone is safe, including women and children, from abuse and violence.

There are concerns about the increased risks to victims of abuse and violence who are trapped behind closed doors in self-isolation.

If you have any concerns or worries for yourself or anyone else, call NNIC on 6689-1692 for support and guidance, or phone:

- 1800 RESPECT: 1800-732-732;
- Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800-65-64-63;
- + Mensline 1300-789-978;
- NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Hotline: 1800-628-221.

Mental Health during Covid-19

If you have concerns about your own mental well-being or that of someone you know, call Nimbin Integrated Services on 6689-1497 and make an appointment with Genevieve at NNIC.

It is now even more important that we all promote a sense of community, reach out and ask our friends, family and colleagues, "Are you OK?"

Some people in your world might be feeling anxious, worried about when things will return to normal, be physically unwell or concerned about their health and wellbeing.

We encourage you to use this time to pick up the phone, video call, SMS or post online to check in and see how those in your world are travelling.

If you're feeling well and able to support someone, reach out and let them know you're there to help now and for as long as it takes.

Remember to trust the signs. Be aware of any changes in online behaviour or the way people communicate:

- · Consider the tone and language they're using;
- Are they posting more or less?
- Are they answering your calls?
- · Are they communicating as you would expect?

If you are concerned about someone,



Nimbin's unusually quiet street scene

trust your gut and ask "Are you OK?" Listen with an open mind to what they have to say and ask them what you can do to help.

In the current circumstances there might be limits on what you can do, but you can definitely be a listening ear and a (virtual) shoulder to lean on.

(Excerpt from: www.ruok.org.au/ staying-connected-is-more-importantthan-ever)

For loads more mental health tips see: https://nswmentalhealthcommission. com.au/mental-health-and-thecoronavirus

Struggling with household bills?

We may be able to assist with electricity and telephone bills.

Phone us on 6689-1692 to make an appointment with our Community Worker, Pete.

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre (NNIC) is run by locals for locals and our job is to support people in need and the community in general to achieve their aspirations.

Everyone is welcome at NNIC. If we can't help we probably know who can. You can also find lots of useful local and other info on our website: www.nnic.org.au www.facebook.com/pages/Nimbin-

Neighbourhood-and-Information-Centre

Nimbin Hospital information

Child immunisation clinic

For 0-5 year olds, held on second Tuesday of the month. Next clinic: 12th May. Phone 6620-7687 (Lismore Community Health Centre)

Early childhood nurse

Every Tuesday. Baby checks, weighs, post-natal support. For appointments phone 6620-7687.

Women's health nurse services

Third Thursday of the month, next is 21st May. Confidential service, checks, advice, general health information. Phone 6689-1400 for appointment.

Wound clinic

Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am. For self-referral, phone 6689-1288. Referrals also from Nimbin Hospital and GP clinic.

Drug and alcohol counselling services available

For an appointment, please contact 6620-7600. A trained professional will ask you a few confidential questions and will provide you with an appointment time.

Nurse practitioner clinics

- · Diabetes clinics: third Thursday of the month, next is 21st May.
- · Respiratory clinic: second Tuesday of the month, next will be on 12th May. Phone 6630-0488 for appointments.

Community Registered Nurses

Monday to Friday, 8am-4.30pm. Assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy, provision of palliative care in the home, medication support. Phone 6689-1288 – leave a message, will return call swiftly.

Nimbin NSP

Needle and Syringe Program open Monday to

Thursday. Arrangements can be made to see a Community Registered Nurse.

Health advice line

Phone 1800-022-222 if you have a health issue. 24-hour, seven days a week free service. A Registered Nurse will assess whether you need to go to an Emergency Department.

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

The Auxiliary is suspending all fundraising activities until further notice.



Monthly meetings of the Auxiliary have also been cancelled.

Back to "normal": Coalition plans for a post pandemic Australia

by Simon Clough

aleed Aly in his recent opinion piece in *The Age* argues that the USA and the UK have had major difficulties dealing with the corona virus because they are essentially fractured societies, and one of the major determinants of those fractures is the degree of inequality in their societies.

This does not just mean income inequality, though that is critical, but inequality in terms of access to key services such as health, education, housing infrastructure and government itself.

Aly further points out division in society around issues such as Brexit and in the US case, wage stagnation for low and middle income earners and the role of President Trump.

Australia, even after decades of relentless attack, still has a high quality public health system, an effective public education system and has fortunately to date avoided deeply divisive issues such as Brexit.

Elements in the Institute of Public Affairs (the ultraconservative organisation largely funded by Gina Rinehart) wanted the corona virus lockdown abandoned after several weeks in favour of restarting the economy. Nonetheless there has been general agreement in the population that subduing the pandemic and saving lives comes before economic recovery.

Many have commented that everyone is a socialist when it comes to a crisis, as evidenced by most government responses to corona around the world. Yet in Australia very few seem to have identified our market economic system as deeply flawed even in 'normal' times. Australia has a lot to be proud of in its society but the evidence at least in the USA and Britain shows that inequality and division can happen with remarkable speed.

The Morrison future

The Morrison government is determined to ensure a fossil fuel-led recovery, the dismantling of environmental protection, attacks on unions and workers' rights and the slashing of corporate and higher income tax rates. At a minimum, these policies will greatly increase inequality and decrease our nation's ability

to deal with crises. Our world is facing its greatest crisis in recorded history in the form of climate change, and these life-threatening policies must be stopped.

The 'business as usual' plans of the Morrison government are deeply flawed. If Australia is to make the changes required to limit the climate emergency, we cannot even consider another coalfired power station, let alone spending over \$4 million on assessing the viability of a North Queensland power station. Australia in the recent bushfires saw the destruction of a billion wild animals, driving many to the edge of extinction. In these circumstances, how can a nation justify reducing environmental standards?

The government's desire to further erode working conditions is blatantly heartless when many of us have observed or experienced the impacts of the casualisation of the workforce because of the corona pandemic. Morrison and his colleagues seem determined to see the economy moving along the path of the working poor and homeless.

The cuts to higher income tax payers are particularly counter-productive economically. Surely it is better to give tax cuts to lower paid workers in the knowledge that they will stimulate the economy by spending all that money on their survival. High income earners on the other hand may well save their tax rebates. Certainly if reducing inequality was a goal, tax cuts for high income earners would not be considered.

The government regularly trots out the argument that Australia's corporate taxes are higher that the US or Singapore and the UK etc. What this fails to take into account is the large number of major corporations that pay absolutely no tax in

Australia through transfer pricing and other nefarious practices. Michael West, the independent journalist, has written extensively on corporate tax avoidance which is particularly popular in the mining sector.

Another fallacy in the government's reasoning is that corporate tax is the major determinant in companies being attracted to or continuing to work in Australia. The degree of stability in the nation, the access to high quality service such as banking, accounting, insurance as well as government policy, security and transparency are the critical issue for making corporate decisions. Not to mention high quality infrastructure, housing and quality health and education services. These are the attractions for corporations, their workers and their families.

Culture is another significant determinant for location of business. Business owners and workers are attracted to countries with a dynamic, creative and entertaining culture. Typical of neo-liberals everywhere, the Morrison government has not lifted a figure to aid the tens of thousands of people previously employed on short-term contracts in the arts sector.

In many ways Australia sells itself short in terms of having a lot to offer business and individuals. Our nation does not need to compete in the race to the bottom which characterises many neo-liberal economies. We have many of the key institutions, services and policies that make this a wonderful country in which to live.

We must guard against the current government's blind push to increase inequality, increase greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbate those things that divide us as a people.

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DV victims need safe transport

Beth Shelley (pictured), Chairperson of the Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) says, "One thing that is obvious in this recent health crisis is that our community wasn't prepared for the consequences of this epidemic.

"Indeed social supports have been eroded over time by cuts in government funding and a loss of oversight on the predicament of the most vulnerable people in our society. Needing to be socially isolated in order to prevent disease has meant pressure is placed on the victims and families of those experiencing domestic violence."

As reported recently in the Echonet Daily (Isolation and the domestic violence curve) by Eve Jeffrey, "With a larger proportion of people staying at home and the unusual circumstances we now find ourselves in, another downside of isolation is the rise in domestic violence (DV)."

Social welfare groups such as Social Futures recently acknowledged in a public presentation that one of the contributing factors to ongoing domestic violence in the Northern Rivers was the lack of "safe mobility to refuges for women and children escaping domestic violence."

NRRAG co-secretary Lydia Kindred has applauded Social Futures for identifying that the lack of adequate rail transport has compounded the impact of domestic violence; stating, "Women across the region have expressed their desire for the immediate reinstatement of the Casino to Murwillumbah railway due to the safety of train transport and the ability to move from one township to another to find alternative housing or connect with extended family or friends or other forms of support."

Beth Shelley states that, "For many years now conservative governments in NSW have meant a loss of funding for services to rural areas and support of vulnerable groups in our community. Governments who believe in user pays systems neglect support systems for those of us who are disadvantaged and socially



isolated. Now we're in a situation where we have to isolate for health reasons and the mental health toll is emerging. Families are left alone to deal with huge difficulties with no support services available."

Chief Executive Northern NSW Local Health District Wayne Jones says, "Our existing understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and anecdotal evidence to date suggests that for many people experiencing domestic violence, social distancing and self-isolation measures may place them at greater risk of harm."

Mr Jones adds that the mental health implications of living through natural and other disasters can be cumulative and can intensify existing experiences of trauma.

Beth Shelley states that, "Just like the bushfires this epidemic is showing the fragility of our social systems. The loss of our rail services is an underlying symbol of that loss of ability to find help and safety. We need the government to invest in services that support the whole community because as we are now learning more clearly than ever, we are all in this together. It's time to support our community's need for safe, adequate transport."





When you are intoxicated you are more likely to be involved in accidents or injure yourself and require medical help. Drinking may also impact negatively on your mental health and increase feelings of isolation and loneliness. If you think you, or someone you care about may have a problem with alcohol, contact NIS on 6689 1497 (for Nimbinites), OR Riverlands 6620 7600, OR Alcohol & Drug Info Service 1800 250 185

Brought to you by Nimbin Community Drug Action Team (Nimbin CDAT) c/- NNIC P.O. Box 20168, Nimbin NSW 2480. www.nnic.org.au