



Open letter to Kevin Hogan

Dear Kevin,
As an older member of your electorate, and one with much to fear from the Covid-19 virus, I want to say the following:

I think the worst danger is presented by shopping centres and supermarkets, where there is no real restriction on people's behaviour. Public transport presents the same problem.

The least danger is presented by individuals driving cars, cycling, motor-cycling, swimming, i.e. doing things by themselves.

I think we need to tighten up regulations around shopping. Masks should be worn; tellers should be behind perspex screens.

And I think we should not just relax rules around going out, but encourage people to get out on their own.

Families should be allowed to meet provided everyone has been practising health protocols, which they will do. Most people are very reasonable.

Michael Birch
Nimbin

Fingers in the till

Lismore City Council has had poor economic management for some years now and has tried to raise citizens property rates to cover the deficit we currently endure.

I am reminded of PM Keating's famous excuse: "The recession we had to have." Well if he was a good economic manager why did we need a recession?

Typical of the Labor Party is overspending and jobs for the boys and girls. Lismore City Council and its Mayor are no strangers to this. High taxes/rates to cover the overspend.

Currently Ratepayers are funding a series of TV ads for the Mayor. These ads are nothing but self-indulgence and promotional material to enhance the Mayor's election campaign.

The message they convey is pathetic, and nothing but a poor excuse for the Mayor to get his face on TV. What is the cost to ratepayers?

I think I may stand for the mayor's job next election and the first matter I will undertake will be to halve my mayoral salary to show my genuine concern for our City Treasury, which is not a bottomless pit

Claire De Ellae
Lismore

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 Nimbin Good Times.

Herd immunity

Some things are clear. No country has demonstrated a satisfactory solution to the pandemic, backed with scientific understanding that is above all suspicion of influence by vested interests. Initially our politicians were able to find their innate compassion, by putting aside "ideologies" designed to serve such interests. Our leaders had the courage to spend big against their economic conditioning, showing how Keynesian principles can indeed work.

It will take a lot of guts in this brave new world to stand up for all humans, against corporate forces bigger than governments, not knowing who is allied to whom.

Without herd immunity, no country can get back to normal. So, why is there no country where this is not seriously and openly discussed in mass media? Answer: perhaps Big Pharma has so much influence, it neutralises any arguments against putting our trust in vaccines and pharmaceutical solutions.

The overwhelming majority of healthy people recover quickly, as they would from any flu. Susceptible people have a weak immune system. We have just acquired distancing and virus tracking skills. They enable herd immunity to be built in the healthy majority, while

compassionately keeping the vulnerable and elderly safe.

Surely Wuhan's reproduction factor, R is a handy tool. Some few cases moving freely in small localities, can be monitored while they spread immunity at controlled levels above R=1.00. The higher the safe level of R, the sooner we return to normal commerce, without fearing the odd undetected case.

USA, the biggest disaster of all, has the largest emphasis on profiteering and God-fearing. Perhaps they could learn to trust the immune system He created, and lay off the profiteering. It's the latter that is poisoning the creation, human food, bodies and immunity.

Meantime science can work out why some weakened immune systems cannot cope, and find a way to assist it to restore itself. Others may care to correlate and report on high levels of immunity, natural food consumption, and resistance to viruses.

It has been the modus operandi of Big Pharma to influence and infiltrate world bodies and governments for profit. They were into WHO, Australia, China, and US presidents long ago.

You have to ask what happened between the WHO, Bill Gates and China over Covid-19? And is President Trump by Dr Fauci on behalf of Big Pharma, who want to do big business in China too?

It is reasonable to ask, is Covid-19 a natural virus studied by two rogue nations as a bio-weapon, and from where did it escape? Only a fully transparent investigation will suffice.

Somo and a courageous nation must persist on behalf of a world always manipulated by competitive corporate powers.

Hayo van der Woude
Mullumbimby

Lockdown tyranny

We can't leave our houses without an approved reason? How fast we went from a democracy to a police state!

This is not even a pandemic according to the U.K. Australia has had 93 deaths, hardly the Black Plague.

So far this year 200,000 people presumably died from Covid-19, but more than 135,000 died from seasonal flu (worldometers.info).

In Italy influenza deaths were three times higher in 2017, yet there was no lockdown and no hysteria.

And this is for a virus that has never been properly identified and whose testing methods are flawed and not standardised.

The Italian Minister of Health said 99% of Covid-19 deaths were due to pre-existing conditions i.e. they died with Covid-19, not from it.

Worldwide reporting requires only that the virus was present at the time of death, which violates the basic principle of infectiology: "only when it is certain that an agent has played a significant role in the disease or death may a diagnosis be made." American hospitals are given \$13,000 for every Covid patient and \$39,000 whenever a ventilator is used. Doctors are coached on how to fill out death certificates with a Covid-19 diagnosis without lab tests to confirm. Shocking!

This means the number of people dying from Covid-19 is dramatically less than what is being reported. Meanwhile 5G/surveillance technology is being sneaked in along with a totalitarian system like China's where we lose the rights and freedoms we had before.

We may never be free of Covid-19. With every outbreak will we go into lockdown and quarantine? Why not just isolate the elderly, the immune compromised and those with the flu, boost our immune systems then provide everyone with N95 masks?

Over 88% Covid-19 cases recover quickly with mild to no symptoms. What is the big deal?

Globally people are starting to pushback and gather in protest. If we surrender our freedoms we may not get them back.

How soon before Australians see through this scam and stand up to tyranny?
Menkit Prince
Uki

Notices

Annual General Meeting

The planned May 13 AGM for Nimbin Environment Centre Inc. has been postponed to Wednesday 10th June, 6pm at Nimbin Community Centre School Room, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin or via Zoom – standby for updates.

Nominations for executive and committee members will be accepted from the floor. Must be a financial member to vote. \$10 / year, \$20 for a family.

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.

Pell innocent?

The declining influence of Christianity in particular and other religions generally is an observable fact. The conviction of Cardinal Pell, a high ranking priest, of sexual misconduct spotlighted this disruption.

I repeat an argument I put to my brother who is a Catholic devotee who defends his church and its priests:

Communities of humans, 'tribes' if you like, coexist peacefully and creatively because they are organised – organisation on a number of levels: practically in day to day behaviours and interactions, socially in the way interactions and behaviours are morally and ethically governed, spiritually for providing an overarching ubiquitous sense of purpose and meaning to the individual and community.

The relationship between social morality, ethics and institutionalized religion is indivisible – and that is why the behaviour of priests is so important: priests are an embodiment of our deeper personal and community aspirations; their assigned duty is to represent in their thinking and behaviour our civilization's morality and ethics – it is distressing when our trust in them is betrayed.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle

Penpal wanted

I'm just one of many in lockdown and starting to climb the walls due to boredom.

Is there anyone out there who would like an old-fashioned penpal, and friend? I'm 53, single gay guy, very keen on gardening and seed-swapping.

I run a small trade table monthly here in west Tassie, and am keen to meet other like-minded people to chat with, plus swap veggie and garden seeds. I also love anything to do with recycling and junk re-use.

Anyone keen for a penpal please write to Steve, PO Box 10, Queenstown TAS 7476.

Going viral

All our words are out of date
we are in the un-words,
the unworld,
unlearned, unprepared,
unprecedented,
unemployed, we are
undone,
talking to screens
listening to screens
talking –
terrible numbers groan
money pours through
holes
time and space lockdown
the war is invisible
the streets empty
the signs read:
closed cancelled postponed
indefinitely,
the chorus is:
'we're all in this together',
the mantra is:
'til things get back to
normal',
yet normal is never
normal
now every day is a new
normal
X marks a spot where I
stand,
we navigate around each
other
skirting touch
skirting trouble,
we sprint from patient
zero to patient five
million,
we spin from hoaxes and
hoarders to heroes,
and the president is
contagious
blaming and raving,
his city that never sleeps
is dead
is having a bad week of
death,
ghosts crowd the big apple
sky –
in sterile rooms
machines push the last
gasp
and strangers wrapped in
plastic
fill a convoy of coffins
still
the milk of human
kindness is an armour
for those who care and
comfort the suffering,
hidden by mask and visor
with rubber gloved hands
to hold the frail
all in this together
here in the waiting room
waiting for a cure
– David Hallett

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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.

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NEXT DEADLINE:
Wednesday 27th May

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

Dangerous potholes

Dear Mayor Isaac Smith,
On Monday 27th April I called Lismore Council and talked with Susan, in regards to the horrible, big and dangerous potholes in Tuntable Falls Road, a bit past Kirkland Road and before you get to the bends before the old dairy.

Besides how I was rudely treated and talked to, she provided no information, just comments that weren't of any help.

Susan actually said hundreds of people have been calling about this part of road, and they can't keep putting this in the system etc etc. So, when I asked for the request number she fobbed me off, then when I asked when is it scheduled, she was very rude.

I said I would like to know. She told me she would get back to me. I waited til 30th April, and then rang council again. I spoke with Lee, and briefly explained why I was calling.

Lee looked in the system and said she couldn't see anything on file and went back as far as the end of last year, and asked if it was OK for her to get Susan to call me, I agreed.

When Susan called me back, she told me it wasn't in the system. Well, I wasn't impressed but kept my cool. So then I asked for the request number and she didn't have it. So another phone call from Susan, and I got the request number which is 3882/20.



Potholes outlined by residents

When I asked when is it scheduled, she was able to supply me straight away with that info, which is 1st June.

Then I politely asked why she spoke to me the way she did on Monday and also provided misinformation. Instead of an apology I got excuses, which isn't good enough: how low-staffed they are, how stressed they are etc.

I pay my rates, I'm still working, I am a support worker, and I am not too impressed.

Anyway Isaac, it would be really good for you to go and see this part of the road for yourself. I'm so glad I don't drive it on a daily basis, like many do to get to their jobs.

My eldest son who works, lives on the Tuntable community, and I have work colleagues who live there too, and one of our community nurses does too, and the owners of Nimbin Candles and many other people who need to use this road consistently.

This road is a main link between Nimbin and The Channon and Dunoon and beyond, as you are aware.

School buses drive this road. It's unsafe, it's a hazard, it's an accident waiting to happen, people have to slow right down and swerve to miss the large and growing potholes, and end up hitting them. Like my son said, lots are unavoidable, especially if a vehicle is coming the other way.

It's actually unacceptable and negligent of council. These holes are just getting bigger and bigger, and having to wait for a further month is appalling and more work for the council, because they will keep growing. The holes need to be filled now, like next week.

I'm fortunate that I don't drive this road on a daily basis.

I request for this to be taken to the traffic committee and made a top priority please.

I do not want to travel this road again after experiencing it last Friday. And I have to say I am shocked and dismayed that if so many people have called council regarding this section of road, why was it not in the system until my calls?

And if it wasn't in the system, how can someone from council already have assessed it? Or have I misunderstood the lodging of this request, because I'm sure I heard clearly that it wasn't in the system.

I would really appreciate feedback on this.

Marie Cameron,
Nimbin



Kyogle Council received funding to replace the original single-lane timber Mulcahys Bridge on Needhams Road with a new 35m concrete bridge. This removed previous weight restrictions of 25 tonnes.

Needhams Road is a key access route for local farming and forestry industries. These bridges are designed and manufactured locally by Kyogle Council. They are made in Woodenbong. Kyogle is one of the only councils in NSW that do this process themselves.

Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan joined Kyogle Council Mayor Danielle Mulholland (pictured) to officially open the bridge to traffic.

"This is important for primary producers and is essential for residents and ratepayers. Council continues to focus on improving connectivity across its whole local government area," Cr Mulholland said.

"These important projects would not be possible without the support of the Federal and State Governments," she said.

"This will increase productivity by allowing larger B-double vehicles to use the road. It's also secured the viability of the route for many years to come, as well as reducing ongoing maintenance costs for the council," Mr Hogan said.

Mulcahys Bridge was funded by \$435,000 from the Federal Government, \$435,000 from the NSW State Government, and \$30,000 from NSW Forestry Corp.

Myocum Road upgrades

There's good news for people who travel on Myocum Road with some \$6.6 million to be spent on upgrading what is one of the Shire's most important thoroughfares linking Byron Bay and Bangalow with Mullumbimby.

Byron Shire Council has received two grants from the NSW Government - \$3.8 million over three years for safety improvements from the Safer Roads Program and \$1.8 million over two years from the Restart NSW Fixing Country Roads Program.

Council has also allocated \$1 million for substantial work on the road which currently carries more than 3,000 vehicles a day.

Phil Holloway, Council's Director Infrastructure Services, said Myocum Road is used by a lot of heavy vehicles and the improvements will make the road safer for everyone.

"Our Resource Recovery Centre is accessed via Myocum Road so there is a steady stream of traffic seven days a week, including trucks, cars and trailers that are often full of rubbish.

"The road is currently narrow in many places, windy and the surface has seen better days so to learn that we have been awarded \$5.6 million to upgrade this road is terrific news," Mr Holloway said.

"People can expect to see work start later this year and continue at different stages over the next three years," he said.



Chamber Chat

by Diana Roberts, president

After a month spent grappling with the intricacies of JobKeeper, JobSeeker, state government grants, BAS credits, Zoom conferencing, webinars and much more, I'd love to be writing here about how beautiful my garden is looking, how my vegies are thriving, how more fire-safe my property is, and how much I've enjoyed the peace that comes from spending more time at home, with only the occasional face-to-face contact. But these aren't really Chamber Chat topics so, back to business.

While researching and distributing information about government financial support for business and individuals, I have spent much time in recent weeks wondering about the new normal that will emerge from this. Many of our local businesses are now struggling and it could be a long road back for them. But back to where?

I see we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to push to remake society, to raise our voices

to bring about significant change, both environmentally and socially, to challenge the powers and trends that have pushed us to the brink. We need a much better and more equitable version of "normal", and we need to work together to bring about the kind of society we would like to re-emerge post Covid-19.

As an optimist, I have a firm belief that if enough care about the wellbeing of all, including our environment, we can bring that about.

For myself, that entails becoming engaged, not being complacent and leaving the fight to others. For decades I have engaged at the local level to combat injustice and strengthen community while passionately advocating for the protection and enhancement of our natural environment.

Personally, I don't want to go back to the way things were before Covid-19. Our community was already grappling with the effects of climate change, drought, bushfire and significantly reduced tourist visitations, so vital to our local economy. Now we'll be grappling with crippling under- and unemployment but, at the same time, we are presented with an amazing opportunity to rebirth and reshape our village.

In this context I'd like to draw your attention to a Lismore Council strategy currently on exhibition and encourage you to have your say. Every council in NSW is now required to prepare a Local

Strategic Planning Statement which sets out a council's land use vision for the next 20 years. Many of you have felt concerned about how growth is being managed in and around Nimbin given our inadequate and failing infrastructure.

Lismore Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement

Lismore Council's strategy consolidates initiatives already undertaken or planned. As growth has stalled in the Lismore area, no new residential release areas are identified beyond those already included in Council's earlier growth management strategy.

For Nimbin these areas include the former "mill" site stretching from Gungas Road through to Tuntable Falls Road, the former Olley property adjoining the Bush Theatre, areas to the east of the village including land off Alternative Way, land around Jarlanbah and the surrounding rural residential areas, land on either side of Falls Road at the village end, and land adjoining the Showground.

Given the limited water supply, it is not envisaged Nimbin village will expand beyond the existing village zoned boundaries.

Recently the majority of Councillors resolved to allocate funding to develop a 'masterplan' for Nimbin village, in collaboration with the community. This is in response to community concerns

that new developments are leading to a loss of the qualities loved by residents and visitors.

Such a plan would address issues such as accessibility, car parking, heritage, amenity, street infrastructure, traffic issues, place identity and renewable energy opportunities. Adoption of the masterplan would see the development control plan for Nimbin village revised and land uses in the village clearly redefined.

Once adopted, the Council would work with the community to apply for funds to realise the community's desired outcomes. This initiative was not supported by all Councillors and I'd suggest we should all be lobbying to ensure this proposal survives Council's budget deliberations. As a first step this can be done by making submissions to the Local Strategic Planning Statement. Council is now keen to receive community feedback on this draft document and submissions must be made by close of business on 21st May 2020. It can be viewed at: <https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/lsp>

Bushfire recovery

Council will receive \$1.3m to provide financial support and enable recovery efforts to bushfire impacted areas, with a view to rebuilding vital infrastructure and strengthening community resilience.

Specifically for Nimbin, Council is applying for funds to majorly

upgrade evacuation centre facilities at Nimbin Showground, increase water supply capacity by placing tanks in strategic locations, construct turning circle capacity on roads in strategic locations, and improve capacity to conduct teleconferencing during an emergency.

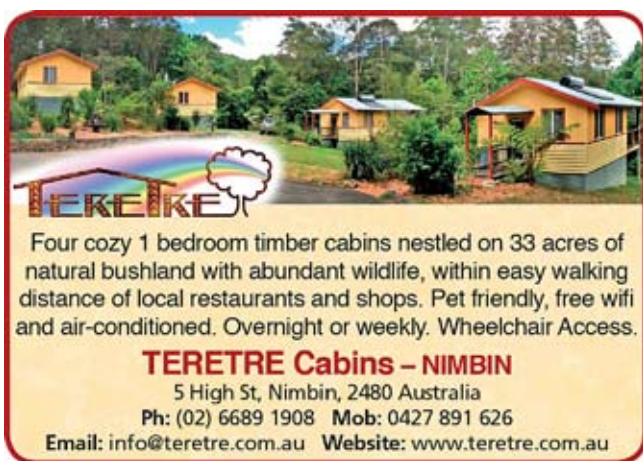
Sport & Recreation Plan

Council is also exhibiting its Sport & Recreation Plan, Visions and Directions to 2024. While very Lismore urban focussed, the Plan includes aims to enhance sport and recreation within villages, particularly walking/cycling, park improvements and Nimbin Pool.

Hopefully from this the Nimbin Rainbow Road walking trail might be rebirthed. Look out for the Plan once it's on exhibition and if this is your area of interest or concern – make sure you have your say: <https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au>

That's it for this month. I look forward to seeing your faces on village streets very soon. Please remember to shop locally wherever you can. It will be vital to the survival of many of the local businesses we value.

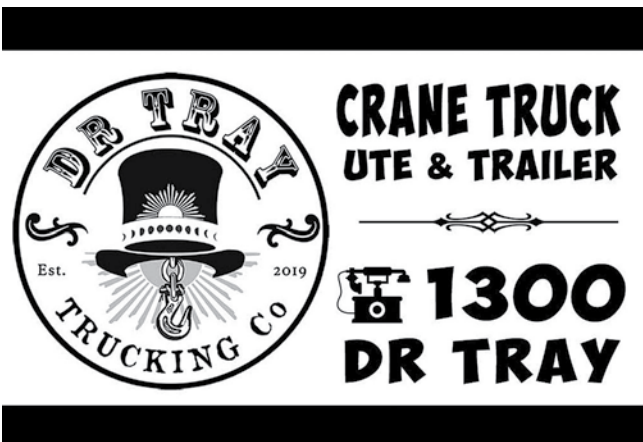
If you don't know how to contact local tradespeople visit Nimbin Hook Ups – Trades & Services' Facebook page. Or visit Nimbin Hook Ups BSB (buy, sell or barter) Facebook site. If you would like to feedback to Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, please email: chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au



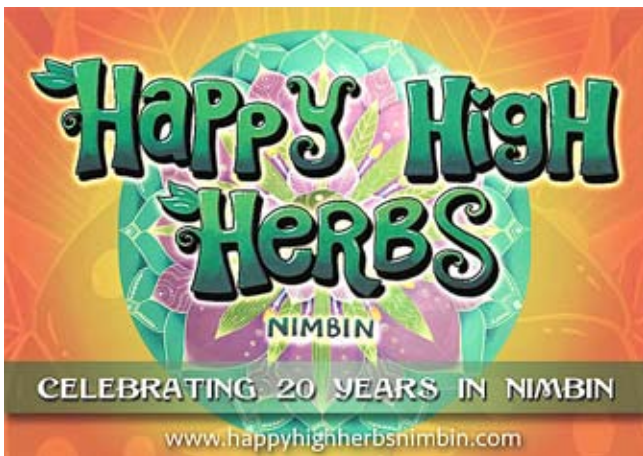
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Why councils are cash strapped

It's budget time. Again, we are faced with needing to find millions of dollars of cuts and savings in a budget that has nothing to give. It's not going to be pretty.

Like all organisations, Lismore Council has been heavily impacted by Covid-19. Financial projections have us losing up to \$1.5 million in revenue in the 20/21 financial year, and this could blow out to be more depending on how long this crisis continues. We were already in an extremely precarious financial position, and this additional loss in revenue is another body-blow.

I often see commentary putting the blame on the current Council for our financial problems, so I want to explain some of the reasons our financial situation is so grim. It's worth noting that we have inherited about 15 years of poor financial management. We are still carrying the cost of some dubious decisions made in previous terms and we have had compounding financial issues and natural disasters during this term.

It is also important to understand where Councils get their funding from. In simple terms we get funding from four sources – rates, fees and charges, state government grants, and federal government grants. So let's break these down.

The annual percentage increase in rates is determined by the state government, and often it is lower than CPI, meaning that every year our

costs go up by more than we can recoup from rates, and each year we get further and further behind.

The only way to increase this revenue stream is to increase rates with a Special Rate Variation. We had lodged an application with IPART for a SRV for roads and economic development, but Council voted to withdraw it in March.

Then there are fees and charges. Ideally we should be charging fees on a cost recovery basis. The fee should cover what it costs us to provide the service, although often the fees don't actually match the cost to Council. This is common in the hire fees for sports fields and public spaces.

Most of what we do when we are delivering projects is grant funded. This means that the money can only be spent on a specific project. For example, we can only spend CBD revitalisation money on CBD projects. Or, we can only spend a grant to fix Nimbin Road on that road.

Grant funding is important and gratefully received, but it doesn't help us when we have unexpected costs or impacts because we can't repurpose any of that money. The other grant funding we receive is annual funding in the form of Federal Assistance Grants, commonly known as FAGs.

Grants from other levels of government are very important but there are also issues.



Word of the Bird
 by Cr Elly Bird

The first issue is that the state government has absolute power over local government and at any time they can put additional costs onto us. This is known as 'cost shifting'. One of the biggest cost shifting imposts on Councils is the Waste Levy. Council pays the state government for all waste that goes to landfill and barely any of this comes back to Council in grants to manage waste initiatives.

There are many other small cost shifting impacts that occur every year, and Council has to cut other budgets to absorb these costs. The estimated impact to our Council in 2015-2016 from cost shifting from the state government was \$9 million.

Every year Councils get a funding allocation from the Federal Government. These are the Financial Assistance Grants, commonly known as 'FAGs'. Of all the funds that Councils receive from State and Federal Governments, this is the only money that

is 'untied' and Council can determine how it is spent.

The FAGs have consistently declined from a level equal to 1% of Commonwealth Taxation Revenue (CTR) in 1996 to just 0.55% of CTR today. If they were restored to 1%, our financial problems would barely exist.

The Australian Government collects approximately 82% of Australia's tax revenue and is responsible for just one tenth of Australia's public infrastructure assets. Local councils raise 3.6% of taxes and are responsible for 33% of public infrastructure, including 75% of Australia's roads.

These financial constraints are preventing us from achieving outcomes in our community. For example, in March I put forward two motions, one was for climate resilience and the other was to undertake some much-needed master planning for Nimbin.

In an ideal world, we could just fund these without question and get on with the work, but this Council is so cash-strapped we have no room to move, and it's very likely that these projects won't be funded in this budget.

It is a frustrating situation to be in. Local government is the closest level of government to the community, but we are constrained by state and federal funding. We cannot help you if we do not receive help ourselves.

I can be contacted on 0418-639-927 or email: elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au

Coronavirus and climate change

I must admit that I have got mixed feelings about the impacts that Covid-19 is having.

I certainly applaud the State and Federal Governments for doing everything in their powers to reduce the spread of this virus and to have the protection of people, particularly the elderly, as it's number one priority. As always at times like these, it is a blessing to be living on our wonderful island in the Pacific.

Please forgive me if it is too early to look at some of the positive things that have happened as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the global shutdown (dramatic slowdown) of the world economy. I would like to compare the rapid response to this emergency to another one that is quite often the elephant in the boardroom.

A recent study by a Stanford University Scientist of four major cities in China found that Covid-19 was listed as the 49th most common form of death, accounting for just 0.03% of deaths during March.

In the same period, as a consequence of the dramatic

drop in economic activity there has been a significant reduction in air pollution. Levels of PM2.5, the tiny particulate matter considered the primary cause of death from air pollution, have significantly reduced.

As a result of the reduction in pollution, it is estimated that it has "likely saved the lives of 4,000 kids under the age of 5, and 73,000 adults over 70 in China alone". That's an incredible statistic and should be a wake-up call for policy makers.

The significant reduction in air pollution has also been reported in India where the snow-capped mountains of the Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas are now a visible for the first time in over 30 years for many towns and villages. The drop in air pollution in India would have also saved thousands of lives. Comparison photos in many areas are quite dramatic.

It's hard not to compare the 'war-like footing' to this virus and the lack of response to climate change from world leaders and political parties around the world. Predictions that climate change will cause greater death and upheaval



by Cr Jeff Johnson,
 Ballina Council

than Covid-19 is lost on most politicians, particular in Australia.

The renewable juggernaut we see in Australia is not being led by government, rather it is being led by individuals, organisations and businesses. On the political side of things there are still generous incentives to develop and exploit our fossil fuel reserves.

Many towns in Australia haven't recorded a single case of Covid-19 yet have been completely locked down and the government has thrown over \$300 billion to preserve jobs while forcing thousands of businesses to close while everything goes into 'hibernation'.

If that money was available to address the climate emergency, then Australia could have a major renewable energy export industry (both solar and batteries) and be at greater than 100% renewables within 10-20 years.

You might ask how can we be greater than 100%? Well, there are already plans and feasibility studies underway to build massive solar farms in WA and NT to power, via undersea cables, Singapore and Indonesia. Our vast sun reserves and proximity to heavily populated urban centres will inevitably result in Australian companies heading down that pathway. (Google 'Aussie solar to Singapore' for more info.)

Hopefully the world gets on top of Covid-19 ASAP but doesn't then just go back to business as usual. This could be the wake-up call the world needed to see what can be achieved if everyone worked together and gave climate change and the transition away from fossil fuels the attention and funding that it desperately needs.

Removing fossil fuel subsidies would be the obvious place to start.

Covid-19: WHO and Wuhan

by Janelle Saffin,
Member for Lismore

There continues to be a lot of chatter about the competence of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the origins and spread of the Covid-19 virus.

These two issues are set to dominate domestic and global affairs.

Most know of WHO but know little about its governance. As with most government bodies, we only want to know that it works for our benefit.

WHO's slowness to call the advent of Covid-19 a pandemic and its dealings with its member countries, notably China, has focused attention on its failings.

Australia has called for an investigation that has powers akin to those of International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) weapons inspection regime, and for China, where the pandemic began, to be transparent in its dealings.

Australia is well placed to advocate changes. It is a founding member (1948) of WHO, with a seat on its 34-

member governing executive board that meets at least twice a year, one of the 194 countries that comprises the World Health Assembly (normally meets in May) and is a contributor to WHO's budget.

To advance these changes will require Australia to craft a creative campaign, similar to the Rudd Government's campaign that secured Australia a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

The better advocacy would need to address the question of WHO's governing architecture. Is it "fit for purpose"? The present conversation suggests not.

The immediate examination must be the scope of WHO's 'action review investigations' post major events and more broadly of WHO's *International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005)*.

All member countries agreed to be legally bound by the IHR to prevent and protect against, control, and to provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks and that avoid

unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.

The mandated *traffic* and *trade* clause weakens the primacy of the public health focus.

The IHR also includes mandatory obligations on countries to report early the advent of contagions. This needs to be form part of any investigation.

In examining WHO's failings, we need to examine our role and responsibilities in WHO and our own health security policy through the prism of our national security framework. The lack of PPE (personal protection equipment) and ventilators made in Australia; i.e. the lack of heavy manufacturing has been a wake-up call.

It is right to expect China to step up to its international citizenry transparency obligations on all matters Covid-19, but its system of government hinders this.

Better WHO governance would assist all countries to accept this requirement.

In a short but significant op ed in *The New Scientist*, Debora Mackenzie reports on

four key matters concerning the work of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, notably that of its deputy director Zheng-li Shi. (25th February 2020, p9)

1. In 2013, Shi's team found a coronavirus that could infect human cells in the lab.
2. This year Shi reported that this virus is 96 per cent identical to COVID-19.
3. Wayne Marasco, of Harvard Medical School, and his colleagues are reported saying that they found that the virus discovered by Shi's team could replicate in human airway cells, described it as being "poised for human emergence" and that further research on this virus was hampered by the US Government's ban on work that alters viruses in ways that might make them more dangerous.
4. Andrew Cunningham, of the Zoological Society of London, says that based on the virology evidence, the virus is almost certainly from a species of bat. There is a lot of conjecture



about laboratory leaks and standards at the Institute. This needs to be cleared up through the adoption of an international standard created for such research, accompanied by independent audits.

Dr. Fauci, whose face we are now familiar with, speaking in a White House press briefing (not for the faint-hearted) refuted claims that the virus was lab manufactured. "A group of highly-qualified evolutionary virologists looked at the sequence in bats as they evolve. The mutations that it took to get to the point where it is now totally consistent with a jump of a species from an animal to a human." (*The*

Sunday Guardian)

Australia is correct to call for an independent forensic investigation into the origins, spread and response regarding Covid-19, from WHO and other countries. It needs to craft the campaign to secure the support at the upcoming WHO World Health Assembly.

China concomitantly would be better to direct its efforts to its international citizenry responsibilities, cease its 'boycott diplomacy' and participate co-operatively at the upcoming World Health Assembly. It serves all our interests to know how this happened and to better respond.

On the same Page



by Kevin Hogan, Member for Page

Nimbin Showground upgrade

During the recent bushfires, the Nimbin Showground played a crucial role as an emergency evacuation centre for our community. It was important for people and animals alike.

Nimbin Showground has received \$445,000 to upgrade facilities from a Federal Government grant allocated by Lismore City Council. This will:

- 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 roller door main pavilion storage; and
- New kitchen and floor coverings in the main pavilion.

I thank the Showground Committee for the important role they played in looking after our community.

Foreign investment

We have changed foreign investment rules. This is designed to protect Australia's national interest as we deal with the economic implications of the coronavirus.

ALL proposed foreign investments, regardless of the dollar amount, now require approval from the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB).

FIRB advises the government on Australia's Foreign Investment Policy and its administration. It gives us greater scrutiny, and protects Australian business and Australian jobs. For more information, go to: www.firb.gov.au

Norco milk

Norco has received the 2020 Canstar Blue award for most satisfied customers for full cream fresh milk. This has confirmed what we already know.

Australian consumers scored Norco five stars across four categories: most satisfied customers, taste, value for money and packaging design.

Many other dairy processors have disappeared or been sold out, but not our farmer-owned Norco.

Congratulations to our dairy farmers and local Norco workforce.

A vastly different world today

Isn't the world a vastly different place today compared with a couple of months ago?

I'm reconnecting with my garden and vegie patch, and enjoying being away from the bustle and noise of Lismore on a working day. At the same time, I'm using social media to check on the wellbeing of my friends and relatives.

My eldest brother is battling cancer for the third time, and I am saddened that I cannot physically spend time with him. But we are taking the opportunity to catch up often – by phone and email – and to talk about the little things that are often left too late – memories of our parents and grandparents – things he knows that I was too young to remember.

I'm also using the time to look for old friends I've lost touch with over the years – often due to moving to another town, or just the busyness of life. Touching base with people who used to be so important in a previous time can be very rewarding and open up new dimensions to old friendships.

I'm finding my stress levels easing up and my blood pressure lowering – in our working lives we often forget to take time to look after ourselves. We put off dealing with the stresses and worries that our jobs can create because it can be just too hard to change – to find alternate work, or another job, or to reduce the hours and overtime we work.

This forced time out period while we avoid the CV19 virus is giving us the time to reflect on our lives, and the dreams we may have had of one day living differently. For some of us this will be the trigger to make those changes and take our lives in new directions.

I appreciate that for many people this self-isolation period is a very stressful time. It's turned their world upside down and left them with uncertainties about their job security, their ability to pay their rents or mortgages; their kids' safety at school, worries about their health – especially if they are elderly, or have an underlying medical issue.

Both state and federal government agencies are doing their best to provide constant up-to-date information to us all, and provide additional services to help those in need. They are introducing laws to ensure security of rental tenancies and subsidies for wages to help retain jobs. Charities are offering services and counselling to assist where possible.

But it really is a matter for all of us to reach out a hand to our neighbours, our friends, and even the person down the street we have never met. Many communities are forming phone trees and Facebook networks to ensure they can keep in touch.

Facebook Groups such as Lismore Helping Hands – Covid-19 Info, Community Resilience & Recovery are providing online information and resources to help us though not only this isolation period, but also through the recovery times ahead. Supporting Lismore Small Business lists businesses providing takeaway or delivery services – including Nimbin Valley Dairy.

Council matters
Council has launched a Covid-19 information page with the latest advice about changes to Council facilities and services. The page contains links to useful websites and fact sheets on assistance for residents and businesses.

The community can ask staff questions online via the Q&A function, view ongoing news updates and join the community forum to share stories and experiences. To view the page, visit: yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au

Council has made a number of decisions to assist ratepayers and tenants in Council properties, including extending the commencement of interest accruals on overdue notices by 60 days subject to the ratepayer lodging a successful hardship application under Council's Hardship Policy, and halting all legal action on overdue rates except those already before the courts.

Council will also reduce fees on the commercial use of footpaths for a period



by Cr Darlene Cook

of 15 months from 1st April 2020 to 30th June 2021 to allow businesses to re-establish. Fees will be waived for community groups that rent Council-owned buildings; waiving of market fees from 1st April to 30th September 2020; and building owner fire certificates – no processing fees for one year.

Additionally, LCC has received grant funding from these Commonwealth programs: Drought Communities Program (DCP); the National Bushfire Recovery Agency; and the Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery Funds Phase 1 Regional NSW.

These funds will directly affect the Nimbin community, as it is proposed that some of the Bushfire Recovery money be spent on upgrades to evacuation centre facilities at Nimbin Showground; increasing water supply capacity by placing tanks in strategic locations in the district; and by constructing turning circles capacity on a number of roads in the area to facilitate improved access by fire trucks and water tankers.

Council's budget for next year will be brought to the May meeting. In this time of great economic uncertainty Council will have to make some tough decisions to keep its essential services to the community operating. Tune into that meeting via online web casting to view the debate and decisions.

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

The origin of the Hemp Olympics concept

In autumn 1993 in Berlin, violent demonstrations broke out in protest against the city's nomination for the 2000 Olympic games.

The foresight of these protesters probably impacted the final decision of the IOC (International Olympic Committee) not to choose Berlin but Sydney instead.

These Berlin 'warriors' inspired in me the idea for creating alternative games to the commercialised, corrupted and corporatised circus, which the modern Olympics had become,

Knowing the impact that the games had on Atlanta, especially on the poor and socially disadvantaged, who were removed from visibility, so as not to offend the Olympic guests etc, it seemed crazy to inflict this on NSW, who were already reeling from the effects of economic rationalism.

Australia already had enough on its hands, with growing racism, conservative pushes against republicanism and reconciliation, youth suicide, unemployment and a steady depletion of rural infrastructure.

I planned to hold the Alternative Olympics on the 19/9/99, following on Prince's song '1999', in the community of Nimbgee, where I lived. Nimbgee already had a 10-year history of an annual picnic race day, which featured competitions such as egg and spoon, three legged races, a "Midsummer-Midday-Madness Run" of 3000 metres in 40C heat, as well as a beer brewing competition.

Part of the concept for creating these 'alternative games' was to invite friends to join in sporting and sub-cultural events, like table tennis and joint rolling.

After the first three MardiGrasses, and talking to Bob and Michael, we felt that Mardi Grass needed an event where people could just sit and watch while being entertained and educated.

The Hemp Olympics was born in 1996. We created the three main events, which are still being held, Joint rolling, Bong throwing and the Iron Growers Person.

The Hemp Olympics Torch

Bob and Michael, being sportsmen in younger years, liked the idea of the Hemp Olympics Torch. Starting the run in Lismore, where our Court House resides, and using the flames as a visual tool to show the devastating effect of the laws on our communities.

In some hamlets (cluster of houses close to each other) in some land-sharing communities, there were no young men living anymore to interact with children, because they were all locked up for growing pot. So we created the 'Hemp Olympics Torch' which carries 'The eternal flame for the victims of prohibition'.

The idea of the symbolic Hemp Olympics Torch run was to start from the Court House and run into Nimbin for the opening of the MardiGrass on Friday at dusk, where we wanted to pay respect to our indigenous local people, welcome our visitors to Nimbin and hold a minute of silence for all the



by Chibo Mertineit,
Hemp Olympics president

people sitting and suffering in goal for drug charges.

The Kombi Konvoy

The 'Kombi Konvoy' is a respectful salute to the origins of the mobile hippie roots and students coming to the Aquarius Festival in 1973 and reinvigorating Nimbin, bringing the 'New Age drop-outs' to settle in the 'Rainbow Region'. Knowing the sound a Kombi makes rolling into Nimbin, I was hoping to get a few following me on my run.

The Kombi Konvoy started in Lismore and after a few years moved to Byron Bay where Rusty was having endless court hearings after a sniffer dog lifted one of his testicles in a search there.

The Hemp Olympics events

♦ **The Speed Roll**
Speed Joint Rolling was the first event we worked on. I came up with the idea of a 'speed rolling' competition in remembrance of those moments squeezed in toilets of a disco to roll a joint to be shared outside.

♦ **Artistic Roll**
Being always a devotee of carefully crafted joints, inspired the idea of the 'Artistic Joint Rolling Event' which allows some time for competitors to enjoy rolling some magical creations.

♦ **Blindfolded and Adverse Conditions**
To create more fun, we invented the blindfolded roll as well as the adverse condition roll, where people try to disturb you with water pistols and fans.

♦ **Bong Throw**
Concerned for the health of our young bong smokers, who often use plastic orange juice bottles and a piece of garden hose (which when getting hot, releases toxic fumes) we devised the Bong Throwing Event.

♦ **The Irongrower-person event**
This event intends to illustrate why "mull" costs so much. It demonstrates the real risks and Herculean feats locals have had to perform, carrying bags of fertiliser, buckets of water (often up steep terrain), crawling through tick- and leech-infested thickets of lantana bushes, while concealing tracks to the crops from the police helicopter, with the threat of being busted and jailed.

Hemp Olympics locations

The home of the Hemp Olympics is and always will be in Nimbin, but in 2000 they were held in Victoria Park, Sydney. We celebrated the end of Graham Dunstan's Freedom Ride, travelling from 30th June until 9th September to all NSW prisons counting the victims of the war on drugs.

I ran with the torch from the Court to Victoria Park where Bob Hopkins, a founder of MardiGrass, joined me on the last 200 metres. This was one week before the real Olympics, so the Sydney Hemp Olympics gained worldwide acknowledgement through BBC and CNN.

Triple J interviewed us about the Bong Throw after a press release from Graham Dunstan stating that there were "more bongs in Australian households than there were javelins". We were calling for the Bong Throw to be part of the Sydney Olympics to motivate more young people into sporting activities after its great success at the Hemp Olympics.

The Hemp Olympics and the Nimbin Hemp Embassy are not encouraging any form of drug use, especially at a young age, but we are standing up for change to our ridiculous drug laws, which are creating more harm for most people than cannabis itself.

As Mike Baird, then premier of NSW, said in his opening speech at the first medicinal cannabis symposium in Tamworth in 2014, "Why should NSW not be the world leader in growing medicinal cannabis?"



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Highlights of MardiGrass Zoom Hemposium

by Michael Balderstone

The on-line Hemposium this year was very educational. Medical Cannabis doctors Andrew Katelaris and John Teh were as insightful as ever. Did we realise all the imported legal bud, mostly from Canada, is irradiated?

Dr Pot is increasingly enthusiastic about consuming raw Cannabis for health. Put your morning bud in the blender for brekky instead of smoking it!

Dr Teh likes 1:1 THC/CBD blends for healing and believes delivering it in hemp seed oil may even be a little synergistic.

Solventless extraction is the new ideal in America, if you can, we heard from Becky streaming live from *nimfm.org* on the Hemp Hours (every Friday at midday).

She's been working in all areas of the legal weed industry in Portland, Oregon for the last two years.

Many Americans have been turning to pot to help them through the stress of the corona lockdown and they are also developing a strong case for legalisation to help the economy recover.

Researchers estimate legalising pot on a Federal level could create 170,000 jobs in just the states of New York and New Jersey alone.

Then there's all the tax revenue on top of that. Australia's population is roughly the same size as those two states!

John Jiggins' talk about the Queensland prison crisis was a shameful eye opener. Inmate numbers have grown almost 50% in the last six years, five times the



population growth rate and two new prisons are needed, costing \$3.6 billion it's estimated.

To house an adult costs \$111,000 annually, and the recidivism rate is more than 60%. Aborigines make up less than 5% of Queensland's population and 40% of jail inmates! WTF?

Forty percent of inmates are illiterate, and a report says prisons today are a repository for a lot of people with severe mental health trauma. It will be similar in NSW, John said.

The prison report suggested decriminalising or legalising cannabis and MDMA, but the Palaszczuk government buried it for six months and is now proposing to appoint another committee to report on the report. Same old same old.

Talking statistics, I heard some numbers that are almost unbelievable about our Afghan

veterans. 41 soldiers were killed in action over there, and at least 419 have committed suicide after coming home to Australia.

Cannabis is exceptionally good for PTSD, and no doubt many of these lives could have been saved if it was an offered option.

Martin Ernegg from Synergetic Systems near Nimbin was possibly the most interesting online speaker for visitors.

We know his work but others don't, and his local laboratory and workshop will soon be producing hemp "plastic" products; 90% hemp fibre, 8% water and 2% pigment to create his extraordinary colours. Hemp has its own glue.

Another highlight of *virtualmardigrass.com* was David Hallett's Pot Poetry, one of which he filmed early in the morning in Nimbin with the unheralded Chris the cleaner's ute the only vehicle



parked in a deserted Cullen Street.

We also heard from Grace bunkered down in NZ about the recreational Cannabis referendum to be held over there during their Federal election on 19th September.

The draft legislation includes that you must be 20 or older to buy from licensed stores, up to half an ounce per day. Two plants per person maximum, four per household, and licensed consumption venues would be allowed.

You will be allowed to buy seeds and even live plants from licensed outlets, but there is a potency limit of 15% THC.

In David Shoebridge's Zoom talk where he outlined the NSW Greens new deal on weed, 'From Policing Drugs to Cannabis Jobs', he said it would have to help us here if the Kiwis deliver on the referendum.

Virtual co-ordinator Max Stone said some of the zoom rooms were



recorded, though numbers are sketchy because as the saying goes, "What happens in the zoom room stays in the zoom room."

"However it was certainly the biggest cyber audience assembled in Nimbin so far this pandemic," he said.

"The recordings of all the virtual events such as we have will be linked into the discord and the *www.virtualmardigrass.com* website over the coming days weeks, months and year."



Unda tells Somo he's Santa, not the Messiah

I've had the most extraordinary conversation with the PM, and I told him I would tell you about it. And he didn't seem to mind.

It was after midnight when he phoned. Not a text, a phone call. Interesting that he chooses to unload on a middle aged undacua woman who's currently iso on a hippy commune in the middle of nowhere, miles from anywhere. I guess it felt safe.

And we did discuss Jesus a lot, which I believe the Liberal

STREET SHUFFLE

Journal of the North Coast's longest serving covert

Party has banned him from talking about in Parliament. The convo was all about the Jesus, and Revelations, and just who he actually is in the Big Play. The congregation at his Church is in another world to his fellow politicians he says. The second coming is imminent to many of them and Somo himself could be some sort of saviour they think. It's become embarrassing he tells me, and confusing.

"Some even believe I'm the new Messiah and I'm wondering if maybe I am, sort of? They think the billions I've been giving away is synonymous with Him driving out the money changers from the temple. And I think I'm having prophetic dreams. I think a war might be coming. I saw hundreds of ships belching black smoke. The sky went dark."

I had to tell him bluntly, "No chance sir. I actually thought you were copying Labor and the GFC handouts, which you criticised endlessly. Fact is, the old and young hippies up here on the various pensions are calling you Santa now, not Somo. They couldn't believe how generous you were, and so quickly, even though there's nowhere to spend the money. But no one thinks you're the Messiah. We've actually got several of our own in the tribe up here on the mountain but they usually grow out of it. Carried away on mushroom juice,

their egos have got in the way."

He was quiet for a moment, then. "We actually have no idea what we're doing you know, but I have to make the people feel safe and throwing money at them is the sure-fire way, isn't it? It's one thing to lock them up, but how do I now let them out?"

"Slowly," I heard myself saying, half asleep. He actually woke me up. "There are fantastic unintended consequences sir, have you noticed? People are starting gardens, there are seedlings at supermarket counters. The air is clean, the oil price has collapsed, fracking is no longer viable. People are working from home and loving it. No more traffic jams and spending more time with their children. Every day is a Saturday. We're used to such freedom up here, but most aren't. They're rediscovering their lives and rethinking their priorities. I'm not sure they all want to go back to work, sir."

"You mean they're turning into hippies while they're not working?" He was actually listening.

"Some of them, hopefully," I said. "But no doubt most will go back in six months when the money dries up."

"Dutts doesn't want to let them out. Now we have them unda corona control, he says we can reorganise the whole work force. I have no idea what he's talking about, but he wants my job, we all know that. Does that mean he's the anti-Christ then?"

"You are not the Messiah sir, get that idea out of your head. I suggest you have a decent dose of CBD and get a good night's sleep, Santa."

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