

## Petition on Collaery

A Change.org petition addressed to Attorney General Christian Porter was posted from Byron Post Office on 29th October by members of Byron Friends of Palestine, calling on the Attorney General to drop the charges against barrister Bernard Collaery and his client, Witness K.

The 196-page petition with 4,249 signatures states, "These are honourable men who bravely exposed Australia's subterfuge in its negotiations with the government of Timor Leste."

After backing Indonesia in its murderous occupation of Timor Leste and training its infamous Kopassus special forces, Australia then resorted to bugging the Timor Leste parliament so it could grab an unfair advantage in the Timor Sea oil and gas negotiations.

Whistleblower Witness K's revelation of Australia's dirty tricks resulted in the International Court of Justice ordering Australia to stop spying on Timor Leste, but it also drew government fury and charges against Bernard Collaery who represented him.

Shame, Australia, shame!

Gareth W R Smith  
Byron Bay

## Rail trail response

Regarding Marie Lawton's response (NGT 10/20) to my article, 'Rail Myths and Realities' (NGT 9/20):

The company that carried out the survey for Byron Shire Council, Arcadis have stated that they did survey 'most of the line' in spite of certain sections being quite inaccessible, even though John Holland Pty Ltd (now owned by the Chinese government) is paid \$750,000 per year to keep our railway line clear.

True, a representative has told me that only two people who initially helped form the Sourdough Group, a Northern Rivers think-tank for developing business opportunities, were in support of rail trails.

Surprisingly, the rails and ballast on most of the line are still in good condition

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.

even though some wooden sleepers and bridges have deteriorated.

I'm glad we agree on the option of mini-buses (especially if electric) being a better way than the large buses that don't serve our communities so well.

Those living in Ballina and Tweed Heads could easily catch buses connecting them to a central rail service that runs through Lismore city and all other major towns in our region.

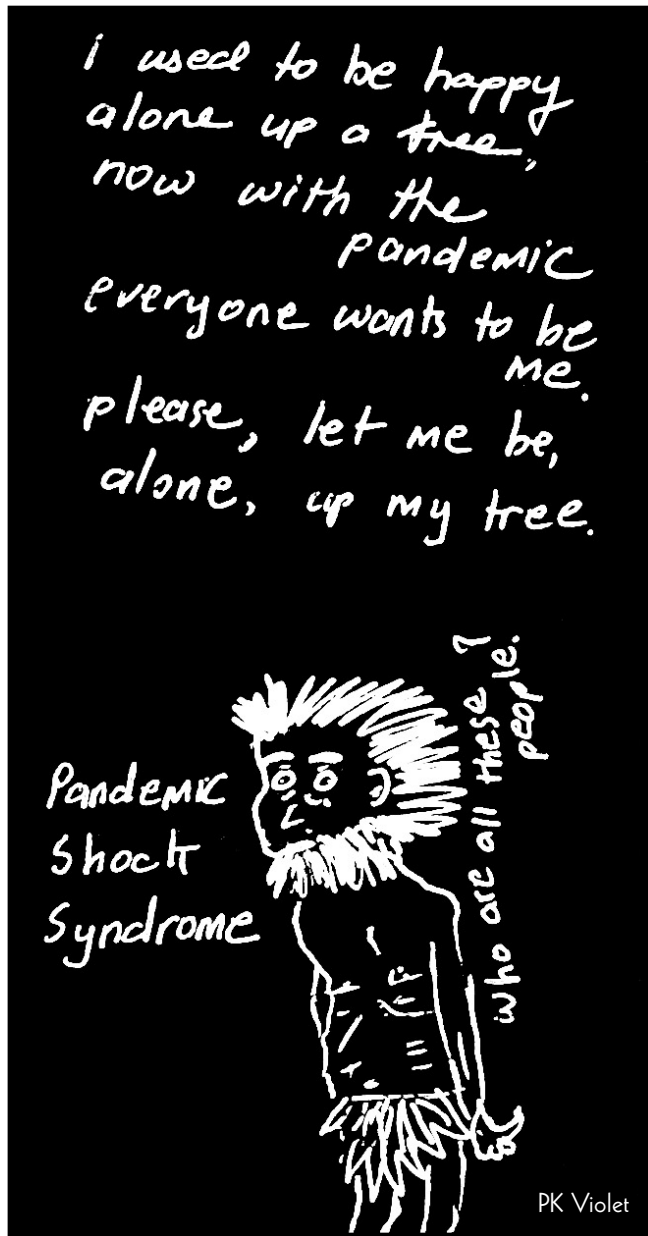
Tweed MP Geoff Provest's recent announcement that a new light rail service to South Tweed from Queensland is being supported, shows great hypocrisy when he would not support renewing a rail service along our line that already exists in good order.

We are sadly aware that the change of legislation carried by the LNP and Labor (though all minor parties supported keeping our rail line for future services) shows we cannot count on them to help us get rail back, but there is hope that a public/private partnership may still be possible.

We are hoping that the rail corridor will be kept 'in public hands' however it is not safe from being leased out. Lismore MP Janelle Saffin put through an amendment for it not to be sold outright.

The Byron Railroad Company is open to extending its solar train service to Tyagarah, Mullumbimby and beyond, and Byron Shire Council is working towards this.

The best option is to place the 'rail trail' beside the tracks on recycled plastic raised cycleways that are



being widely used elsewhere.

Good to hear that rail trails will not prevent the return of rail in the future. However, your suggestion of running a rail service along the coast seems ludicrous, with it being the highest priced land in Australia and subject to rising sea levels.

We understand it is not your fault our emasculated rail service was lost, but we should be able to work together for a win-win outcome.

Lydia Kindred,  
Northern Rivers Railway  
Action Group

## Rail trail response 2

Reading Marie Lawton's letter (NGT October), it was hard not to sense her glee about the dismantling of our branch rail line from Casino to Murwillumbah.

Her points read like a memo from Bob Carr and Michael Costa's brief to take the train away. The proposed legislation not being available for public comment also smells of another brief.

The absence of public transport in the Northern Rivers is a tragedy that the public are crying out for, and ripping up our branch line is another slap in the face by the NSW government.

Having a go at Lydia Kindred from NRRAG is another slap in the face for all of us who tried to keep the train.

Paul Brecht  
Evans Head

## Budget bonus

I have been asking a number of pensioners how they propose to spend the two bonus payments of \$250 each.

People seem to be very happy. \$500 to a pensioner is a lot of money.

Of course "wet blanket me" pointed out that there is not going to be an annual CPI increase.

I believe for the first time in 23 years.

Amazing how one almost exactly cancelled out the other.

If this becomes a precedent, Australian pensioners are going to be in big trouble.

Tony Batchelor  
Lismore

## Open letter

Dear Kevin Hogan, The scientists tell us that since 1950 the oceans are one degree warmer. One degree is not much, but it takes a phenomenal amount of energy to heat the oceans by one degree.

David Attenborough, in his new film warning about ecological destruction, says it's because we've used millions of years of stored energy (fossil fuels) in a short time.

It has so far caused half the Great Barrier Reef to die, acidified the ocean, stunted the planet's fish population, and the poles now get fifteen degrees hotter, meaning the ice will melt and flood the world's coastal cities.

# Notices

## NH&WS AGM

Nimbin Health & Welfare Association Inc AGM Tuesday, 10th November, 3pm – 5.30pm at Birth & Beyond, 54 Cullen Street, Nimbin. A celebration will be held after the AGM. Become a member for only \$3 and support this vibrant community organisation. RSVP: 0457-804-997 or email Jen Ireland: cycad5@iprimus.com.au vibrant com

## Nimbin Community School Co-op AGM

AGM Wednesday 18th November, 6pm at Comskool Room, Nimbin Community Centre 81 Cullen Street. New members welcome. Major project is Nimbin Open Learning Centre.

## Nimbin Organic Food Co-op AGM

AGM Monday 23rd November, 5pm in the Comskool Room, Nimbin Community Centre, 81 Cullen Street. All members welcome.

## Art competition

Entry forms for the 2021 Summerland Giant Pumpkin and Watermelon Still Life Art Competition are due 1st December. The theme for this year's competition is 'Fairies in the Melon Patch'. Prizes: 19 years+ \$500; 12-18 years \$150; 5-11 years \$50. Entry forms are available from the Roxy Gallery, Scarborough's Shoes, Amanda's Hair and Beauty and the Heartland Office, Kyogle.

## Free notices

Keep it short, under 50 words, and to the point, get it to us by deadline and we'll run it for you for free.

And the party you represent wants a "gas-led economic recovery". Not only will this mean a network of fracking around Australia, it also means poisoning the Great Artesian water basin, an underground store of water as big as France and thousands of years old. In a country that is facing a water shortage, it's not very clever to do this.

But I get a bit confused about where your National party ethics sit. You claim to stand for the farmers, yet you advocate for mining companies that ruin farmland, destroy sacred Aboriginal places, and poison the water. Your party even fought hard to allow farmers to cut down koala habitats.

But who are these 'farmers' you represent? Are they the same ones that advocate intensive farming practices that have had such an effect on insect populations around the world that 40% of the world's insects are endangered?

In Germany, 75% of flying insects have disappeared, and other countries are not far behind. Pollination, and the ecological chain, doesn't function well without insects. This is short-term profit for a few, over long-term suffering for many.

And it has now been proved that there is corruption in the government. Through the 'right' avenues, I can pay thousands of dollars to a politician, or 'donate' to their party to tell them about the deal I want to make. I wonder what deal Gladys Berejiklian made to allow clear-felling around the buffer zone of NSW's national parks?

Indeed, even you,

Kevin, have played your part, by moving to get rid of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, meaning that a company like Santos is fined only \$1,500 for leaking poisons into underground water systems.

You haven't replied to my last letters Mr Hogan, I hope you will reply to this one.

Yagia Gentle  
Nimbin

## A ray of hope

Well said, Aidan Ricketts ("The real threats to our liberty and survival" NGT October). An accurate and insightful article.

The world is a mess, but there is hope via the existence of those such as Greta Thunburg and Extinction Rebellion.

Education is the answer.

Peter Mudd  
East Lismore

## Good news week

At the end of October we received the great news from ICAN, that we now have the 50 ratifications supporting the UN Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons.

On 22nd January 2021, this will become written into International Law, making it illegal to possess, manufacture, propagate or threaten the use of nuclear weapons.

It is not the end, it is only the beginning, and it surely at least, will throw the cat amongst the pigeons. Thanks to all involved including ourselves for making this happen.

Here's to a nuclear weapons free future.

Deb and Mick Stacey,  
Ballina

## About us

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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.

Bookkeeper Martha Paitson  
Web [www.nimbingoodtimes.com](http://www.nimbingoodtimes.com)  
And find us on Facebook

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

## NEXT DEADLINE:

Wednesday 25th November

Email [nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com](mailto:nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com) or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.





## Chamber Chat

by Diana Roberts, president

### On-line services

The Chamber launched its new-look website last year: [www.nimbinaustralia.com.au](http://www.nimbinaustralia.com.au) and since that time has been spending considerable time and resources to develop a dynamic, optimised and useful website.

Until now, the focus has been on delivering a website that supports our local businesses and community organisations. This has included promoting aspects of our local culture and we are doing this to the best of our ability with very limited resources.

As Lismore Council is no longer supporting the visitNimbin website, the Chamber is exploring expanding our website to include provision of visitor information. What does that mean, how would it look and how could we fund that expansion of its role?

We are exploring creative and possible ways whereby a dual-purpose website, servicing both visitors and local needs, can be delivered in a professional manner.

A working group looked at this in some depth at a recent Chamber workshop and gave us much to think about. A website needs to be useful to those who access it, but it is apparent

# The future for Nimbin visitor information services

we no longer have a clear understanding of our visitor demographic. Anecdotally, businesses report this has changed – even before Covid hit.

Since Covid we have lost much of our young backpacker market and international visitation, which accounted for up to 43% of our visitor market, has disappeared. Instead we are looking at an older demographic, currently domestic tourists, seeking a more enriched visitor experience.

This presents lots of opportunities for us, as this visitor has more ready cash and will be more willing to pay for visitor experiences. If this is so, how do we better cater for their interests, encourage them to stay longer and spend more in our village, while ensuring the needs and desires of both visitors and locals are met?

Servicing visitors digitally is important, given many visitors access destination information on-line and a visitor-focussed website needs to inspire and inform. Options for content are extensive – on-line reviews, location-based listings, social media commentary, brochures, maps, fact sheets, online booking services, retail sales, links to other sites and much more.

There is also the potential to tell our stories to the world and showcase what's happening in our area through media such as

an embedded YouTube function or video postings, something the Chamber has been giving consideration to for some time. A well-supported website could also provide an online messaging service or chat function and engagement with on-line platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

So, who are we servicing, how do we meet their needs and how do we fund this? – the crunch questions. Better understanding the visitor demographic, their interest and needs is information that we can collect through local businesses, maybe via a visitor survey. We can seek government grants to fund construction of a website to meet this need.

The challenge will be maintaining it, as government generally does not support on-going wage costs. Options we're considering include: financial contributions from local businesses who derive benefit from the website; booking commissions; an on-line retail sales arm focussed on locally-made product; advertising; and directing funds from the special business rate levy collected by Council for economic development in Nimbin.

These are really big issues the Chamber is currently grappling with and if you have any experience or thoughts in this regard we'd love to hear from you. Email: [chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au](mailto:chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au)

### Face-to-face services

The Chamber's recent workshop also looked at options for replacement of the Nimbin Visitor Information Centre (VIC), closed permanently by Lismore Council at the beginning of Covid.

The survey we recently conducted indicated the community feels strongly that we need a face-to-face dedicated visitor service running in tandem with online information.

The survey results did not deliver a strong preference for location, and at our workshop we canvassed two options – 7 Sibley Street and Nimbin Bush Theatre. Extensive discussion delivered no clear preferred outcome or strategy for moving this forward.

The Chamber Exec has yet to discuss where to from here but, after spending the past six weeks looking into this, I'm going to share my thoughts following our workshop. Firstly, I think we need to be really clear about who would use a VIC and what their expectations are. Obtaining this information will enable us to develop a better-informed business plan.

VICs cost money to run. For Lismore Council, this was in the vicinity of \$150,000 per year for Nimbin. Undoubtedly we could deliver this service more economically, although it's not entirely clear what Council funds contributed towards. The business plan

for a Nimbin VIC would identify both expenditure needs and possible income streams.

Given our recent survey identified a strong desire for a service that runs seven days a week throughout the year, it is highly unlikely we would be able to deliver a self-funded model without outside financial support. Most VICs receive funding from their local Council or are supported financially by a Regional Tourism Organisation. We currently don't have the luxury of either, but maybe we could make that happen.

Once we identify funding options, we can more fully explore possible locations and what's required to make that location work. My research has indicated easy parking, disability access and good toilets are essential elements of a VIC, with successful VICs often located alongside an existing visitor attraction.

While obtaining a grant to fit out a location and develop product such as signage, local maps and brochures should be possible, on-going operational costs will present a challenge for us. It's worth noting that Byron VIC is self-funded and managed by volunteers. Could we achieve that? Again, if you have any ideas or thoughts please share. Email: [chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au](mailto:chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au)

### What do we want to showcase?

Our recent workshop was full of exciting ideas for

tourism product beyond maps and brochures.

Self-guided trails were suggested that would include a focus on arts, local buildings and murals, music, our indigenous culture, food, herbs and healing, environment and sustainability, on-farm visits and so much more.

Hopefully workshop contributors were inspired enough to bring some of the incredibly creative ideas to fruition.

In the longer term, perhaps an enterprising visitor information service could work up visitor experiences and then charge people to participate, as an income-generating stream.

We also explored the need for signage throughout the village, and how this could be used to enhance the visitor experience. Work and energy are needed here too.

In closing, it's all a little overwhelming, a much bigger task than I ever imagined.

We could just throw up our hands, say it's all too much and muddle on, but our local economy and associated employment have become very dependent on the tourist dollar.

Regions around us are directing much more energy in this direction as the value of tourism to a local economy is widely recognised and valued, and government financial support in a Covid environment is significant.

Hopefully we won't miss out and will be able to secure some of this funding.

## Better access a focus of Nimbin Community Centre

by Teresa Biscoe, co-ordinator

### Community Centre Map

Last year the Community Centre commissioned local mural artists Elsbeth Jones and Julie De Lorenzo to paint a map of the Community Centre site showing all our buildings, separate tenancies and identifying all our tenants.

The work has been completed and the new map has replaced the old notice board at the front of the Cullen Street carpark. We now have a bright, beautiful and very Nimbin map of our Community Centre.

We hope this will help our many visitors find their way around the centre and reach the people and services that they are seeking.

### Consultation with Traffic Advisory Committee

The Community Centre has, in consultation with the Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Centre, been working to provide better access to their service for their many clients.

Many years ago NACRS got funding to install the disabled access to the front of the building from the



footpath, but were never able to use it to pick up or drop off clients due to the parking zone in front of it.

We have been quietly lobbying to get this changed, but due to the bus stop located across from the ramp, Council was reluctant to change anything.

Since the bus stop location was moved during the Lismore Council review of on-street parking in Nimbin, we decided to give it another try.

I was invited to attend a meeting with the Committee at Council Chambers and was able to present a case to them to consider changing the zoning in front of the

ramp and improving the area to the footpath to allow this important service the accessibility it needed.

They also mentioned that they had committed to improve several important roads around Nimbin including: the section of Nimbin Road leading into the village where we had the tragic accident a few years ago that claimed the life of beloved community member Simone Rutley; Lillian Rock Road; Stony Chute Road and Blue Knob Road.

I would like to give a big thank you to this committee for the great work they do improving safety and

accessibility in the Lismore area.

### Nimbin NAIDOC Day 2020: Always Was, Always Will Be

This celebration is being held on Friday 13th November, 11am – 3pm in the heart of the Nimbin Community Centre grounds.

This will be a Covid-safe gathering, so it will be smaller and we will have some Marshalls to direct people and ensure that we manage the safety of all present.

Please respect and accept the direction being offered to ensure the safety of all who attend.

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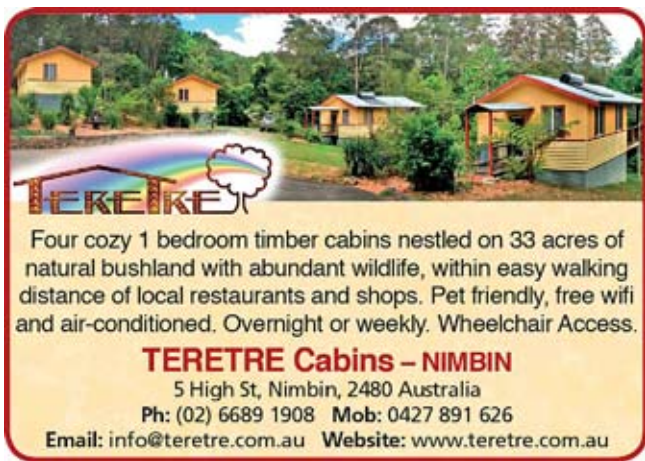
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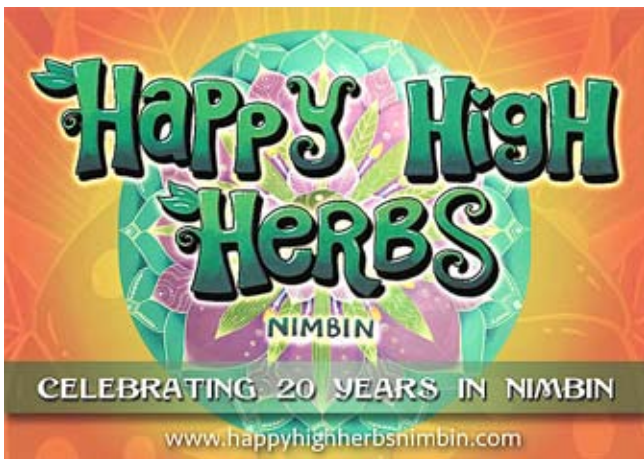
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# Express your views to council

Council has a number of items on public exhibition at the moment that you might like to have a look at. The first is a survey into rural tourism in our LGA.

Council has received numerous enquiries about developing facilities for weddings, health spas, yoga retreats, micro-breweries and distilleries in our rural areas, all of which are currently prohibited by Lismore's planning controls for areas zoned for primary production (RU1).

We are keen to hear your thoughts, as there are multiple perspectives on whether or not it's a good idea. New initiatives create employment and alternative income streams

for landowners, but there are impacts on neighbours, communities and on road networks that need to be considered.

The second is our draft Climate Resilience Policy. In March last year, Lismore City Council joined numerous other councils in declaring a climate emergency. This policy moves Council towards implementing a whole of Council approach to responding to climate change and enhancing climate resilience.

It's still an overarching policy document, so there are not a lot of concrete actions in there, but it's another step in the right direction. Action to address climate change has to evolve beyond an emissions reduction



**Word of the Bird**  
 by Cr Elly Bird

focus only and needs to also consider adaptation, mitigation and community resilience.

It's worthwhile registering on Your Say Lismore to engage with matters before Council, once you have signed up you will receive

emails when new items are open for comment. It's a critical avenue for you to ensure that Council hears and considers your views.

I was out in Nimbin yesterday to participate in a session hosted by the Chamber of Commerce to look at ways to improve visitor experiences. As always I was impressed by the passion and commitment in the community to find solutions and opportunities to address issues.

I was also really pleased to hear that the plans for the walking trail are progressing and hopefully we can attract some funding to make it a reality soon.

I can be contacted at: [elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au](mailto:elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au) or on 0418-639-927.

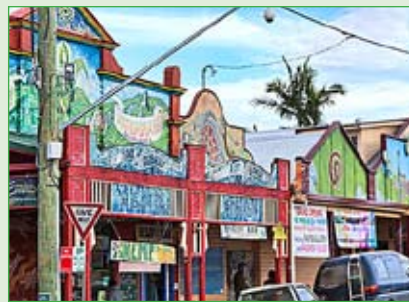
## Community asked to help plan Nimbin's future

Lismore Council is asking for community feedback as part of a review of Nimbin's planning controls to guide future development and growth in and around the village.

Council has released a discussion paper and on-line survey to kick-start discussion with the Nimbin community and get feedback on the types of growth and development that are suitable for Nimbin in the future.

Community feedback will inform possible amendments to the Nimbin Development Control Plan (DCP), Lismore Environmental Plan (LEP) and Growth Management Strategy (GMS).

"In recent years there has been a surge of interest and development applications in Nimbin, with Council approving 129 DAs since 2015, including 50 for new dwellings," Council's general manager Shelley Oldham said.



"With this surge in interest, it's important that Council reviews its planning controls to make sure new developments are in harmony with the unique qualities of Nimbin that residents love and attracts tourists from far and wide.

"We also need to look at the cumulative impact of new developments and the high numbers of visitors and tourists has on Nimbin's roads and other infrastructure.

"Council has a range of tools available

to guide development in and around Nimbin. We want to make sure these align with community values and that the character of the village is identified and protected."

After the results from the Nimbin Development Control Survey are collated, Council's strategic planning staff will prepare a Draft DCP for Nimbin, along with possible amendments to the LEP and GMS.

These will be available in early 2021 for a final round of community consultation prior to any recommendation being made to Council.

The Nimbin Development Control Survey is open until Friday 4th December. To read the discussion paper and take the survey, visit: [yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au](http://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au)

Hard copies are also available at the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre.

## Range of measures needed for water security

Submissions have now closed for the proposed dam at Dunoon. I assume that there were a large number of submissions opposing the concept of a new dam to be constructed in an area that would have a very small catchment area, and would flood exceptionally rare and precious sandstone rainforest that makes up part of the 1% of what's left of the Big Scrub rainforest.

The well-documented Indigenous sacred sites in the area proposed to be flooded should also be reason for the dam proposal to be discontinued and more appropriate and secure options to be investigated further.

It was a real honour to speak at the launch of the Water Northern Rivers Alliance at Lennox Head a couple of weeks ago with renowned community leaders Nan Nicholson and Annie Kia. This alliance and movement will continue to grow and be a force for positive change as the



by Cr Jeff Johnson,  
 Ballina Council

community now leads the way in investigating and highlighting alternatives to the proposed dam.

Rous Council representatives' assertion that the Dunoon Dam is the best and most affordable option to secure our water supply is simply not true. Putting all of our eggs in the big dam basket that has a tiny catchment area would not only be a missed opportunity to rethink how we use and collect our water, but it

would also be foolish as it would rely on regular rain falling on that catchment area. Put simply, relying on regular rainfall in a small catchment area in times of changing weather patterns will not provide security.

I'm proud that Ballina Council is leading the way with the introduction of the recycled water (purple pipe) to all new major new subdivisions. This program can be expanded on, and when combined with additional rainwater tanks, stormwater harvesting initiatives, fixing the existing leaking pipes (which account for approximately 15-20% of current water 'usage'), it becomes obvious that a range of measures combined would actually provide a more secure water supply moving forward.

The concept of building a massive new dam just to flush water down the toilet, and into the creeks, rivers and ocean, feels like a lazy outdated option, particularly given that the

changing weather patterns are likely to increase the periods without rain. Dams only work when regular rain falls in the catchment area. All that effort for a water supply where less than 2% is actually used for drinking.

We have a unique opportunity in Ballina with the major residential growth area (up to 4000 homes) being on the top of the hill and the major industrial expansion project in the region (near Ballina airport) being at the bottom of the hill. With roofwater harvesting, as has been demonstrated in a pilot project in Warranbool, new subdivisions can actually add water into the system rather than become a drain on the existing water supply.

The dramatic reduction in energy costs associated with renewable energy (solar power) is another game-changer for future water strategies, as the high energy costs associated with pumping water between areas is no longer an impediment.



# Here's hoping for a big Budget spend on social housing

by Janelle Saffin MP, Member for Lismore

All eyes will be on NSW Treasurer Dominic Perrottet this month when he hands down the 2020-21 State Budget, particularly to see if a strategically leaked big-ticket item becomes a reality for future years.

I read with interest *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter Matt Wade's 10th October article, 'NSW to spend big on public housing to get out of the Covid-19 recession' where the Treasurer was quoted as saying the NSW is set to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on social housing.

I immediately wrote to Mr Perrottet, welcoming this pre-Budget announcement and attaching my Housing Ends Homelessness Report and Advocacy Paper, for his information and consideration.

Readers can find this report on my website: [www.janellesaffin.com.au](http://www.janellesaffin.com.au) or request a copy from my Electorate Office on 0266-213-624.

I reiterated to him that the Northern Rivers region, of which the Electorate of Lismore forms a large part, has an historic significant shortage of social housing and put in a pitch for a fair share of the Budget spend to go here.

Not only would it provide short-term job creation opportunities in the construction industry but it would house more of the most vulnerable members of our local communities and reduce disadvantage.



Janelle Saffin and Lismore City Councillor Darlene Cook support the continued good work being done by Momentum Collective team members to combat homelessness and social disadvantage.

I know that tackling the issues of housing supply, affordable housing and homelessness are close to heart of many residents of Nimbin and surrounding areas because yours is among the most inclusive and open-minded of communities.

I stand ready to work with the NSW Government should they release their long-overdue social housing policy and implement it on the ground.

When it is said that the Federal Government is not involved in the provision of social housing that is not entirely accurate; Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is a great model for delivering and maintaining mass social housing.

It has an excellent track record of efficiency,

sound financial management and profitability.

I observed DHA projects across Australia in my capacity as a former Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works when I was Federal Member for Page.

There are 18,000 Defence Housing Australia properties nationwide, worth \$11.2 billion and turning over a \$40-million-a-year profit.

Defence Housing Australia could subcontract to local builders, handymen and associated trades.

Had the recent Federal Budget allocated funding for social housing, it would have been welcomed.

My work as a political representative is guided daily to make a positive difference in

people's lives, particularly the disadvantaged in our local communities.

For instance, Momentum Collective's mission statement of helping their clients have a safe and suitable roof over their heads, secure a job and to live a better life align with my values.

I grew up in the Housing Commission (as it was called then) in Ipswich and felt so pleased and privileged to have a house, a yard, a neighbourhood and a broad mix of people.

All children must have this opportunity and feel like this. It is up to us adults to make sure it happens both at a policy level and at a practical level on the ground.

## Showground success

Congratulations to all involved in Nimbin Showground's success this year in Phase 1 and Phase 1B of the NSW Government's Showground Stimulus Funding program.

The team secured a \$22,000 grant in Phase 1 to tile one existing amenities block and a \$41,000 grant in Phase 1B to install a concrete pathway linking amenities blocks.

Overall, a total of \$675,208 was shared by local showgrounds in the Electorate of Lismore under the three phases (1, 1B and 2) of this \$25-million program, rolling out over two financial years as part of the Government's \$2.3-billion Health and Economic Stimulus Package (Covid-19 Stimulus).



Treasurer Josh Frydenberg discusses the budget with Kevin Hogan

## On the same Page

### 2020-21 Federal Budget

by Kevin Hogan MP, Member for Page

It has been a challenging year for everyone. As a Government, our focus has been on fighting the virus and assisting the economy.

I have been back in Canberra recently for the 2020-21 Federal Budget. The budget is all about growing our way out of the Covid recession.

As part of this, we will provide \$17.8 billion in personal income tax relief for more than 11 million working Australians.

This is about putting more money in your pockets to spend in our small businesses and help create jobs.

We are also giving assistance to apprentices and any business who

employs someone under 35.

We are also supercharging the instant asset write-off. It will allow businesses to invest more in their businesses.

25,990 age pensioners in our region received two support payments of \$750 in April and July this year as stimulus.

They will now also receive a further two \$250 payments in December and March. That is \$2000 in extra stimulus over 12 months.

I will continue to work with all aspects of Government to ensure outcomes for our region.

We can look forward with hope and confidence in the resilience of our wonderful community.

## Water supply planning looms large

One of the biggest issues in this region today is the future security of our water supply.

Rous County Council, as the bulk water supplier for most of Lismore, Ballina, Byron and Richmond Valley council areas, has to prepare for changes to our water supply needs in the future as we face increasing populations, increased demands, and uncertain climate influences.

Rous placed its *Future Water Project 2060* on public exhibition in August. Hundreds of people wrote in or emailed, and there is a major social media campaign about some of the issues raised in the proposals.

While the primary new water source identified for rollout is groundwater from the Alstonville aquifer with treatment at Marom Creek WTP, the second source identified would be a new dam on Rocky Creek at Dunoon.

Other sources identified, but not preferred due to cost, legal constraints or environmental consequences were desalination, direct and indirect potable reuse (recycled sewage), and stormwater recycling.

Rous will continue to invest in demand management programs, rainwater tank subsidies, water-saving efficiency devices, smart metering to detect leaks, and possible pricing incentives.

Rous is holding a workshop to canvass all the ideas that have arisen during the community consultation in mid-November and a decision on preferred directions for future water security will be made at their December meeting.

This is an issue that does affect the Nimbin communities. Late 2019 the Lismore water supply serving Nimbin almost ran out. Many local people had rainwater tanks that also ran dry and hundreds of people had to access bulk water filling stations supplied by Rous.

At the same time, the main Rous water source, Rocky Creek Dam was quickly lowering – and that demand was exacerbated by the fires. If the rains had not come when they did, Rocky Creek Dam would have been at crisis levels.

Because this is a situation we could all face again, Rous needs to make plans



by Cr Darlene Cook, Lismore City Council

now to ensure that they have the needed water resources in place to cope with any climate-induced water demands in the future.

For your information, the *Future Water Project* documentation can be found on the Rous website: [https://rous.nsw.gov.au/cp\\_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-KZG-22-16-87](https://rous.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-KZG-22-16-87)

## Rural Tourism Survey

Lismore City Council is seeking community feedback on rural tourism uses and the growing demand for these activities in Primary Production zoned areas of the LGA (where the uses are currently prohibited).

The 'rural tourism survey' is aimed at gauging community views about where rural tourism uses (such as weddings, yoga studios, distilleries etc) may be appropriate (if at all), and the types of controls Council should consider.

The survey is open until 16th November. Go to: <https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/rural-tourism>

## November Council meeting

At the 13th November Council meeting, the recently-drafted Climate Resilience Policy was approved, and it will be put on public exhibition this month for comments from the community. This is the first step in a process that will enable Council to look for appropriate grants to assist the community in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

We recognise that the changes in our environment will pose challenges to

us, as a council and to our community now and in the future. Recent events including the drought, the 2017 floods, last summer's bushfires and now Covid-19 have impacted the community's capacity to adapt.

Council acknowledges its key role in building climate change resilience, promoting mitigation actions and enabling communities, ecological systems and economic systems to adapt and thrive within a changing climate.

Council's draft Development Control Plan, Chapter 14 Vegetation Protection was adopted in the November meeting.

This DCP responds to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non Rural Areas) commonly referred to as the 'Vegetation SEPP' that requires Councils to update their DCP controls to define and regulate when a permit is required for "below threshold" vegetation clearing within prescribed zones.

Sadly, with the changes to the Koala Habitat Protection SEPP in NSW parliament mid-November, any reference to the new state-wide koala mapping had to be removed from this DCP.

Basically this means that the additional protections proposed to be given to koalas in this state have been rescinded.

Lismore is fortunate that we have a Koala Plan of Management (KPOM) covering the south east of the LGA. But we can no longer hope to roll out the KPOM to cover the entire council area.

Other councils whose KPOMs were sitting on the Minister's desk waiting approvals – such as Tweed and Byron – had their Plans refused.

New KPOMS can no longer apply to any lands outside of the main urban or peri urban centres.

This leaves it open to landholders to clear valuable koala habitats without any controls or constraint placed on them.

Considering the decimation of our koalas in the recent fires and drought, combined with the relentless land clearing in part of the state, the future of the koala in this state is very threatened.

I can be contacted by phone on 0427-895-316 or email: [darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au](mailto:darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au)

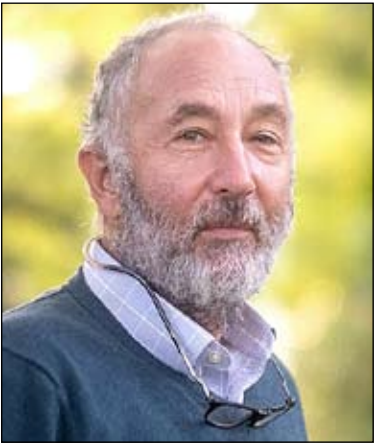


# Can you reduce crime by using drugs – really?

I have a lifelong commitment to decreasing both violent crime and imprisonments rates – occasionally a barbed-wire fence proposition. I have a more recent interest in the treatment of mental health issues by the use of psychedelic-assisted therapy.

At first glance, it may appear that these two interests are disconnected. Maybe they are intricately linked – hence my excitement at recently becoming an ambassador for Mind Medicine Australia.

- So, let's play 'what if' for a while.
1. What if psychedelic assisted therapy could make a real dent in the numbers of those suffering from substance abuse disorder, PTSD and depression/anxiety?
  2. What if a substantial proportion of those who commit violent crimes and are imprisoned are suffering from those conditions?
  3. What if there was broad availability of these treatments for violent offenders?
  4. What if there was broad outspoken support from the criminal justice sector?
- As to the first 'what if', having read the research I am comfortably satisfied that psychedelic-assisted therapy including psilocybin and MDMA has great results in treating conditions such as substance abuse disorder, PTSD and depression/anxiety.



by David Heilpern

The phase three trials will undoubtedly cement psychedelic assisted therapy as a key treatment to these ailments.

However, much of the recent research has been on those perceived to be worthy – those dying of terminal illness, Vietnam veterans, AIDS survivors, anorexia patients and the like. There are some studies of those with substance abuse disorders, but it is notable that violent offenders are not the target tested group.

Yet, and this answers the second 'what if', those suffering abuse disorder, PTSD and depression/anxiety are responsible for much of the violent crime in Australia.

As a children's court magistrate,

I noticed something very quickly – there were no repeat violent offenders who had not witnessed or been the victim of violence in the home. None, zero. Every sentencing report detailed PTSD from living in fear as a child. Every single one. All of these kids I had to lock up had experienced seeing their mum beaten up, or been abused themselves.

And with violent women offenders, it soon became apparent that the vast majority had been victims of sexual abuse and suffered from PTSD or substance abuse disorder as a result. For men, the picture was more complex with a range of diagnoses – until the Royal Commission.

Suddenly, it became acceptable for men to admit to the abuse they had suffered and a PTSD diagnosis became more and more common. For most violent male criminals, alcohol abuse disorder was a regular feature.

This anecdotal evidence is, unsurprisingly, supported by the research. For women prisoners, two-thirds have a mental health condition, and one-third for men. A third of women have a history of self-harm. A quarter of all entrant prisoners are taking medication for a mental health condition.

This is a world-wide phenomenon – for example, the prevalence

of psychosis in a London prison population was found to be more than 20 times that of the general community, and almost 70% of people in prison had more than one mental health disorder.

The figures don't distinguish between violent and other offenders, and nor do they inform of the type of mental illness. I plan to dig deeper on these issues; however my hypothesis is that the research will conform with my observations – the vast majority of violent offenders have mental health issues that lend themselves to psychedelic treatment.

There are two important caveats to this hypothesis worth keeping in mind: firstly, the vast majority of those who have mental health conditions are not violent. Secondly, those with mental health conditions are much more likely to be victims of violent crime.

And to the third 'what if' – imagine if there was broad availability of psychedelic-assisted treatment of these violent offenders. I'm not suggesting we lace prison water with LSD a la Timothy Leary, however surely psychedelic therapy holds more likelihood of rehabilitation than the rigid discipline of time behind bars and a lifetime of psychiatric medication.

I reckon that violent offenders ought to be the first for whom this treatment is available – because

there is a sure and clear test of effectiveness. They either re-offend or they don't.

And finally, to the fourth 'what if'. There certainly are some barriers to getting criminal justice support for psychedelic therapy – there are deeply entrenched views that mimic those of Mr Mackey in South Park – all drugs are bad.

Of course, the logical flaws in that approach are obvious but should not be discounted, as it is the dominant approach. Such views are shared by the majority of police, judges and lawmakers in the country.

Medicinal cannabis has faced decades of prohibition until very recent times in this country, and still the barriers are significant. Legitimising psychedelics is a hurdle that may take some time and effort.

So, if we are serious about decreasing the prison population and reducing violent crime, the criminal justice system ought to support psychedelic therapy availability. The current law and order 'solutions' to violent crime – more police, longer sentences, tougher prisons – demonstrably are not working.

It is time to try a more scientific approach.

David Heilpern was a NSW magistrate for 21 years, and has now returned to private practice.

## Wedlock, NT style

Working with indigenous men and women in the NT, I noticed that the older couples were frequently legally married, or if widows or widowers, they had been legally married.

By legal marriage, I refer to a legal union recognised by the state and in accordance with the federal *Marriage Act*. For clients born in the 1970's onwards, I noticed that legal marriages amongst indigenous couples were relatively rare.

I recall one elderly client who was married to her partner back in about late 1950 or so, but he had long died. I needed to establish her identity in order to carry out legal work for her. The trouble was that her birth had never been registered, and like a lot of indigenous people, she didn't really know her birth date.

"I was born in the Great Sandy Desert like my mum, under a tree. My aunt told me it was the season for good bush tucker. I am maybe 80?" she hazarded a guess which seemed right, given her shock of white hair.

Trundling back into her one-room shack in a tiny community, she retrieved a bag with a mass of papers in it. I carefully went through the documents with her. Old pension letters, scraps of newspapers when eventually, in an aha moment, I pounced on her marriage certificate.

"Oh yes, Bill. He died long time ago." I asked about her current surname, which I noticed was her husband's: this was unusual as most Indigenous women retained their own surname when married or in a relationship. "But you know that my real name is my tribal name, like my mum's."

Old Betty had been getting the old aged pension for many years, in the days before ID was needed. Her pension was paid into an account which had been opened decades ago again, in the days before ID. How to resolve this?

I convinced her daughter to drive her mum to Katherine, a distance of some 800km, the closest Court house. They managed, after days of waiting and demands in Katherine to get Betty's birth registered. The date of birth? 1940. Month and day: not known.

When I was finally provided with this precious evidence that she was, in fact, legally alive, I was elated. Finally, I could complete the necessary paperwork for her to sign. That meant another trip to her home, some 500km from my office.

As I completed the documents, "Dammed." Betty's birth certificate showed her birth surname as her long-departed husband's name, her married name. In the end, the powers that be insisted on a photo of my client, so I did so on my mobile of dear old



by Aniko Papp

Betty seated in her rickety chair by her dusty humpy.

We couldn't stop laughing at the sheer absurdity of me as a white lawyer having to sign the photo so as to prove her to be real living person white fella way, whilst on her own country.

Before the Federal referendum passed

in 1967, which paved the way to equal treatment under the law, the state also controlled almost every decision to be made in the lives of indigenous people who were considered state wards. In most states, indigenous people needed permission to marry. Of course, marriage to a white member of the opposite sex, was not allowed in most states.

In decades past, marriage was imposed by the missionaries or religious orders on indigenous couples if they wished to live together. If you failed to marry, then you were forbidden from having sexual relations with a member of the opposite sex. Given that many indigenous people were removed to live on missions or in religious institutions, it wasn't a requirement that one could argue with.

One 60+ year old client was asked in a court case if he was married to his wife who was seated next to him, he nodded yes to the magistrate, stating simply, "We're married blackfella way since I was 18 and she was 16."

After the judge left, my client pointed to the bible on the bench and remarked, "See that book? That's white fella law, not our way. They used to make us marry on that book." He then laughed, knowing full well this was one remark he was never going to make in open court:

"You know it's all bullshit eh? The missionaries used that book to get rid of our culture. But they didn't. It's still strong, you know."

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# Family law mediation

I've got a two-in-one week, the first a shuttle telephone conference, where the parties don't have to hear each other's voices, the other by Zoom. The aim in each is Consent Orders.

The shuttle one's first. It's a Litigation Intervention Conference. When the mediator rings, I put my mobile on speaker. She introduces herself, gives us the standard rave on confidentiality and so on. Legal Aid's paying for it, as my client would have to sell his home to pay her what she wants. The property valuation came in much higher than expected. They want a percentage of the pool, so high isn't good.

Housekeeping over, my client explains his position. Then the mediator takes him through the form we've filled out, with all of our estimated values, after which we have coffee while she hears from the other side. When she rings back, negotiation begins.

Family law property settlements are not all about contributions to the marital property pool, but we start by agreeing values, then talk percentages. That she made his life unpleasant for years (think narcissism + Stockholm syndrome) isn't that significant. It's called no-fault divorce.

Two hours later, we're still a long way apart. He thinks he can raise half what she wants. We suggest a further mediation after we've talked to the bank. The mediator takes this back to them and hangs up. We'll have to wait for their response.

The Zoom session, set up by the other side, is about parenting, not property, not money. An old client, the



by John Adams

mum in this case, had rung me for advice on a lawyer's letter she'd received.

Some years ago, we'd filed consent orders for property and parenting. Now the father threatens to file a Contravention Application if she won't let him see the kid. She claims it's too dangerous with Covid. I tell her what the Chief Judge said about Court Orders trumping border closures and talk her down.

She's happy to mediate anyway, and even let him spend time with the kid, now that the virus seems more controlled. He hasn't been paying the child support they agreed, and she wants her money. Which poses problems, first for her, then for me.

Hers is the impression that she's holding the kid until he pays up. Mine is that all those years ago, when we signed his solicitor's rapidly scrawled

hand-written orders, the child support bit was missed out, and I, negligently, hadn't noticed. I limit myself to one relatively sleepless night before I tell her.

"But he agreed to pay, and he was paying it 'til this year." "Doesn't matter," I'm forced to reply, "It's not in the orders. They won't want to talk about money." When I suggest she sue me for it, she laughs; "I'd never do that to you." But, as the song goes, you never can tell.

She's paid the mediator's fee and I've tried, and failed, to get the camera on my laptop working. When I join the Zoom session I can see everyone and they can't see me. I like that. His solicitor's young, beautiful, and probably overworked. The mediator's exceptional.

There's a bit of shouting, even some obscenities from the ex, but somehow, out of chaos comes agreement. Consent Orders. Dad gets time with the kid and puts the first \$600 in her bank the next day.

Also, that day, a letter arrives by email from the solicitor in the other matter; either they get what they want, or they'll file an application that the house be sold.

I spend another relatively sleepless night.

# Drug lords

by John Jiggins

I completed my PhD, *Marijuana Australiana: Cannabis Use, Popular Culture, and the Americanisation of drugs policy in Australia, 1938-1988*, in 2004. It has been downloaded 21,373 times, and is one of the most widely read Australian history theses. I suspect its popularity is because people want to understand how such an absurdity as cannabis prohibition began.

For many decades in Australia, cannabis was regarded as a wonder drug that treated an extraordinary range of diseases. In its homeland of India, it had been celebrated as a holy plant for millennia, and prayers were offered when the plant was sown or harvested.

Prepared as a drink, and taken with suitable ceremony, the plant would bring joy, a release from care, and destroy disease. It was said no good would come to those who trod underfoot its sacred leaf.

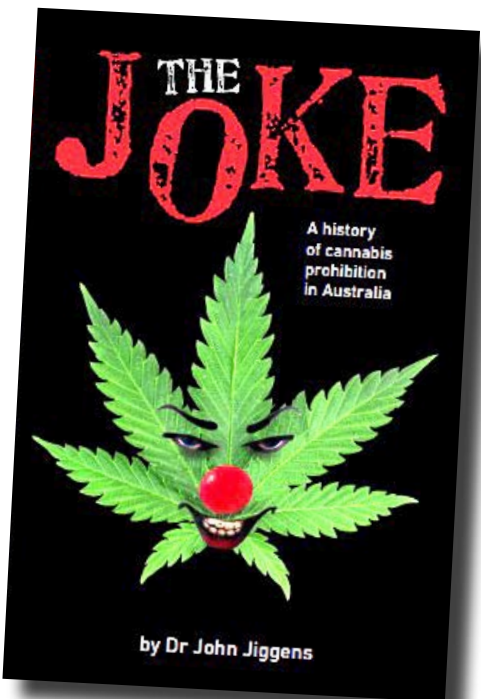
Then a campaign of vilification began, orchestrated by the US Bureau of Narcotics and its commissioner, Harry Anslinger, who painted it as a vicious, evil plant. He called it the Devil's Weed with its roots in hell, and said it was a killer drug that provoked madness and led to the utmost depths of depravity. He gave it a new, foreign-sounding name: he called it marihuana.

In the two decades since I wrote my thesis, I've met some remarkable people who have told me extraordinary stories about the murders and the mayhem that constitute the cannabis trade under prohibition, while writers like Steve Bishop and John Shobbrook have written about those enablers of corruption, men like Justice Edward Stratton Williams, whose Australian Royal Commission into Drugs forms the basis of drug laws in most Australian states, and editors like Ron Richards, who championed the corrupt in his newspapers.

I decided to rewrite my thesis and re-name it, *The Joke*, because the Joke is the central mechanism of prohibition.

One of the best summations of the Joke came from John Wesley Egan, a NSW Special Branch detective who in 1966, with the help of his friends in the CIA, became Australia's first major heroin trafficker.

After his release from prison he told *The Bulletin* that his organisation enjoyed police protection in the countries where



he operated, that it was only bad luck he was arrested, and he knowingly remarked, "Organised crime figures and senior police officers are often the same people."

The Joke in a nutshell: Prohibition corrupts. While the Australian media portray the war on drugs as a fight between noble police heroes and evil drug pushers, the war on drugs is largely a fight between the White Knights of the police, who believe in enforcing the law, and the Black Knights, who know it's a Joke, and who often turn out, like John Wesley Egan, to be working with US intelligence.

The involvement of US spy agencies is another important part of the Joke, which, considering its name, is surprisingly unfunny but the purpose is to strain credulity, to have what the intelligence agencies call plausible deniability.

Living in northern New South Wales provides a visceral understanding of The Joke. Every summer the helicopters arrive to remind you that the war on cannabis is not a war on drugs, it is a war on certain people.

It is a faux demonstration that the police take the laws seriously, while they operate a kind of de-facto legalisation for their criminal allies that hides behind the constant stream of minor cannabis convictions.

In this century, as cannabis's reputation as a wonder drug that treats an extraordinary range of diseases has been restored, cannabis prohibition is falling world-wide.

## STREET SHUFFLE

Journal of the North Coast's longest serving covert

I've told you before about Scomo's church mates treating the Big House like it's their very own. He's given them all passes and they come and go all day as they please, and take up a lot of his time. I think they believe he's working for them really. Their spokesperson as it were.

Often I'm just sitting around in the background with little to do at these times but the Undacuva training is ever present and I can't not listen to every word. A lot is about money. They seem to have a lot of money. All members are tithed ten percent of their earnings and no doubt it adds up quickly each week. In fact, Jobkeeper has been making the Church a bonus fortune. So much money I daren't tell you.

Many of them are full of the same old missionary zeal to save everyone from themselves and one in particular has been preaching for months to the PM about buying the famous Festival Hall in Melbourne for another Church. I should say infamous the way he talked about it.

"That place has been supporting, indeed encouraging sinners from the day it was built. Boxers and druggie musicians have been leading people astray in there for decades." He goes on and on to anyone who will listen. "We'll show them what real singing is."

It caught my attention because I happened to spend quite a bit of my youth around West Melbourne and "festival" as we used to call it. I was homeless at the time and trading anything I could on the streets. When there was a music event on at Festival we could sell any sort of pill or square of



Hillsong church conference

coloured paper as acid. It was the easiest money in the world. As they were queuing along Dudley Street to go in, we'd do a brisk trade and be long gone by the time they worked out it had no effect.

Now the same moneybags who pushed until Hillsong bought Festival Hall last week, are keen to buy Nimbin. I've been listening to them for months and thought they were dreaming but if they can fork out twenty odd million for Festival, why not the village they call "the devils playground".

I couldn't really say much to defend you: it would have been casting pearls before swine, except to mention Jesus said to love your enemies.

I may as well have not spoken. There was a fractional moment of silence and then it was like those words just didn't land. They disappeared into thin air. I even wondered if I actually spoke them or was I just imagining I did.

Scomo is such a bully and at the time smooth talking

salesman. I brought it up again when the masses left because he knows full well I love the little hippy village that I know like the back of my hand. Even if I have busted so many of its residents I've saved more in ways I cannot for the life of me disclose. I mistakenly used the word compassion to the PM which triggered a huge angry and dominating reaction.

"Don't speak to me about compassion. That village lives off my Centrelink and spends all day stoned, from what they tell me Bethany. Tell me it's not true?"

"It's not true sir, many of them are in the pub." I tried lightening the moment but that fell badly flat. "Of course it's not true. The village is a hub of activity and most people don't smoke in fact. Or not all day."

"There you go, druggies one way or another. Leaners not lifters, Bethany." He's standing over me now, at least six inches taller, more, grinning down at me like a Cheshire cat, eyes popping. Force oozing out of him. Extremely intimidating actually.

I felt like kneeling him in the balls but my skirt was too tight and I would've probably harmlessly hit him on the thigh. And looked stupid as they threw me out.

"It's a great idea for the Church to buy that little village," he hissed and I felt a tiny bit of his spittle. Didn't even think of Covid until I'm typing this now. "There's only one street they tell me, shouldn't even cost too much. Anyway it's out of my hands, I'm not on the purchasing committee. But I have no doubt they can afford it, especially with my Jobkeeper helping them at the moment."

Corona is causing all sorts of new thinking as you might expect, and Hillsong is not the only one looking at leaving the city, so, Nimbinites, heed this warning. Hang onto your piece of dirt with those bare feet and don't be tempted by offers from crisp white shirts with aftershave who secretly are here to eradicate the devil's lettuce.





by Antoinette Tombrook

It is the school holidays. We are privileged to see kids and hear kids in our small-town neighbourhood.

Most are very young, and I was wondering what their parents think of the recent approval of 850 coal seam gas (CSG) wells in northern NSW.

Gas is a fleeting product in every facet.

You cannot eat gas; you do not need gas for cooking, heating, making love. Exposed gas, extracted from the depth of the earth, is volatile in its application and contributes to a volatile economy.

That is the crux: a fickle economic model born from fickle governments. What can you expect other than a downward spiral that must end in a collapse of this so-called economy?

We must concentrate instead on what we have. We have lots of land, and rivers and oceans, rain and sun and complex ecological communities of a vast array of species. Australian soil can still potentially feed people with yields of healthy crops grown organically and GM-free under regenerative farming principles.

*“Issues raised at the public hearing and in more than 11,000 written submissions to the Commission included groundwater impacts; climate change impacts from greenhouse gas emissions; biodiversity impacts; impacts on agriculture; bushfire impacts; employment impacts; health impacts; impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage; and management of waste (including salt).”* – Independent Planning Commission of NSW, 09/2020.

All these impacts will be severe, leaving a long-lasting legacy to these kids playing today in the backyards of our towns, innocent of the latest crime against Australia and ignorant of the bleak future that awaits them.

Those responsible for handing out approvals know that too. They are thieves in the night committing these injustices knowingly and quietly. A million submissions against would not have made an

in-road, because, I bet, it was long in advance decided to go gas.

*“Following its detailed deliberations, the Commission concludes the Project is in the public interest and that any negative impacts can be effectively mitigated with strict conditions.”* – IPC, 09/2020.

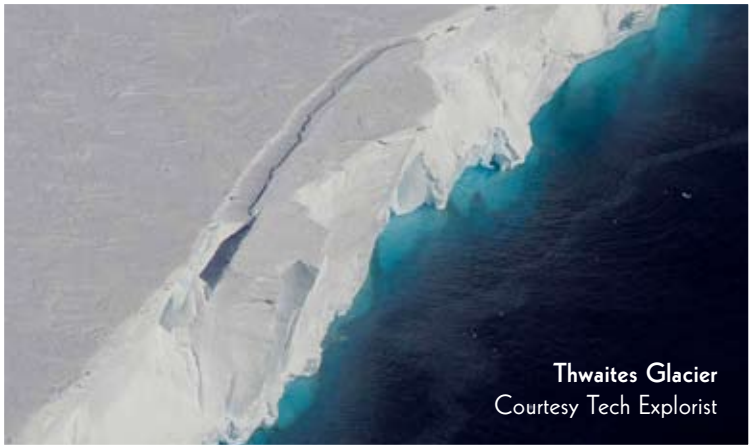
Only a healthy planet can be “in the public interest”; something we don’t have due to a million similar projects all over the world, due to the continued ill-use of fossil fuels, the continued disregard for the ecological importance of forests, due to the agricultural practice of spraying poisonous substances, due to humankind not waking up to their own devastating arrogance towards life.

Can we, please, at least begin to tidy up our mess that we are passing on to the young generations?

We can and we must make a difference. I love hearing the kids play in our neighbourhood. I wish for them to have poison-free food, clean air to breathe, forested landscapes, and an abundance in natural richness to feed their minds and souls that we right now let slip through our fingers.

There is a lot that the individual can do, so do it.

# If Antarctica goes, so does humanity



by Bernadine Schwartz

Antarctica is a continent full of natural grandeur and indescribable beauty, covered in thousands of glaciers and vast ice sheets nearly equaling the size of North America and unmarked by time for 34 million years, and it’s still unconquerable and impossible to harness.

It’s a planetary storehouse of ice that reaches down as far as five kilometres, and for all that time it’s been out of sight and out of mind, but today it’s one of the fastest warming locations on the planet, with all eyes now heavily focused on the massive Thwaites Glacier and the Pine Island Glacier that act as a gateway to a massive cache of frozen water. If their gates break open and it all escapes into the sea, it alone would raise global sea levels by 2.2 metres.

Since 2018, scientists have intensified their research, after discovering that hidden beneath the western parts of Antarctica were the unmistakable signs of global warming. A team of Brazilian scientists made history on 9th February this year after recording a record high temperature of 20.75°C in the Seymour Islands.

East Antarctica is a frozen desert, sitting on top of a continent about the size of Australia but so far it and the central regions of Antarctica are stable, however the same can’t be said for the Western Antarctica Ice Sheet (WAIS), including the Antarctic Peninsula, where these islands sit alongside

195 other significant glaciers.

The WAIS is completely different, instead of one solid continent beneath, it’s a series of islands covered in ice, where most sit on the floor of the Southern Ocean, and in some areas as low as 1.7 kilometres below sea level and concerns are mounting, as satellite imagery shows 87% of glaciers around the peninsula are receding and at a rate of two kilometres a year and others are beginning to thaw and they’re gathering pace.

Pine Island is the largest of the islands and the largest ice stream in Western Antarctica, with Pine Island Glacier itself covering an area of 175,000 square kilometres. However, the Thwaites Glacier is the largest, taking up an incredible 192,000 square kilometres, equal to the size of Britain.

Both are rapidly melting and draining into the Amundsen Sea, weakening their very foundations and already they’re responsible for a 5% rise in global sea levels.

The enormous Thwaites Glacier also goes by the name of the Doomsday Glacier, because if it completely disintegrated it would cause a rippling effect throughout the western half of Antarctica, giving it the capacity to raise global sea levels by two to three metres, profoundly altering the landscape of the entire planet.

It’s becoming more evident that the Thwaites Glacier is the most vulnerable of all, after on-site drilling and data collected by the Thwaites Glacier Project discovered very little of the ice shelf remaining in the western



Melting gaciers in West Antarctica and the Antarctic Peninsula are increasing the rate of ice loss from Antarctica

Photo: Won Sang Lee/Korea Polar Research Institute, courtesy Inside Climate News

area, with large portions deteriorating and turning into a slushy mix of icebergs and pieces of floating ice.

The other major concern is that the sea floor beneath the Thwaites Glacier is on a retrograde slope that goes inland and if it manages to retreat far enough and the floating ice shelf breaks into icebergs, it will simply collapse under its own weight.

This is backed up by the latest climate modelling that also suggests there will probably be nothing to stop it.

Research conducted by the Earth Institute at Columbia University suggests that 60% of the shelf is at risk of hydro fractures as melt water widens crevices and fissures and in crucial areas, giving it the potential to trigger a collapse, yet the majority of climate models never factored this in.

According to all the research, it’s becoming apparent that even if the world stays under 2°C and meets

the goals of the Paris Agreement, it wouldn’t make an ounce of difference if a miracle occurred and temperatures rapidly declined, because Antarctica will still continue to melt in catastrophic amounts, causing entire nations to be wiped off the map of the world forever.

Most scientists believe 2°C is an existential threat and staying below it is no longer obtainable, and the days are long gone when scientists spoke in terms of prevention, instead the operative word now is ‘delay’ a climate catastrophe, so it bothers me greatly when I hear or read fake facts without a shred of evidence.

Every minute of every day, what we do determines our children’s future, so please stop and question every action you take and say to yourself, Is this necessary?

It’s an absolute miracle that we even exist, according to findings published in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

A technique referred to as the Bayesian method, which is akin to modern-day betting systems, was used to understand how complex life evolved and in short, if we were to rewind Earth’s history back to the very beginning, the emergence of intelligent life is somewhat unlikely. And now here we are, in the throes of becoming extinct.

It’s a crying, crying shame; we took life for granted. The only species on the planet gifted with not only an exceptionally intelligent mind but also a highly sophisticated body that gave us the ability to make our dreams a reality, and just look at what we created.

A world where we promoted greed and rewarded the greedy, and off we went full steam ahead on the gravy train and despite years of unrelenting warnings, we still wouldn’t get off.

So you tell me, who would want to forgive us for all we have done? I for one won’t be!





# Broad options in draft Far North Coast Water Strategy welcome

The newly-formed WATER Northern Rivers Alliance has welcomed the diverse water supply options featured in the draft Far North Coast Water Strategy, released by the NSW Government on Friday 30th October.

“We are pleased to see a list of diverse options, not all of which will be progressed,” said Annie Kia, spokesperson for WATER Northern Rivers.

WATER Northern Rivers is an alliance of groups and citizens who want smart water options for the region, instead of the Dunoon Dam.

It was launched on 19th October at the start of National Water Week, with its message ‘Let’s re-imagine our water future’.

“We have been very concerned about the narrow focus of Rous County Council *Future Water Strategy 2060*, which has ignored many of the modern solutions available that, when combined in a mixed portfolio, help create a resilient and drought-proof water system,” said Ms Kia.

The broad-options approach in the draft strategy is in line with the recommendations of Water Services

Association of Australia (WSAA) in their document *All Options on the Table*.

WSAA recommends a suite of diverse options and strong water efficiency measures. In particular, they note that new dams, being rainfall-dependent, do not provide drought-resilience.

If new supply is needed, it’s advantageous if these sources are independent of rainfall, such as water re-use and desalination.

Dr Stuart Khan recently echoed this when asked about the Rous *Future Water Strategy*, noting that a

drought-resilient system would have 30-50% of its water coming from sources not dependent on rain.

Simon Clough, spokesperson for WATER Northern Rivers and former Rous County Councillor said, “Why would we waste more money on this destructive dam when water experts say there are better ways to ensure water security? It’s time for Rous to change tack.”

The group has also welcomed other initiatives within the strategy, supporting Aboriginal rights and a focus on improving the health of the

Richmond and Tweed Rivers.

“WATER Northern Rivers is ready to assist the development of this new vision of water supply in our region,” Ms. Kia said, “and we look forward to the public consultation process empowering our community.”

The draft Far North Coast Water Strategy is on public exhibition, with submissions invited, until 13th December.

It is available at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/public-exhibition/far-north-coast](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/public-exhibition/far-north-coast)

# Water experts say dams are not the best defence against drought

by John Revington

What’s the best way to ensure water security in a hotter and drier climate?

In an authoritative new report called *All Options On The Table*, the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) warns that dams are “often high-risk investments as they are reliant on rainfall and less resilient to climate change than other options”.

The WSAA concludes that the best strategy is “a diverse portfolio of water supply sources” rather than one large, rain-dependent source. In other words, use multiple supply sources, and ensure that some of them are not rain-dependent.

The *All Options* report examined 330 water projects around Australia and found that commonly overlooked supply sources include “purified recycled water for drinking, stormwater harvesting and water sharing (particularly rural and urban trade)”. The report

provides an estimated cost per kilolitre for each of the options it examined. Some of these costs are shown in the diagram.

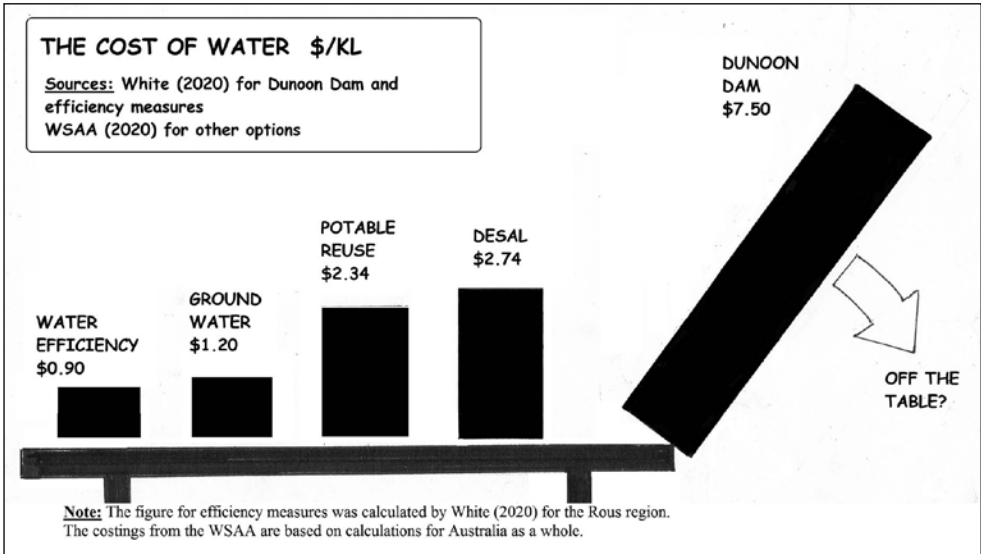
So a dam would be poor protection against drought – and it is also one of the most expensive options.

In his paper ‘Rous water supply augmentation proposal – brief review’(2020), Professor Stuart White rejects Rous’s fanciful accounting and estimates that water from the Dunoon Dam would cost \$7.50 per kilolitre.

Rous based its costing of the water from the dam on the total amount of water that it could provide, rather than the amount of water it actually would provide.

If Rous had been more realistic, it would have found that the cost per kilolitre of water from many other options is lower.

Moreover, financial calculations for the dam do not account for its cultural and environmental impacts. What monetary value



Rous County Council wants to build a large dam between Dunoon and The Channon to guard against population growth and a drying climate. But an authoritative new report suggests dams are not the answer.

should you put on the loss of Indigenous heritage sites, or irreplaceable rainforest, or the habitat of endangered species?

On the other hand, water efficiency is the cheapest option of all, and the savings achieved can be dramatic. Sydney Water was able to

supply water to almost one million additional people without needing to increase its supply.

White argues that efficiency measures would be “highly likely to enable significant deferral of the need for the commitment to Dunoon Dam, when

combined with a diverse portfolio of demand and supply options.”

Another barrier to water supply diversity is resistance to the potable use of recycled water, but Perth already replenishes its groundwater with recycled water, and the

WSAA reports that many cities around the world “have achieved community acceptance for purified recycled water.”

WSAA’s call for a range of options to be put on the table is echoed by the NSW Government’s Productivity Commission and by Infrastructure Australia. A Productivity Commission green paper made two recommendations about water systems: address the barriers to using new water sources and keep improving the efficiency of our water usage.

In its 2019 Audit, Infrastructure Australia concludes that “ensuring all options are on the table, and can be deployed when required, is likely to be essential for governments and operators to effectively and efficiently ensure secure [water] supply over the long term”.

So Rous is at odds with a range of organisations, and with the community it serves. Is Rous out of touch?

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