

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.

Is Lismore expendable?

What happens when Covid-19 arrives in a backpackers hostel in Byron Bay when a cashed-up influx of schoolies is imminent?

Sensibly you lockdown the facility, with 24-hour security staff, test staff and guests and ensure that sufficient goods and services are available.

Then the natives get restless. What is the next move? Ship the potentially infected backpackers off to Lismore, invoking the plan which apparently has been in place for months – possibly years.

Set up a bunch of RVs at the showground, in a space adjacent to the buildings which regularly house the farmers market and organic market. Both of these busy markets are classed as essential services. Both are the primary incomes for many of Lismore's stallholder families.

What's the key strategy to stop Covid from spreading into our community? Why of course, a perimeter fence... that is under construction as I write. What could possibly go wrong?

Are we worried this might be another Ruby Princess disaster in the making? Minister Hazzard, who oversaw that fiasco, will surely reassure us again that all bases are covered!

Has there been community consultation regarding this plan? Did the local state MP know and approve? After all, Public Health is a state responsibility. The answer is No, on both counts!

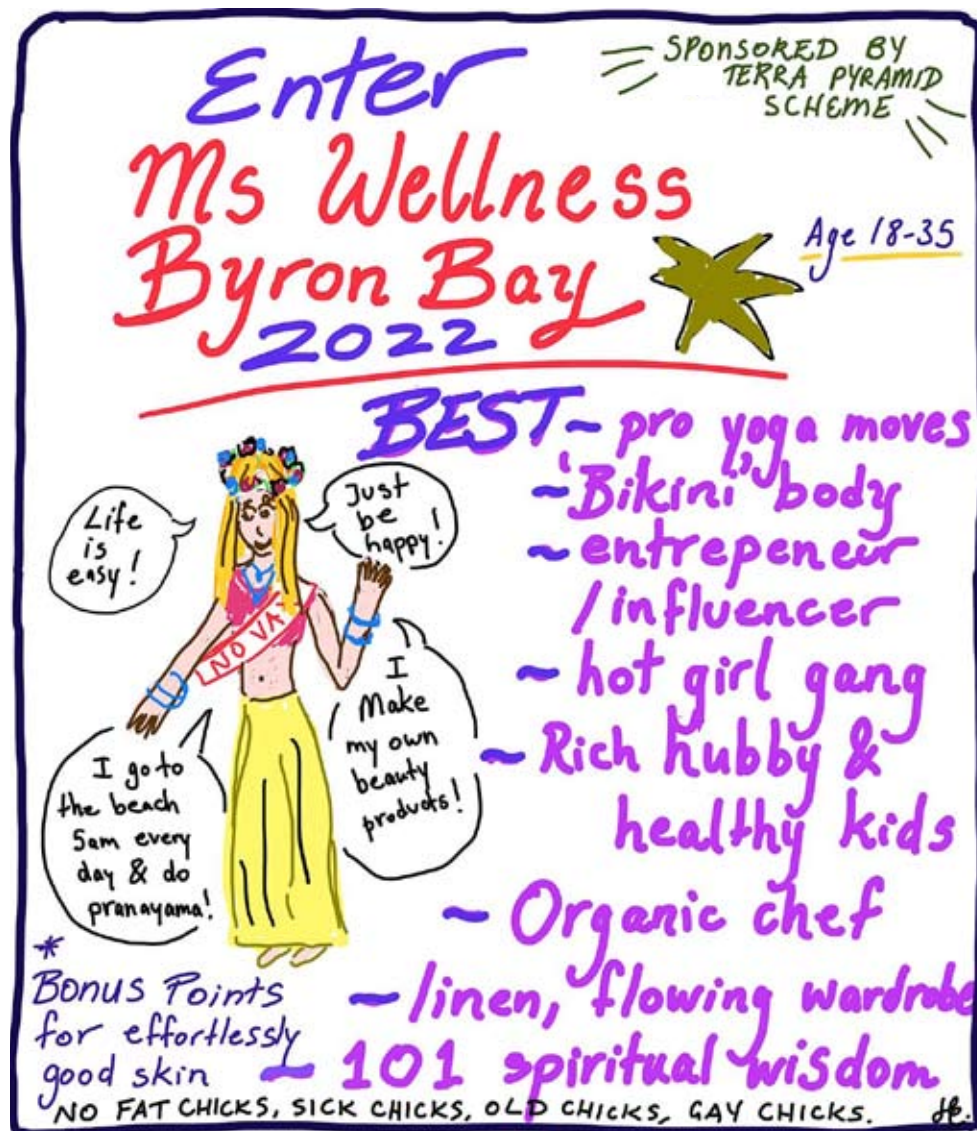
As a retired health professional and a senior citizen living in Lismore, I am appalled by this scenario. Maybe you are too. If so, contact the local Public Health Unit or your MP.

Beverley Crossley
Lismore

Development around Nimbin

The village of Nimbin has a thriving commercial heart where businesses pay some of the most expensive rents in the Richmond Valley. Yet these high rental costs are maintained with profits, pre-Covid.

For size, our commercial district rivals Kyogle with its population of 9000. Quite an achievement for a community



which is made up of six streets.

Developers and the LCC see a small village and the concept is let's cut up the area and change the landscape, and not just Nimbin itself but knives are out to slice up Blue Knob, Tuntable, Stony Chute etc, as has happened to Clovass – McKees Hill and Gerards Hill. In those areas, where is the unique flora and fauna?

Nimbin still has elements of our country's nature, so why strangle the area with a land grab? Surely the 129 development approvals since 2010 are enough.

Nothing about the LCC development plans makes sense.

LCC put great faith in the idea of reticulated water. Apart from the greater variations of rainfall, this closed system will lose water, not harness it!

As the plastic pipes will be damaged by floating rocks, chemicals will be used somewhere along the way in the water system (in London, water is so cleaned by chemicals that dirty plaque remains in the bottom of the coffee cup)

A guarantee is rates will rise, as like all developers and all councils, LCC are greedy for money to sustain their own existence. Why place more pressures on the local environment? Isn't what we have enough already?

Mark Pestell
Nimbin

Nuclear Weapons

The Australian Government has entered a new contract

for the building of nuclear submarines. The purpose of these submarines is to provide further weaponry to the Australian Defence Force.

The Prime Minister, quickly trying to convince the Australian population that they will not be nuclear-armed, does not change the fact that they are nuclear weapons. A rifle without a bullet in its breach is still considered a weapon.

Why was the Prime Minister so fast to declare that the submarines would not be nuclear-armed in his deceit?

It is because the USA and Britain are in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in selling these nuclear submarines, and so too is Australia in acquiring them.

New Zealand was onto them at the outset, banning the subs from their ports.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed by Australia, Britain the United States and most countries in the United Nations. The treaty aims to limit nuclear weapons and weapons technology. Countries which had nuclear weapons at the time of the treaty cannot share/sell them and countries that did not have them cannot acquire/receive them.

The cost of these acquisitions to the Australian Taxpayer has not been disclosed, so one can only assume that this is more deceit from the liars in Canberra.

How will these nuclear weapons be paid for?

More cuts to the Aged Pension no doubt, with no lifting of the assets and income barriers to receiving this pension. Cowardly financial bashing of the aged by a government which vows and declares it is concerned at the plight of the elderly.

Claire de Ellae
Urbenville

US violence

An 18-year-old child with a semi-automatic weapon killed two people during racial unrest in Wisconsin. He said he feared for his life. He was declared innocent of any wrong-doing.

I see what's happening to America as an outsider, an Australian, with horror, compassion and as witness to a great nation in decline. America, as a nation, is violent. It is always at war somewhere in the world. Citizens shoot each other, shoot their children, shoot their leaders, export movies which depict awful forms of violence, and worst of all act out mob violent insurrection in their own democratic house in Washington.

I have lived and worked in the USA. I was offered residency. I felt it was not a safe place. I had many friends, good people I loved, who worked hard long hours who would worry with their fear of poverty, and speak with distrust of their politicians. Their America did not feel to me like a peaceful land of the good and the free.

America dreams of its beneficence; a child with a lethal weapon becomes a

Notices

Nimbin Christmas markets

Nimbin Community Market is back for all this month, on Sunday 19th December, 8am-3pm. Steph has moved the market forward to the third week of the month, for this month only, to accommodate Christmas. Stallholder enquiries, text 0475-135-764 or email: nimbinmarkets@gmail.com

Annual General Meetings

- Nimbin Independent Media Inc (Nim-FM) AGM: Thursday 16th December, 1pm at the Community Centre pond and pizza oven (weather permitting). All welcome!
- Nimbin Community Centre Inc AGM: Thursday 16th December, 5-7pm at Birth & Beyond meeting room.
- Nimbin Health & Welfare Association AGM is rescheduled to Thursday 3rd February 2022, at Birth and Beyond from 4pm to 6.30pm, drinks and nibbles afterwards. New members enthusiastically welcomed to this quietly achieving Association. NH&W Committee supports a variety of projects and services: Nepal Relief Fund, Nimbin Aged Care & Respite Services, Nimbin Affordable Housing Initiative. The committee meets once a month for 1.5 hours. We'd love to hear from you, please email: jenny@nacrs.com.au

Free notices

Keep it short, not-for-profit and of interest to our readers, get it to us by deadline, and we'll run it for free.

About us

Managing editor Bob Dooley

Assistant editor Sue Stock

Sub-editor S Sorrensen

Layout Peter Chaplin, Andy Gough, Bob Dooley

Photographers Sue Stock, Chibo Mertineit

Distribution Peter, Coralie, Brommers, Chibo, Sue, Bob, Rob and Lisa, Dominique, Rosie and Trevor

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

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

NEXT DEADLINE:
Friday 24th December

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

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.

killer and is praised for that. This America, a nation that preaches democracy to the world, with a weapon in its hands, is a dangerous friend.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle

Save the planet?

I think there is a misconception of miscommunication when speaking about climate science that we are or will kill our planet, Earth.

Contrary to these popular expressions the history of Earth's evolution would tell us that this is incorrect.

Fear not for the Earth my friends, it will continue to spin and circle the sun as it has done for 4.5 billion years, as it will do for an estimated few billion to come.

How we could stop this and kill the planet by blowing it up is beyond even our technological capabilities.

(I'm speculating on this and wouldn't put it past some in power if they had the financial or egotistical motivation).

The Earth will adjust, atmospheric levels will change, ice ages will come and go, hot periods and new

specifies and life forms will develop and flourish and the two million-odd years that humanity existed won't even account for a single percentage of the Earth's time spinning around our sun as the most majestic and beautiful planet we have ever found evidence of.

Perhaps if we changed the language people would be more aware. As the current context makes it sound like we will go on living and leave Earth when it dies.

The climate crisis isn't killing the planet. It is simply killing the environment in which humanity survives. The Earth will be fine and keep doing what it does.

We are a product of Earth, we didn't create it and we won't kill it.

Jeremy John
Kingscliff

Apology

Last month's page 1 story about the destruction of St Patrick's church in Nimbin quoted the next-door neighbour David Barbara, without noting that his partner Susan Gumley also contributed information. Sorry Sue. – Ed

90% fully vaccinated against COVID

As at 25th November, on average, 90.5% of North Coast residents aged 16 and over are fully vaccinated, with final figures expected to be above 95%. All LGAs are now over 80% double vaccinated.

Healthy North Coast chief executive Julie Sturgess says North Coast residents have pulled together in an exceptional show of community spirit to ensure more than 90% of adults and

older teens are protected against the worst of COVID.

"North Coast residents understand that living in one of the most visited regions in NSW means they will be living with COVID in the future, and they have chosen the best defence possible," Ms Sturgess said.

"We are known for our resilience up here and we've had some tough times over the past few years. There's

no question that our community has rallied around again in a solid stand against this virus.

"As we have seen recently, the risk of outbreaks is still very real and I urge anyone who has yet to be vaccinated to take that step, particularly for our younger residents aged 12 to 15 years."

Anyone yet to be vaccinated can find a clinic or book through the Vaccine Clinic Finder.



Chamber Chat

by Diana Roberts, president

Farewell from me

This will be my last Chamber Chat in the *GoodTimes* as I am retiring as president of the Chamber at our upcoming AGM.

The Chamber's Constitution allows for someone to serve two terms only. Ordinarily this would be two years, but my term was for three years as no AGM was held in 2020.

During my time as president the community has weathered bushfires, drought and flood, combined with the extraordinary impact of Covid and the on-going effects of global warming. These have been challenging times for small business but most have exhibited incredible resilience and optimism, supported by their employees and our local community, alongside various government rescue packages.

Because I had fully retired from my business only weeks before the November 2019 bushfires, I found myself with the time required to effectively take on a leadership and support role as Chamber president during very difficult times.

I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from my fellow committee members. I have pushed them at times when they were already struggling to keep their own businesses afloat or seeking to disappear down the rabbit hole and I have appreciated their unwavering support. As a community we've been so much luckier than many and have so much to be grateful for.

I never really saw myself as president of a business Chamber. My passion has always been for community, despite operating a small business for over 20 years. It was inevitable that once in the role I would work to integrate the needs of both and deliver outcomes for both. This has been very satisfying.

Simply being in a Chamber of Commerce takes you into worlds that are closed



Jingawala Wia-bul Jugun

Caring for Community, Culture and Country

www.visitnimbin.com.au



to most community organisations, while the emergence of Zoom and Teams meetings has brought a comparatively isolated Chamber into contact with far-reaching support networks, especially at the government level. As a result, we have received considerable outside funding support during the past 12 months.

I have written a detailed president's report for the Chamber's AGM this month (it will be on our website), but I'd like to use this farewell to highlight and reflect on a few of the Chamber's achievements over the past two years.

Tourism

In mid-2020 the Chamber received a grant to conduct a survey of our community. Following Lismore City Council's abrupt withdrawal of all funding for delivery of visitor information services, we were seeking your input into 'where to from here?'

The survey delivered much food for thought while a follow-up workshop provided lots of great ideas for the Chamber to work on. We have focussed much of our energy in this direction for the past 12 months and these are some of the outcomes, funded in part by a significant grant from the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Fund:

- Beautifully designed and well-researched heritage information signage will be installed on buildings throughout the village;
- Dual language village entry signs have been designed for the three village entrances;
- Three audio signs have been recorded and will be installed in key locations;
- Village map signs are currently being painted by a talented local artist;
- A 'Welcome to Nimbin' brochure and map, written by us and sharing our values and history, is now available;
- A revamped Chamber website: nimbinaustralia.com.au;
- A revamped Visit Nimbin website (still in progress);

visitnimbin.com.au;

- A self-funded Visitor Information Centre (VIC) based at the Nimbin Bush Theatre (officially opened on 1st December);
- An on-line shop selling Made in Nimbin products to raise income for the VIC; and
- A social media strategy to promote Nimbin to a domestic audience and encourage people to stay longer.

At the same time, we successfully lobbied Lismore Council to fund a tourism position in Nimbin and we now have a full-time Tourism Destination Officer working from the village.

We also have a much closer working relationship with Lismore Council, especially the economic development arm.

Rainbow Road Walking Track

A project long supported by the Chamber, it was during a Zoom meeting called to assist Nimbin develop a bushfire economic recovery strategy that the idea of submitting a grant application for the track came about.

It started as a modest grant application that grew into a \$2.54m request, a project that combines stages one and two of the track while including all the surrounds that will make the track special including plantings, art installations, lighting, signage, seating, picnic areas and much more.

This grant application came about because Business NSW Northern Rivers (Jane Laverty) organised a meeting for the Chamber with various government agencies managing funding for bushfire affected communities.

Thanks go to Jane, the government agencies that encouraged our application and Lismore City Council who now have carriage of the project.

A working group, set up by Council to oversee the project, includes myself and Stan Palmer from the Nimbin Advisory Group.

The future

Using the special business rate levy collected by LCC, we are directing annual funding to maintaining and updating our websites.

Having just spent over \$50,000 to make them work better, we see them as a valuable asset for local business and the broader community.

The events section of the websites will become the 'go to' to find out what's happening in our community.

The Tourism Destination Officer will have carriage of keeping this current. The Visit Nimbin website will promote activities for visitors that will encourage them to stay longer.

While I am stepping down as president, I intend to stay on the Chamber's executive and focus my energies on completing the tourism initiatives started a year ago. And, of course, it will still be business as usual.

We're working on pulling together a program of events for the 50th anniversary of the Aquarius Festival in May 2023; we're planning an evening street festival in March; we have funds for mural restoration – if only we could find artists; we have plans to extend the under-awning and mural lighting project; and most importantly, we will continue lobbying for positive outcomes for our community.

In closing, I'd like to thank local businesses and the community for the support you've given us. We currently have over 60 members which is a great achievement for a small Chamber.

I'd also like to acknowledge my fellow committee members David Spain, Peter Hughes, Kylie Cain, Sammi Allen, Teresa Biscoe, Caroline Todd and Steph Seckold.

It has been a privilege to serve as Chamber president, but I am looking forward to less time in front of my computer and more time with family and friends and outside.

NIMBIN BOWLO

25 Sibley Street Nimbin
Phone 6689-1250

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS & GUESTS



The Club will re-open at 2.30pm on **Wednesday 1st December** for double-vaxxed patrons

Open from 2.30pm Wednesday to Saturday, Sundays 8.30am – 6pm

Bistro Lease opportunity: Lease fees N/A
Enquiries to James on 0482-429-412



Expressions of Interest for the Nimbin Advisory Group (NAG) open Wednesday, 8 December 2021.

The NAG acts as an advisory panel to Lismore City Council.

The primary objective of the NAG is to provide advice and guidance to Council on a range of matters impacting the Nimbin community.

If you are a passionate person who resides in the Nimbin area and who would like to make a difference locally, we urge you to nominate.

The group meets quarterly in Nimbin, and members discuss reports coming to Council that may affect the Nimbin community.

To find out more or to nominate as a member, please visit the Your Say Lismore website using the link or QR code below (page will be active from 8 December).

www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/expression-of-interest-nimbin-advisory-group-nag

Nominations close Friday, 4 February 2022.



Old Vintage Stuff Wanted

SMALL FURNITURE, OLD WARES, BRIC-A-BRAC AND MORE!

Deceased estates, pre-garage sales visits or just scaling down – home, garage and shed

Local dealer for over 15 years

**CALL ADAM FOR A CHAT
ON 0416-225-376 ANYTIME**

mi~DRIVER

Imax people-mover, up to 7 pax. Fully insured.
AFFORDABLE RATES



Bookings 0402-831-151

privatedriver@email.com www.miprivatedriver.com

TICKS WANTED

Unengorged FEMALE* paralysis ticks wanted, \$2.50 each.

Deliver to Lismore Vet Clinic

22 Uralba St, Lismore Ph: 6622-0033

Ixodes Holocyclus: Females responsible for Paralysis

Mole non toxic





On the same Page

by Kevin Hogan, Federal Member for Page

As a community, we have faced many challenges this year. It was a difficult period for everyone, but together we pulled through. I am incredibly proud of our resilience and our ability to care for each other.

It is fantastic to see Australia opening back up again, and I am exceptionally optimistic for our future.

This year we have achieved a lot. We secured funding for a \$2.4 million Rainbow Road Walking Track to connect the CBD to heritage murals and colourful street life. We

also secured funding for Nimbin's Sustainability Hub for a small building with compostable toilets and handwashing facilities including disabled access.

When buying your Christmas presents this year, I encourage you now more than ever to shop local. Local businesses are the ones that employ our young people and put money back into our communities.

Thank you all for your support in ensuring our community remains safe and strong. Together let's look towards 2022 with hope and optimism in our region's future.

Election reflection

by Cr Darlene Cook
Lismore City Council

By the time you read this article, the council elections will be over, and all that will be left is waiting to find out who the final elected councillors will be.

The final declaration will be made on 22nd December, once the NSW Electoral Commission computers have done their maths allocating voters' preferences.

I'm writing this at the end of the first week of pre-poll, held in Lismore at two locations, one in Lismore and one in Goonellabah.

It's been an interesting experience as we are working with new rules – no handing out how-to-vote cards within 100 metres of a booth – and having to set up our materials two hours before the booth opens, and take them down two hours after the booth closes.

There has been a lot of feedback to the electoral commission about these new rules – mostly negative responses. However, this may be the way of the future to ensure a Covid-safe election.

The candidates have been getting their messages out to the community by various media – mainstream newspapers, radio, TV as well as on-line media and social media.

This is the first election where on-line and social



media have had a major influence – another change that election candidates had to be aware of and make good use of during their campaigns.

On-line media carries stories, articles, media releases so quickly – enabling a number of ideas, policies and opinions to be in the public sphere at the same time, and allowing ordinary people to have input, ask questions, get answers in depth, and to compare those responses when choosing their preferred candidates to vote for.

Journalists have been asking for details of candidates' positions on a number of issues which concern the community – roads, waste management, climate change, flood mitigation, water security, finances, housing affordability, population growth. It is these topics upon which the distinction between candidates can be seen.

Some candidates chose not to respond to any media questions; some answered a select few; and others gave very informative responses to enable the community to assess their position.

Some candidates believe that community engagement and consultation is essential to enabling councils to respond to community aspirations.

One candidate said outright that he didn't believe in consulting with the community.

All I can hope is that you all have taken the time to read those responses, to think about what kind of world you want to live in, and decided which candidates may be able to work towards that goal with you, and voted accordingly.

I have been very proud to be a part of this community's journey over the years; to have had the opportunity to stop for a while and talk with so many of you; and listening to your journeys, your lives,

your love for this village, has greatly enriched my life.

Gift cards

With NSW re-opening for business and tourism, I know that you will all support your local shops and retail businesses to rebuild their resources, to keep trading and work their way back to financial stability again.

One way to do that would be to give friends and family a local gift card for Christmas – a gift that can only be spent at a local shop.

Check out this opportunity at: <https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/loving-local-gift-cards>

I hope you all have a wonderful, safe, happy and healthy holiday season, whatever your religious or cultural beliefs, and look forward to catching up with you all again in January 2022.

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

Premier must find courage to hold Drug Summit

It was a bold and promising move by the then Premier Gladys Berejiklian in 2018 to call for a Special Commission of Inquiry into the drug ice.

Announcing the inquiry, she said: "Ice is a destructive drug that is ruining too many lives across NSW, especially in our regional centres."

"We want every option on the table to bolster our existing efforts to combat the evolving threat of this dangerous illegal drug and to get help for those who need it."

In January 2020, after 14 months of meticulous evidence gathering, round tables and public hearings around the state, and hundreds of written submissions, the Commissioner Professor Dan Howard SC presented his four-volume report with 109 recommendations.

And the only response from the government since then? A statement within one day rejecting five of the recommendations outright. These included a trial of pill testing, and expanding the safe injecting room program.

What happened to, "We want every option on the table?"

There has been no further response on the other 104 recommendations. It has been 23 months. What happened to getting help for the people who need it?

If the ice problem was great enough to warrant a Special Commission of Inquiry, why are we still waiting for

the government's response?

Last December the government's response was apparently held up because of Cabinet disagreement over how to treat possession of small quantities of drugs.

The attorney general supported recommendations that divert people away from the court system. He says this is a health issue, not a criminal justice issue. But Cabinet couldn't reach agreement, so the response to the Inquiry was put off.

At the time, the then treasurer Dominic Perrotet said the government needed to take its time to get it right. Strange then that the government took less than a day to rule out those five recommendations. Perhaps they should have taken a bit more time to get it right.

Take, for example, the recommendation that the safe injecting room program be expanded beyond the one facility. Rejected out of hand. On what grounds?

In May this year the Health Minister Brad Hazzard attended a ceremony to mark 20 years of the state's first and only medically supervised injecting room in Kings Cross run by Uniting, part of the Uniting Church. Mr Hazzard's tweet to mark the anniversary said: 'Saving lives'.

So one centre saves lives, but the government won't even consider a recommendation to set up any more.

The first manager of the Kings Cross injecting room, Dr Ingrid



by Janelle Saffin MP
Member for Lismore

Van Beek, has said setting up the injecting room was the last brave thing that happened in drug policy in New South Wales. The last brave thing – and it was one of the controversial proposals to come out of the 1999 drug summit held by the Carr Government.

Then prime minister John Howard said it would make New South Wales the drug capital of the Southern Hemisphere. But the Carr Government found the courage to set it up, and it has saved thousands of lives.

Professor Howard said that implementing the report's recommendations would require political leadership and courage. The government apparently hasn't found that yet.

Earlier this year, Professor Howard expressed his frustration with the lack of government response, saying he wondered

how many of the government had actually bothered to read the report. Because if they had, they would understand the urgency of the recommendations.

I have read it, and it is not a report you can read and ignore. It is a call for urgent action to bring drug policy into the 21st century, and to provide urgent services to regional areas and Aboriginal communities.

The Commissioner has again written in the media more recently, calling on the new Premier Dominic Perrotet to find the political courage to act. But courage seems to be in short supply.

Maybe the *Yes Minister* series has damaged that word for us. In that show "Very courageous, Minister" was code for political vote-loser.

But drug law reform is not a vote-loser, and public opinion is ahead of the government on this. The drug law reform group 'Fair Treatment' headed by the Uniting Church, has released polling that shows a strong majority of people in Liberal seats support drug law reform.

I have a mountain of reports from round tables and inquiries over recent years, all saying the same thing. We need to recognise drug use as a health and social justice issue.

And who is behind these calls for drug law reform? Not a bunch of radicals but former premiers, police commissioners, health ministers, judges, medical specialists, church

leaders and humanitarian agencies.

There has been a shift in International drug policy over the last 20 years and we are lagging behind. The weight of opinion now is on the side of drug law reform.

If the premier wants to know what courage looks like, I would say, look to those who gave evidence to the inquiry.

To every parent and grandparent who found the courage to come forward, with stories of families broken by drug dependence.

To the First Nations people who turned up to give evidence of the impact of ice on their communities – despite their fears that once again nothing would be done.

And all those with a lived experience of ice addiction who fronted up, despite the stigma, to tell their stories, in the hope that they would be heard and something would be done.

I say to the premier, find that political leadership and courage. And if you can't find leadership and courage to act alone, hold a drug summit. Bring all parties together on this and put everything on the table.

We can't afford to play political games with people's lives.

As drug law reform advocate Alex Wodak says: "There are many dangerous ways to use illicit drugs but the most dangerous way of all is using illicit drugs for political purposes."

Left wing, right wing? What just happened to politics?

by Aidan Ricketts

What a confusing ride it has been watching the familiar old political camps get upended during the pandemic.

I think a lot of people have been left very confused about terms like 'left wing' and 'right wing' as the combination of pandemic anxieties, social media polarisation and the spread of conspiracy theories exposed some old cultural fault lines and created new ones.

Our old ideas of left and right had their heyday in 19th and 20th century battles between socialists and capitalists, those in favour of wealth redistribution and those in favour of laissez faire trickle up economics. The arguments still have some substance, but in the world of how people now identify politically the terrain has become far more complex.

It has become very confusing. We suddenly have wellness bloggers sharing white supremacist memes, long time hippy comrades sharing One Nation or Craig Kelly posts, we have fascists and neo Nazis in the streets of the big cities claiming to represent 'freedom' and 'sovereign citizens' waving naval flags.

We have seen violence at protests from both protesters and police, especially the Victorian police, and at times a failure by those of us who would normally denounce violent policing, failing to do so because we don't agree with the people they are capicum-spraying this week.

Then there are the confusing debates around things like freedom of speech, a fundamentally important civil right for all people, but especially for minorities and social movements pursuing new cultural change. In the name of diversity, we sometimes get quite aggressive cancel culture, purity spirals and a celebration of 'punching up' against privilege.

I've even seen people attacking David Attenborough as an eco-fascist simply because he dares suggest that human population threatens biodiversity. I've even seen the great democracy activist and intellectual Noam Chomsky derided simply because he is a white male.

It is no wonder we are feeling confused.

So, at risk of simplifying what really is quite complex I'm going to suggest we temporarily put aside ideas of left and right, (although I think ultimately they still have some value) and start to break this cookie apart from the four

axes of authoritarian vs libertarian and community vs individualist.

So, to begin with, let's remind ourselves where the global power really lies. Despite the pandemic, despite the conspiracy theories and despite who or what any of us identify as, the real power still lies in the hands of giant corporations globally. The Haliburtons, the Monsantos, the mining industry, big Pharma, corporate agribusiness, arms manufacturers, banks. These giant entities span the globe, dwarf most governments in their sheer economic size, and can resist individual governments and legislators who try to bring them under control.

If corporations really remained separate of state power, they would be a big enough problem but they have skilfully learned how to manipulate and control governments and political parties as well. Just look at the stranglehold the fossil fuel industry exerts over the LNP and Labor parties in Australia as a prime example.

I am not a great fan of models, as reality is always far more complex than any model, but any model that introduces more complexity is at least a bit helpful. You can have a play with this one, you don't have to agree (see diagram).

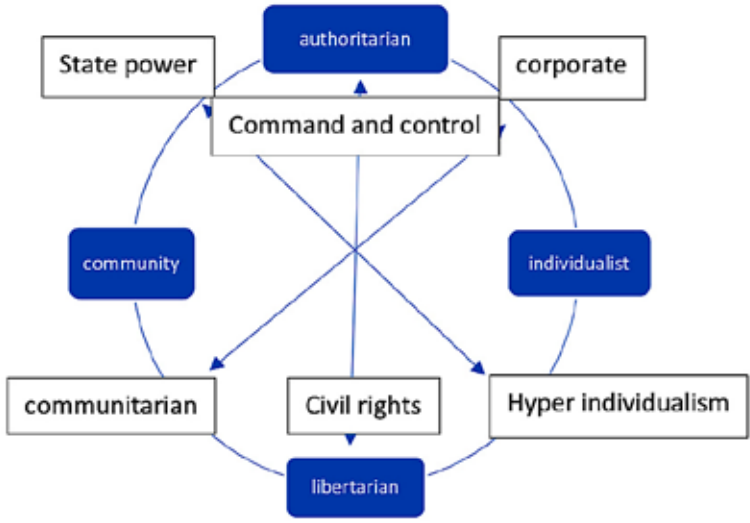
So, if you want to know where the real power lies, it lies towards the top right of the diagram. And the real power to resist lies with communitarian social action, from the bottom left.

The thing about the diagram is that at every point the counterpoint is diametrically opposed. So, if you want to know where the real locus of the fight against global corporate power lies, it is in the hands of communities, and democratic processes for expressing the needs and intentions of communities.

Remember the fight against fracking in the Northern Rivers. We weren't fighting amongst ourselves then, because as a community we had clear line of sight to where the problem was. It was the mining industry, the corporation and their backers in government.

From this vantage, we the community were able to organise, rise up and ultimately prevail. The story is not always so triumphal as it was for us at Bentley, but the message is the same. Our power to resist the real power holders lies in community, in democratic participation, and if required in non-violent direct action.

It is fundamentally important



to remember that real democratic reform is a bottom up process driven from communities that wins hearts and minds. It can be tempting for social reformers to try to grab the reigns of state power and start imposing their agendas on the population by force of law, but if you go down this path without first bringing the population with you, you are most likely to create an equal and opposite reaction.

Governments made this mistake during the pandemic by relying too much on state force and not enough on empowering communities, in things like lock-downs and vaccination drives, and the resultant wave of resentment has been palpable.

We also see this dilemma for the social justice and green left, when they get a sniff of state power, there is often a temptation to ban things, to mandate things. If we allow ourselves to drift from a democratic communitarian perspective, and start to think we as a movement can start to pull the levers of state power, we run the risk of ascending from the bottom left of the circle towards the top left. We already learned in the twentieth century the left and the right can become similarly totalitarian when they try to enforce ideology.

As a deep green myself, but also a democratic communitarian I have often found myself arguing against banning things. Our real environmental enemies are the huge corporations, not the working class fishermen, the 4WDers, the campers. These people, whether we think they are doing harm or not, are part of our community and we need to win their hearts and minds. Similarly, if we care about animal rights, we need to win hearts and minds not generate resentment by seeing how many types

of racing we can ban.

I sometimes feel as though the social justice and environmental movements have felt so disempowered at times that the focus for some has swung from the too-hard basket of fighting the real global corporate military power and has swung around to picking low hanging fruit in our communities to give ourselves the temporary satisfaction of an easy win.

If we have banned someone's recreation that we disagree with, if we have called someone a nasty name in a social media pile on, if we have played the game of pointing the finger of privilege at everyone around us. Did we really strike a blow for the global south, did we really challenge the warmongers, did we really disrupt the mining industry, or did we just make enemies from within our own communities?

And look at the backlash we are seeing on the opposite sides of the circle. The pandemic threw a stark spotlight on people's individualism. But in that boiling cauldron of resentment we have some very shady neo-fascists deliberately harvesting widespread anger at political correctness and cancel culture, deliberately appropriating important concepts like free speech, even the very concept of freedom.

Freedom and liberty are important, as is freedom of speech, but these things rightly belong to communities not just to individuals. They are the raw materials of democracy and participation in civil society.

The state is to an extent a necessary evil for a complex and highly populated world. We need good democratic governance from the state but we don't need authoritarianism. When I see the Victorian police pepper spraying neo-fascists, sadly I

see two types of fascism clashing (for now).

I see the highly authoritarian tendencies of poorly constrained security forces and police playing with their anti-protest toys against the angry neo-fascist and anti-lockdown protesters. What we also saw on display was the danger of violent protest. Violence doesn't win hearts and minds but it does help justify over-policing.

So where does all this leave us?

I think there is still a left and a right. The right still represents entrenched wealth and power globally and the left still represents real people and real communities, working together for a sustainable and equitable future. We cannot achieve that by subdividing ourselves and grabbing for power over each other. We won't get anywhere by simply 'punching up' inside our own communities.

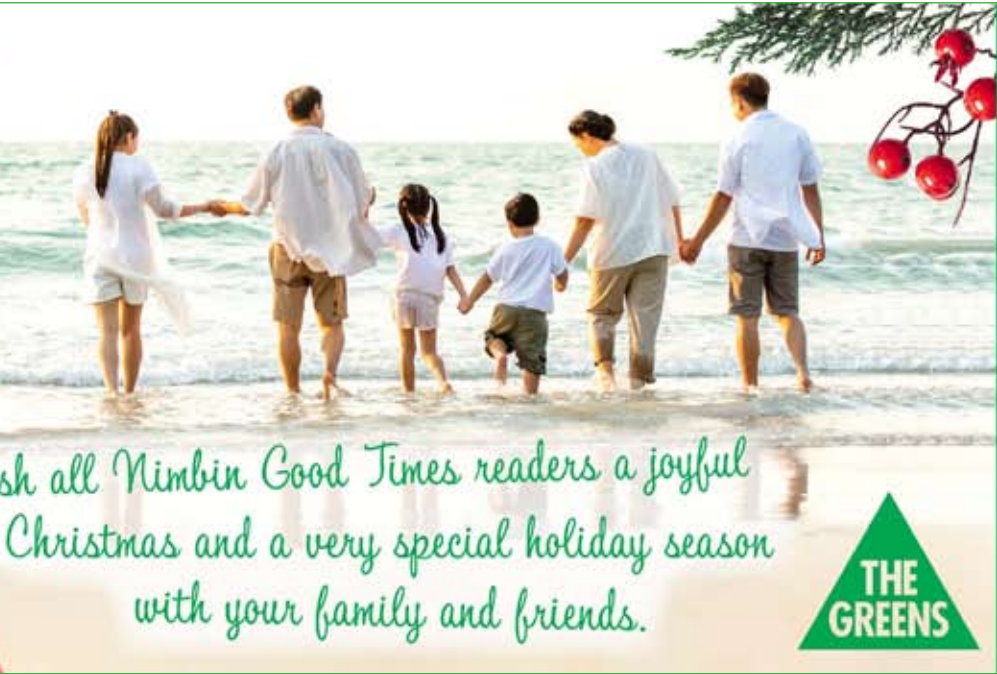

We have much work to do to bring this planet back from the brink of climate and biodiversity collapse. We still have very big forces in the form of multinational corporations, totalitarian governments and their militaries, and now new problems, social media that uses algorithms to exacerbate social tensions and turn people against each other.

There is still massive global inequality and we do need to address this. There will still be a need for government, and even for increasing global state cooperation, this is unavoidable, but it needs more than ever to be informed by strongly networked communities committed to non-violent democratic practice.


Bentley felt as good as it did because we had a clear view across the spectrum. We knew that our power starts in community and we knew that united we could achieve much. We need more than ever to build bridges. Whether we are vaxxed or unvaxxed, however we gender identify, whatever our diverse abilities, whatever our complex ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As a human community we won't constrain corporate and government power if we are fighting amongst ourselves.

The planet is calling. Humans are of this planet; we are the children of evolution. We are a big human family and only through our groundedness inside our bodies, on the planet on which we stand and in community can we find our way forward.

Much love and let's hope we can move beyond the pandemic and refocus ourselves on the bigger challenges ahead.



I wish all Nimbin Good Times readers a joyful Christmas and a very special holiday season with your family and friends.



TAMARASMITH.ORG.AU

I am here to help if you need it.

TAMARA SMITH MP

MEMBER FOR BALLINA

02 6686 7522

ballina@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Shop 1, 7 Moon Street, Ballina NSW 2478

Authorised by Tamara Smith Member for Ballina. Produced using parliamentary entitlements.

The scam

by Yagia Gentle

Scams are rife in our utilitarian society, where the result justifies the path of action, and distribution of happiness relies on a consensual determination of the value of everything turned into a number. However, some values cannot be monetarised.

A case in point is Australia's rivers. In New Zealand they have given rivers the same status as a person. In Australia, the river's water is a commodity that is traded in the stock exchange, like gold or oil, or anything else. This has led to water theft by big agricultural businesses owned by foreign shareholders, and an ungovernable system where the one that suffers is the rivers. That's why recent droughts have resulted in fish that are 50-years old floating on the top of stagnant ponds.

The National party says that they advocate for the farmer and the rural worker. Indeed, their argument is so persuasive, helped by wearing Akubra hats and having tea with gentle country folk, that here in the Northern Rivers they have held power for a long time. This has led to them giving a gift to their voters: cheap labour, and an authoritarian attitude to the environment.

The visa rort imposed by the government has meant that the young, intelligent travellers from other countries are forced onto the agricultural slave market for three months of their extended year's stay. I talked to a young engineer from Germany at the last MardiGrass. He explained how he worked for \$3 an hour doing the last pick of the fruit on a piece rate, and being charged for accommodation.

This exploitation has made a turn during the Covid outbreak. Some of these backpackers have made it into government,



Darling River grazier Rob McBride who delivered a warning to West Australians and the WA government to keep irrigation out of the Fitzroy River. Photo courtesy farm weekly.com.au

and the latest trade deal with England forbids visa extensions linked to working on farms. The National party is now screaming about a lack of labour on farms, while at the same time Barnaby Joyce, leader of the Nats, says he's not going to be part of any climate change solution because rural people working in mines will lose jobs.

Indeed, the National party held the country to ransom at the recent Glasgow climate summit and embarrassed Australia in front of the world, and to put it in perspective, Qantas stood down 20,000 people over the pandemic, while the Adani coal mine was given the go-ahead partly because it employs 100 people. Mining companies dig up Australia with little regard for the environment or the local Indigenous people. A case in point is Rio Tinto legally destroying the sacred 45,000-year old Juukan Gorge for the \$150 million worth of minerals under it, and some bat species are near

extinction from their breeding caves being destroyed.

These scams don't stop with industries that 'donate' to political parties. The recent sports rorts, car park scandal, document forging, and blocking environmental protection laws are just a slice of what the Liberal/ National party have been up to while in office.

The Murdoch press, which received a government 'grant' of \$345,000 to set up a spelling bee site, announced in their press how bad the NSW Commission against Corruption is for pushing Gladys Berejiklian out of her role leading the dodgy NSW Liberal party, and how this proves that the Morrison government is right in not setting up a similar anti-corruption body for federal politics.

Morrison says they have tried to install it, however, Christian Porter, the attorney general at the time (he got de-throned for accepting an undisclosed million dollars to fight the ABC when they called him out in a sexual assault case), wrote up rules for an

anti-corruption body that was inherently toothless, and was rejected by Labor and the Greens.

The revolving door joining politicians, political 'donations' and jobs in corrupt industries has to stop. There is a federal election coming up by May next year. A glance at the policies puts you in a position of using community power to assert values that reflect sensible policies and move away from dependence on companies that invest in denuding the environment for profit.

Indeed, the utilitarian model Australia is trapped in, where results justify the path, needs to allow a semblance of empathy for species other than human, a respect for Indigenous Australians, and a responsible reaction to the environmental desecration that has led us into the dire climate crisis the world faces.

This is a chance to lower the scam rate and vote good people into power. This election vote carefully, a lot depends on who gets into power.

It is possible to reduce flooding events?

by Mark Pestell

This conjunction of the Wilson River and Leicester Creek, along with the low topography and seasonal rains, and massive land clearing has resulted in severe flooding which has impacted the area on an average once every three years.

Decades come and go, and governments of all levels win and lose power, almost all ignoring the problem. Yes, Browns Creek pumping station and levee banks have been built, with dubious success.

However, the impact of floods in the area could be at least regulated, virtually cost-free.

One community has shown the way. It is not an alternative group of those seeking a different lifestyle; Penrith is one of the wealthiest local governments in Australia. For the 2000 Olympics, the Penrith council, with state government support, built what is known as Penrith Lakes. This is a large area of civil engineering construction successfully designed to capture water from the Nepean River.

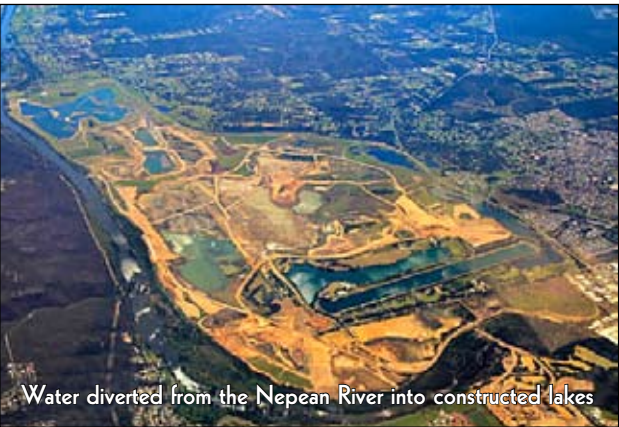
The construction was actually free, with profits made from the sediment dug out and sold, and engaged hundreds of workers.

The new wetland is capable of supporting recreational water skiing, boat racing, world class rowing and kayak events. Old land which was zoned previously as flood land was turned into a useful community area, gentrifying the northern area of Penrith.

It also allowed for an entire new development to be built on its foreshore.

How does it work? The concept is simple: excess river water during floods is stored as it overflows into the lakes built at sloping levels. When the weather event passes, much of the stored water is released back into the river.

Lismore has a vast area of such land to the north and west (10km x 5km),



ample space which could be transformed with lake construction with much more benefits than those accumulated in Penrith.

The space between Bexhill and Lismore is basically similar to what north Penrith was like before the lakes development – disused old land, now transformed by the lakes development.

Close to Leicester towards Lismore's north west is also a vast area, with a similar lake development potential.

If a water storage area was created, it would solve many immediate issues in the area.

There would be no need to build a new dam in Dunoon as water could be stored for domestic household use within the lakes development. Ecological regeneration could be achieved with both wetland and rainforest ecosystems put in place and new koala habitat designed and maintained.

Recreation would be available along with sporting facilities of a major standards.

Tourism would flourish, attracting eco-tourists and sportspeople alike.

Currently zoned as flood land, it would become valuable. When the storage was filled, water can be slowly released, thus taking away the speed of the flood. Employment for all would be a major benefit, as it could involve skills needed in the coming years to tackle climate change.

Investment opportunities would cover the entire project in both the long term and short.

Everyone would be a winner. It is not an impossible task, it is a development which would be common sense.

For a sustainable society to continue to give higher standards of living for its population, more opportunities for our youth and business to work with the environment in the Richmond River Valley, such a development could be the solution.



INTERESTED IN CANNABIS RESEARCH? WE NEED YOU!

Researchers seek to understand the overall well-being and brain health of Northern Rivers Region residents who both do and do not consume cannabis

Now recruiting 2 groups of people (Aged 25-65):

1. Those who DO smoke cannabis
2. Those who DO NOT smoke cannabis



Why participate?

- ✓ Contribute to an Australian-first study and receive up to \$170 in compensation
- ✓ Receive a cannabinoid profile of the cannabis you are smoking

What's involved?

- 3 online assessments (interviews /games /questionnaires) over a 4-month period

Want to learn more?

Go to: tinyurl.com/monash-substance-study
Email: cannabis.study@monash.edu
Call: 0414202371



Trust: the glue of life

by Michael McNamara

Our whole system of community and government depends on trust. It is, in a sense, the glue of life.

We trust each other to act honestly and fairly towards each other. We trust government to act in, and look out for, our best interests. We trust institutions to act with integrity and be true to their underlying philosophy.

When that trust is betrayed, and that seems to have been happening more often and more frequently at the government and institutional level in recent years, the results are catastrophic for

our community. We have seen a premier resign recently because of questions about whether she acted with integrity, whether she put the business interests of some ahead of the public interest. She is not the first.

Whether, for government, that betrayal of trust relates to sports rorts or fudging the economic data about unemployment or favouring the interests of individual corporations or “mates” over the community interest or any number of other examples I could give, it has an impact.

As we wait to find out the sentences for a former mining minister and senior politician found guilty of corruption

over the issuing of coal mining licences, it has an impact.

When we have a Commonwealth government that seems determined to prevent the establishment of a federal independent body to combat corruption, it has an impact.

When governments take us into conflict and send our young people overseas to bear arms in our name based on false information, it has an impact.

For institutions such as churches or banks it matters not whether the betrayal of trust is in relation to child abuse or covering up that abuse or unfair treatment of clients or acting in the



interests of power rather than fairness, it has an impact.

When corporations seeking to exploit our natural resources or promote major developments corrupt the scientific process by cherry-picking evidence to back their case, or hiding evidence that says don't do it, it has an impact.

As we see repeated Royal Commissions into child protection, aged care and treatment of people with disabilities hearing evidence, or making findings, of repeated wrongdoing and cover ups, it has an impact.

When tobacco companies and asbestos producers knew about the health impacts of their products and not only covered it up but actively spread false information, it had an impact.

When fossil fuel companies had evidence of the effect of their products on global warming 50 years ago and not only covered it up but engaged in an active, well-funded campaign of disinformation, it had an impact.

In all of these cases the impacts on our community and our body politic is profound.

Now, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, when public trust in our lawmakers and institutions is so necessary, we are instead beset with the proliferation of conspiracy theories and false information.

This loss of trust, I contend, is one of the major reasons that conspiracy theories gain a foothold and grow. It is no wonder that they grow when we have lost numerous NSW premiers since the 1970s over corruption related matters.

The conspiracy theories are not consistent either. They range from Covid-19 being “fake news” to it being produced in a lab and deliberately released to promoting the efficacy of horse wormer to treat this disease which does not exist to claims about microchips and genetic manipulation through vaccines.

We need to look critically at the claims of conspiracy

theories, their sources and their evidence.

In the longer term, the best (and only) way to combat conspiracy theories is for governments and institutions, indeed for all of us, to act with integrity and in good faith.

We need to look out for what is in the interests of our broader community and act accordingly.

Governments and institutions need to commit to act in the public interest rather than the interests of private individuals, political donors and keeping power to themselves – and then follow through.

Only when that changes, will people stop turning to conspiracy theories.

Only when public trust in our governments and institutions is restored can we be confident that decisions are being made in our best interests and those of the broader community.

It is time for a new politics. It is time for a new polity, a way of doing political business.

Michael McNamara worked for over 40 years as a mathematics teacher and careers adviser, and spent the last 15 years of his career as a high school deputy principal. In retirement, he is actively involved in his local community at Glen Innes with a long-term involvement in the community-based campaigns against coal and CSG, and promoting action on climate change.

Hope for Gaia

by Aniko Papp

I recently went to a Christmas party with many an older environmental warrior attending. By dusk we were exchanging war stories of being arrested, or locked on or protesting at Franklin River, or at Protestors Falls or other sites around Australia.

We recalled painting placards, sitting in trees or marching in protests anywhere from Melbourne to Sydney to the Bentley Blockade. Chatting by the fire pit, hoisting wine glasses instead of joints, we moved on to talk about our children or grandchildren, most of whom were adults leading their own lives.

If a son had a boyfriend, or their daughter married another woman, we chatted about their wedding plans. My parents would have turned in their graves at the thought of their granddaughter having a baby with another woman but here, at this party, no-one blinked an eye.

Quite different to my work Christmas party, when I mentioned to my boss about my daughter's girlfriend to be asked, “Are you okay with that?”

My generation clearly has differing and divergent views on this issue, whereas I realised that almost every young adult I knew had a gay or trans or LGBTI mate and frankly, most don't care at all. They see their school mates with parents who have two mothers or three fathers, and it doesn't ever seem for them, an issue. They see gender and sexuality as fluid.

You see children play with other children of every race and colour; girls of soccer teams are just commonplace as are boys of netball teams. The other day I watched a group of carefree boys at my local beach, of all colours, jumping in the water, giving each other playful hugs and playful wedgies. I thought how my generation of males would not have been seen in public, hugging each other like that, let alone boys of different colour.

Their minds don't seem to be as narrow as ours were growing up, constricted as we were by open racism or open gay hate. It's not politically correct for our children to ask each person how they want to be addressed, he or she or they, it is just the way to ask politely what her, his or their preference is.

“My son was on the phone last night to me wanting to talk about environmental intergenerational equity and I realised he was getting his statement ready in case he was to be arrested. I could not be prouder, but also worried for him.”

It turns out that this former Franklin blockader's son was part of yet another protest about a coal mine. Proudly, I shared a story about my daughter being so incensed

at Turnbull funding research into giant underwater fans diverting warm water off the threatened Great Barrier Reef that her and her friends created an action before the local press where they gathered by a local beach near Townsville and threw ice into the seas.

Another story was told of one of the children making her own placards to display by the front gate warning traffic to slow down for the koalas there. Or kids walking out of school as part of the school strikes against climate change. From young adults becoming scientists, to joining the political world, to teaching primary schoolers about climate change, I realised our children were going to continue the fight.

I reflect on how many other children I have met whose parents are not environmental activists and yet these same children totally accept man-made climate change and in their own way, contribute in ways that our generation and that before us, wouldn't dream of. Like recycling their waste, using keep cups or their refillable water bottles or buying solar panels or an electric car.

Children in preschools tend native gardens in their schools and don't see kangaroos, possums, frogs, or snakes as pests. Unlike us, they grew up learning about the natural world not as something to be conquered but something to be cherished. They watch whales, whereas our parents hunted them.

They see a crocodile in the wild as something special, whereas our parents shot them for fun. They tend gardens to grow vegetables in suburbia and see the natural environment as part of their lives, unlike our parents who often saw the bush as alien and needing taming with rose bushes.

If a child grows up without the shackles of prejudice, then that child grows up creating a generation of open mindedness. If a child grows up learning about the natural world and their place as part of it as the next generation was taught, then that child wants to protect that environment.

All this convivial chatter around a fire pit with like-minded older hoarier rabble-rousers led me to conclude that there is a profound difference between our children and grandchildren to us. Our children and grandchildren don't seem to have imbibed that inherent racism or sexism that our generation did.

Many of our children have at a deep level, an innate knowledge and understanding of the principle of inter-generational equity. Inter-generational equity means that every generation holds the Earth in common with members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future.

This difference between me and my children gives me immense hope for the future of our mother Earth.

Happy High Herbs Book Launch

Come along to the book signing & meet the Happy High Herbs founder Ray Thorpe, as he launches the latest edition of his book filled with valuable wisdom & herbal lore.

UKI MARKET DAY

SUN 19th DECEMBER
10.30am - 11:00am

OUTSIDE THE UKI HAPPY HERB SHOP

\$10 each
Local Pricing
Launch Special
2 for 1!

Christmas Chia

by Simon Thomas

My grandfather Norman Cocks, the thespian priest, was world renowned for his solo performance of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. His rich, versatile voice negotiated the nuances of each character; from the crotchety scratch of Scrooge to the smooth, loving tones of Mrs Cratchit. What excited me most as a child were his stirring renditions of Christmas celebrations, complete with howls of joy from the fictitious kids.

With Dickens' artful storytelling and Norman's uncanny ability to evoke a feeling of warmth and genuine love within his audience, we were transported to an age which seemed simpler and somehow more fulfilling. A time when family and friends of all ages gathered around

the fire for games and the sharing of deliciousness and love.

When I lived in the Italian Alps, I had a taste of the traditional European Yule; a magical mix of snowy fields, roasted chestnuts and gluhwein. The trees were real and the decorations hand-made heirlooms which were lovingly stored away in tissue paper wrapping for the rest of the year. Just like in the Dickensian fantasy, the glowing heat of fire, of love and of wholesome delicacies infused the season with a nourishing ambience.

How on earth did we get to the point where our Christmas season has become a tsunami of frantic consumerism, debauched overconsumption, and Qanon-obsessed druncles berating the assembly with their ignorant rants?

Walk into any shopping

centre in December and your senses will be assaulted with an energy-sapping barrage. I can appreciate the lights and colours if I don't think about the pollution they create, but the overpowering stench of cheap, toxic plastic nauseates like the pong of an Indian pissoir.

Worst of all is the cloying cacophony of carols erupting from tinny speakers, echoing through the soulless architecture. Those retail workers should really be paid danger money.

With the hollow, limp-dick promises of COP26 behind us, we know that we need to start lopping off some of the low-hanging fruit if we want to chart a course for our world which has any chance of ensuring habitability for our successors. Glow-in-the-dark Santa heads would be a great place to start.

I once became the accidental



Photo courtesy Urban Impact

P&C president of my children's tiny country school. There was a "tradition" within this community which occurred every school Christmas party.

Each parent was obliged to buy a gift (value not exceeding \$5 to equalise income groups) which was to be wrapped

in vile paper and handed surreptitiously to the teacher for distribution by a faux Santa at some point during the festivities. Everybody knew that this was a shallow farce.

"You're just Tara's dad pretending to be Santa," the kids would taunt as I handed

them the useless piece of plastic junk that their parents had wasted their hard-earned on at Crazy Prices en route to the gig.

The wrapping was obliterated and tossed on the floor, the packaging likewise discarded. Often, by the end of the gig, the gift itself too lay broken and forgotten in the trash. Nobody cared. It was tradition.

"This is a school, what are we actually teaching them?" I pleaded at the November meeting.

To their credit, the rest of the mums agreed to cast this destructive practice aside. Instead, each child had the opportunity to choose a book from the catalogue to be purchased and awarded by the parent group. One tiny victory against the blight of Christmas waste.

Every year, millions of tons of plastic waste is generated in the hapless pursuit of a festive season.

What will you buy this year for Christmas?

Eulogy for 2021

by Bernadine Schwartz

We're all entitled to have an opinion, it's called freedom of speech and I wouldn't have it any other way, but I'm so fed up with hearing flippant remarks made by people. How easily they make light of all the suffering and death occurring in this world.

They tell me the planet will be fine and say it's been through much worse, or Mother Earth's been here for billions of years, she's just going through another cycle. Have these people got access to privileged information? Is it a document maybe, signed and sealed, and only they know its whereabouts?

Nope! No facts, not a shred of evidence, just another way to ease their conscience.

Well what about the here and now? How I wish they could view the planet as a whole from where they stand, then they'd witness all the pain and suffering firsthand.

They need to see with their very own eyes the polar bears of Alaska and Canada, where many are now skin and bones. Sea ice and icebergs are where they hunt for seals, their primary food source and just as importantly it's where they breed but they're shrinking rapidly.

In the South Beaufort Sea, 805,000 square kilometres of sea ice has already disappeared, leaving

many to drown, exhausted trying to hunt, and some have strayed far from home in search of food, reduced to scavenging through garbage in remote villages of Northern Siberia. And as the ice disappears, so too will the polar bears. The root cause? Humans!

Society wasn't there to witness the suffering and pain of 937 manatees, such gentle creatures who died in Florida this year. Number 37 is a female clinging to life at SeaWorld's rehabilitation centre, weak from starvation and barely able to lift her head to breathe. Her weight is only 531 kilos, down by as much as 286 kilos and tragically she's just another casualty of warming oceans, rising pollution and development, that's led to a dramatic loss of sea grass, a manatee's preferred food. The root cause? Humans!

I wanted society to bear witness to the completely defenceless and innocent species officially declared extinct in 2021, while they were busy whinging and whining about lockdowns and their loss of freedom. They're still alive aren't they? They've got food, shelter and another year to look forward to!

Well not so for the Splendid Poison Arrow Frog, once found in the rainforests of Western Panama, or the Spix's Macaw, that lived in the rainforests of Brazil, also known as the Little



Photo by Kerstin Langenberger, a German nature photographer and guide who's spent most of the past decade in Svalbard and other polar regions, showing a skeletal and apparently injured female polar bear that has just emerged from the water onto a small ice floe. In an explanation accompanying the photo, Langenberger stated she's seeing female bears increasingly struggle to find food because they're unable to return to the sea ice after giving birth to cubs.

blue macaw. The Northern White Rhino of South Africa has bitten the dust and Baiji Dolphins will never swim through the Mekong River again. Gone are the Pyrenean Ibex that lived on the Pyrenees mountainsides, and the Western Black Rhino that once roamed freely throughout central and western Africa, snuffed out for good! The root cause? Humans!

Their ancient lineage brought to an abrupt end, no memorial service, it didn't even make the news. Did anyone even shed a single tear? But how can we ever forget the sacredness of one human life, with all the pomp and ceremony. We even tally up

the Xmas death toll on our roads. Now that makes the news.

If only I could whisk society away. No holiday resort for them, no Xmas festivities just a day, no let's make it a week, in the life of the ten most critically endangered animals for 2021.

From 1 to 10: the Javan Rhino, the Vaquita and Mountain Gorillas. Tigers, especially Malayan and Sumatran, along with the Asian Elephant. Orangutangs of Sumatra and Borneo and Leatherback Turtles. The Snow Leopard, the Irrawaddy Dolphin and last, Blue Fin Tuna.

In 2020 a report from WWF revealed the planet's wildlife

population had plummeted by two thirds in the last 50 years, and according to the IUCN Red List, in 2020 there were 16,118 species endangered. At the close of 2021 it's 41,415. The root cause? Humans!

Here in Australia, the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) has revealed the coalition propose to scrap recovery plans for 4,200 endangered species and habitats. These include the Tasmanian Devil, the Whale Shark and the Glossy Black Cockatoo.

The root cause? Australian voters! The fires in Australia wiped out roughly 14,000 species of invertebrates, creatures who are the bottom of the food chain, worms, insects and spiders. They're crucial to the survival of all species above them, and consumers are no different.

They sit at the very bottom of the money chain and without them industry and corrupt governments just couldn't function. It was never going to be possible to stop the greed from the top down, just look at the deplorable outcome in Glasgow, but it was always within the means of every consumer to stop it from the bottom up.

But over the decades, cashed-up society has joined forces with governments and industry and they're now a united front. They've also chosen to throw caution to the wind and when it all blows back in their faces, no more oops-a-daisy, not this time.

This time they've gone way too far: oops-a-planet!

- FLOOR SANDING -

New & old floors, verandahs, decks



- Free quotes & advice
- Prompt service
- Quality work assured

• All areas serviced

Rob Clark ph 6632-3342 or 0410-016-694

ABN 93 105 831 192

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

SEPTIC SYSTEM DESIGN

Council Reports for all types of
WASTE WATER TREATMENT &
DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

Klaus Walter 0427 108 677
Accredited Waste Water Consultant

klaus0427@gmail.com

Lic No 144338C



RPC staff with the electric fleet

The best Christmas present ever (apart from a solar power system)

Modern e-bikes and e-vehicles are the way of the future.

You may have seen some of our staff members whizzing around town on their new electric bikes – even our financial controller is in on the act with her very own vintage electric yellow scooter: quite the beautiful specimen and still a very functioning and useable mode of transport.

One staff member rides a DIY kit conversion that was the price of a cheap second-hand car, another has a bike worth double that – and in fact worth double the price of his actual car!

The yellow scooter is an anomaly and probably only worth a few hundred – but a lot more than that in cool-ness. Every e-bike is doing the planet a favour and making a difference.

I must add that we have a fourth staff member now proudly getting his daily ‘exercise’ by trekking to work and back (not even lifting a toe), and there are also two very groovy one-wheelers that come out at the occasional time for extra fun incentive around the office and at gatherings/parties.

These bikes are approved for use on roads and are a fun and effective way to get around, taking the pollution off the roads, encouraging a more relaxed lifestyle that is connected to nature.

Another staffer proudly rides his electric scooter around RPC, in and out of sprinklers in summer, round and around our large mud-brick building with his trademark grin and fav catch-cry, “It’s a great day for solar!” and it always is.

We recommend never running these bike batteries to flat, and to that effect we at RPC hope to soon have an e-bike charging station, as well as e-bikes for sale and for hire (a great way for tourists or visiting family members to see the town).



by Diana Gosper, Rainbown Power Co.

Demand will determine supply so we do hope there is a want for it – we will certainly be championing their merits and benefits.

Recently we helped design a multi-station e-bike charging solution for a massive national company, which got us longing for our own Nimbin e-bike hub, which is what we hope RPC

will soon have.

Yes you have to wear a helmet and hi-vis clothes are recommended, but youngsters in particular are excited by this new technology, and Nimbin has a lot of ‘young at heart’ who are also stoked at the prospect.

With such a close-knit town, a one street town at that, with neighbouring communities, hamlets and subdivisions typically no more than a few kms from the town centre, we know that the whole town will soon be on two wheels instead of four.

Even my tiny car takes at least \$50 a month in petrol, as well as yearly registration, but it is really the environmental savings that matter the most.

Our off-grid salesperson, who of course lives off the grid, says he can power up his bike even at night, even on cloudy days, without stressing out his (mum’s) batteries.

It draws 200W from the inverter and takes 4-5 hours to charge and will travel approx 120km on eco mode.

At the top of their game and at the forefront of renewable energy technology, RPC have been instrumental in some of the policies that dictate solar standards in this country; we are proud to have been a major protagonist for renewable energy since the very inception of RPC in 1987.

If you are interested in going solar, call the solar power specialists, powering on for over 34 years. Phone us today on 02 6689-1430, or email: sales@rpc.com.au or visit: rpc.com.au

Dawning of the Age of Aquarius?

Pythagoras, Buddha, and Mahavira lived almost at the same time, 2,500 years ago; children when Zoroaster and Lao Tzu were old and Krishna was a 500-year memory.

Along with Christ and his bloodline relative Mohammed, these eight teachers may be thought of as avatars of Pisces. There are more.

While the Orientals succeeded, Pythagoras was mostly shunned in the West. Why?

Partially because Krishna, an inspired Eastern ‘royal’, left moral teachings, joy, tasty herbivore food, Mahabharata, yoga, infrastructure. Although he justified wars, and had a harem.

In contrast, Pythagoras appealed to reason, not love and the language of crowds.

Humans’ bodies have two sides, right and left, animus and anima, male and female, brain and heart, Yang and Yin, fire and water, reason and empathy. Right is left in a mirror.

One can approach diet also from two sides, logic and like. Mix and spice them. It takes two to tango.

Pythagoras ate little. Like St Anthony of Egypt, he was an ascetic. The body a temple, materialism the enemy: coil mattresses not yet invented.

He survived on bread and honey. No delicious herbs, fun, nourishing dishes, cooking skills.

Many Westerners shunned this, and remember Pythagoras mainly for his mathematical theorem.

Buddha meanwhile had rejected asceticism, promoted ‘The Middle Way’, layered rebirth, identified

illusion, and taught pathways to ‘higher realms’.

This is not an anti-Christian rave. The Gospels teach beautiful values, give keys to the universe, but like many religions, are seemingly male-centric, environmentally unaware and intolerant.

Abuse of environment was understandable with few humans and lots of wild creatures, but it doesn’t fit billions of people. Yes, some animals can be a threat, and as Covid-19 shows, still harm.

But is it “the dawning of the Age of Aquarius”? The sky is waiting.

People used to think only one sperm from millions made a hole in the egg. Sharp elbows supposedly meant survival. Now we know it is teamwork.

The whole idea of ‘winner takes all’ is predatory assumption. Aquarius is an age of working together, instead of Darwinian natural selection.

Sure, society competes, but as a co-operative group.

Humanity may need a new avatar for the Space Age that helps unite the Global Village, occupy the galaxy, promote teamwork.

A good candidate for that is Mahatma Gandhi. A martyr, his peaceful resistance activism can shed hedonist consumerism worst features, while preserving its best, and restore environments.

His non-violence methods were copied by greats like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Today that would be: stop buying from polluters.

A skinny chauvinist, lawyer and herbivore, Gandhi had superb



Shapeshifting

by Anand Gandharva

political strategies, and wrote prolifically. And yes, it cost a lot to make him appear poor.

Sure, there have been assassinations in India. His shooting, the deadly betrayal of Indira: the price of freedom remains eternal vigilance, but the social contract of herbivores is less vicious than predators.

Humanity has to change. Crony capitalism is hardworking, inventive, meritocratic, lawful, has a social safety net, but it also is a harsh economic model that rewards ‘winners’ grandly, while others hurt. It can be predatory, opportunist, dog-eat-dog, intolerant.

Whoever becomes symbol, Aquarius is herbivore, economically expanding, joyfully creative, meritocratic and caring, renewable and valuing common good: gold for the entire community.



Revenge of the Loon
by Laurie Axtens

The blood has barely dried from his morning self-flagellation before Domme Aperitif slipped on his singlet, white work shirt and went to face the media.

Lockdown fetish

His predecessors had both suddenly resigned, leaving him as the ‘fanatic apparent’.

And it was certainly his time. The pressure to open the floodgates had grown intense. The science didn’t support it though – the science was talking about the ‘waning’ effect of the viral vector vaxxes.

Early vaxxed countries were experiencing big new waves of infection morbidity and mortality – the false dawn of the vector vaxxes was fast reverting back into the boiling tumult of new variant pandemic.

“I’m opening the state up.

Double-vaxxed can fly in from overseas without any quarantine,” Domme proclaimed as he was bathed in flashes from the surrounding camera pack, hungry for news of freedoms.

“And the godless will perish,” he thought.

“You sniffing masses; your spell at the edge of ‘the world cleanse’ is over,” he thought as he patted the spiked metal band around his thigh. The pain was exquisite.

“And when the new wave hits, I will call it the “pandemic of the unvaccinated” – the un- and under- vaccinated – so easy; a tiny minority already marginalised and persecuted, who are at the greatest risk and the least likely to be asymptomatic carriers.”

Oh, the dire delightful irony. “They’re already divided; all I need do is conquer.” Evil laugh.

He laid a cool pale finger on the blood seeping through his trousers and touched it to his lips. It was arousing.

NIMBIN WATER BEARERS
& TIP-TRUCK SERVICES
WATER, ROAD-BASE & LANDSCAPE SUPPLIES
0491 700 105

NIMBIN herbs
 Transform your life with plants
nimbinherbs.com.au
 Find us in the heart of Nimbin: 60A Cullen Street Nimbin 2480

CANNABIS
THE NUMBER ONE PLANT

- FOOD** BETTER PROTEIN THAN BEEF
- FUEL** CLEANER ENERGY THAN CRUDE OIL
- FIBRE** STRONGER TEXTILE THAN COTTON
- MEDICINE** SAFER EFFECT THAN PHARMACEUTICALS
- RECREATION** HEALTHIER CHOICE THAN ALCOHOL

OPEN EVERYDAY 51 CULLEN STREET 02 6689 1842
NIMBIN HEMP EMBASSY



Sonnet IV

by S Sorrensen

Christmas decorations, shops are well hung,
And Coles ham is key to family joy,
Credit cards, Afterpay guarantee fun,
And happiness is yet another toy.

No-one cares about that hippie Jesus,
Who chucked money-lenders from the chapel,
Commerce is god now, it's holy business,
If you're sad, pray to Samsung (or Apple).

But behind Santa's ho-ho-ing chorus
Lies emptiness not filled by gadgetry,
We remember dances in the forest,
Solstice is deep in human memory.

But we left the garden, shut the gate,
And now we don't know what to celebrate.



NNIC SOUP KITCHEN

FREE Community Xmas Lunch

Town Hall

Friday 17th December

12.00 midday

Santa Arrives 1.00 pm

Byron Bay's festival of inspiring films

by Digby Hildreth

Byron Bay International Film Festival (BBFF) returns this month with a condensed program of feature films and shorts aimed at inspiring hope and strength in a Northern Rivers community wearied by Covid-19.

Themed 'Shining Light in Darkness', the BBFF offering includes a mind-expanding documentary about the nature of consciousness, a study of young American men draft resisters, the story of one woman's battle against GM crops in India, a portrait of Lennox Head artist Mark Waller and the world premiere chronicle of how a top Australian metalcore band took up the climate change challenge.

Originally scheduled for October, the 2021 festival has had to tailor its program to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and present a revised format, said long-term BBFF director Jaimee Skippon-Volke.

"Covid-19 has devastated the local arts industry and our aim is to keep creativity alive in a safe and enjoyable way," Jaimee said. "We are screening several films that carry positive messages, inspiring faith in the power of people to get through very challenging times."

Among the films is *Aware – Glimpses of Consciousness*, a work of such startling beauty that it provides something of a psychedelic experience in itself.

The filmmakers dive deep into the great unknown – the human mind – and introduce us to brain scientists, a Buddhist monk, Mexican shamen, psilocybin researchers, and evolutionary ecologist Monica Gagliano, a research



Vandana Shiva with maize seeds

associate professor at Southern Cross University who demonstrates that trees learn from experience and consciously respond to it.

The Seeds of Vandana Shiva tells the remarkable life story of eco-activist Vandana Shiva and how she stood up to the corporate Goliaths of industrial agriculture and became Monsanto's worst nightmare.

While shining a light on the horrors of the mass food production industry, *Seeds* also offers a vision for food and farming in which we can regenerate the environment and human democracies.

Others who made a difference were the US draft resisters who turned in or burnt their draft cards in huge numbers, shaking up the murderous Nixon regime. Their story is told in *The Boys Who Said No*. Inspired and emboldened by the civil rights movement, these young men's bravery helped to shorten the war.

Closer to home, the festival presents the NSW premiere of *Meet the Wallers*, a

portrait of Lennox Head painter Mark Waller.

Meet the Wallers is a close-up study of an artist and his occasionally despairing wife which results in a light-filled meditation upon facing extraordinary adversity and growing from it.

Green is the New Black is also a portrait of artists of high-minded intent – In Hearts Wake – and their mission to record, release and perform their album *Kaliyuga* in a radically new way: entirely carbon-free.

The time is right for such films, says Jaimee, and the shimmering antidote they provide to the disturbance, division and despair of 20 months of Covid-19.

"We are confident of holding a safe, entertaining and, above all, uplifting, festival," she says.

BBFF opens with *Meet the Wallers* at Lennox Head Cultural Centre on Friday, 17th December and continues for three days at Palace Cinemas in Byron Bay. More details plus tickets at: BBFF.com.au

The sea is rising and so are we!

Inspired by climate change protests, Spaghetti Circus' powerful show *Bails of Hey!* is a middle finger response by teenagers to being ignored and looked down on by politicians, media, and the adult world. The show is action-packed with acrobatics, aerials, teeterboard, and most of all - fun. The sea is rising, and so are we. *Bails of Hey!* is not to be missed!

First performed at a climate change protest in Byron Bay in 2019, *Bails of Hey!* has since been transformed by director and international circus performer DJ Garner and the irrepressible Spaghetti Circus' teenage troupe into a breathtaking main stage show. And there's no better place to show that off than in NORPA's state of the art theatre!

"These kids are inspiring. Creating any show is a constant game of problems and solutions. The energy



they have put into creating *Bails of Hey!* is exactly what will help change the world. And why should saving the world be boring?" says DJ Garner

Says performer Ellen Bartlett "We're angry about the world we are inheriting but we're powerful, we're hopeful and we work together to create beauty

and change. This show will inspire audiences to think, challenge and get up out of their seats to cheer us on!"

Spaghetti Circus Inc. is a world-leading regional youth circus providing specialised circus training and is renowned for producing innovative performance and raising healthy, creative kids. An integral part of the Mullumbimby community for over 29 years, Spaghetti Circus has grown from a small schools' circus program to a respected member of the Australian circus family with their own National Circus Festival.

Bails of Hey! is presented by Spaghetti Circus and NORPA on Friday 10th December, 7pm, and Saturday 11th December, 2pm at Lismore City Hall. Suitable for all ages.

Tickets: kids (ages 2-17) \$12.50, adults \$25, family (2 adults, 2 kids) \$70. Bookings: <https://norpa.org.au>

Calling all directors

Lismore Theatre Company is keen to hear proposals from directors interested in staging a play for 2022.

The company has some productions scheduled for the new year but is keen to open the 2022 program to new shows including some more traditional theatre options with a comedic flavour.

"After the past two years of struggle and gloom, we think we all deserve a

laugh or two," LTC president Sharon Brodie said.

"We have a great variety of actors of all ages, a skilled technical crew and experienced back stage and front of house crews to bring your vision to life," Sharon added.

The company requires a director to work with our artistic directors and can offer assistance with budgeting. The company can provide publicity,

design assistance and other logistical support.

Interested potential directors should contact artistic directors Jenny Hicks at 0431-958-991 or: hicksanddickson@gmail.com or Bette Guy at: betimagine@gmail.com with their ideas.

PS. The first show for 2022 is *Running Up a Dress*, 18-27th February. Bookings can be made at: www.lismoretheatrecompany.org.au

Women Like Us raise \$ in Nimbin for DV

The smash hit touring show *Women Like Us*, featuring stand-up comedians Mandy Nolan and Ellen Briggs, perform their smash hit touring show at Nimbin Town Hall to raise money for domestic violence support services.

With Mandy stepping up as the Greens candidate for the Federal seat of Richmond, this could be the last hurrah for this iconic touring show that has brought joy and laughter to nearly 50,000 people at almost 200 shows!

With sold-out shows at Melbourne Comedy Festival and 5-star reviews, the girls have also showcased at the Women's Gala at Melbourne Town Hall. In Adelaide at the Fringe Festival, Mandy Nolan and Ellen Briggs were officially declared 'Goddesses' by the *Weekend Notes* writer who said, "Everything they say and do is the absolute word of sacred truth."

Women Like Us is a comedy show that delivers. A Glamelaide reviewer said, "The audience barely had time to draw breath between hearty laughs!" And it's not just women who love this hilarious crowd pleaser. Men are wetting themselves too. And women who came with the girls echo the same sentiment: "Next time I am bringing my husband! He would love this!"

Women Like Us was born when the two women comics decided to step away from the male dominated comedy scene into venues where women's stories and experiences are centre stage.

The show is two hours of stand-up, 60 mins apiece by these powerful, no holes barred, tell it how it is pin-up girls for what they call Real Women. "We want our comedy to demystify a lot of the garbage that we're fed about being women," says Briggs. "We tell everyday stories about our struggles, our failure to parent, the beauty industry, getting fatter, strange surgeries, obsessions, frustrations, and at the end of the day 'who unpacks the dishwasher'. They call themselves "The bogan woman's thinking woman and the thinking woman's bogan."

"It's not a show just for women," says Ellen Briggs, who appeared recently on *Hughsey We have A Problem*. "In the same way, a comedy show by two men would never be seen as a bloke's only show. *Women Like Us* is about making our experiences universal rather than 'niche'. And as it turns out, there are a lot more *Women Like Us* out there than we ever realised. There's even a growing tribe of *Men Like Us* too!"

Mandy Nolan is a columnist for the *Byron*



Shire Echo, and writes regularly for *Mamamia* – and she is the host of their new podcast *The Split*. She has appeared on ABC's *Q&A*, SBS's *Mum's The Word* & *About Women* and is in

demand as a corporate and club performer around the country.

Ellen Briggs is a national finalist for RAW comedy and winner of Foxtel Comedy Channel's *Be A Comedian*.

The two women have well over 30 years of comedy experience between them, and this year they released their book, *Women Like Us* nationally.

Women Like Us is stand-up at its best, where Ellen and Mandy talk about housework, chickens, love, big undies, disappointment, resentment, sex when you're drunk, fit bits, yoga farts and being a menopausal woman dealing with teenage angst. They're overworked, overweight and over it....

It was perhaps the 27-year old reviewer from Adelaide Fringe who really got what *Women Like Us* was all about: "I'd be offended if they weren't considered pioneers of comedy, because they know their shit and do that shit damn well! Heck, it should be part of a woman's right to be able to be blessed by Briggs and Nolan!"

Women Like Us happens on Saturday 22nd January, at the Nimbin Town Hall from 6.30pm doors and music (Mrs Hippy & The Love Handles) for a 7.30pm show. Tickets are \$40 from: womenlikeus.com.au

What's on offer at the Con in 2022?

'The Con', as the Northern Rivers Conservatorium is affectionately referred to, has been providing music education to the community for 30 years.

Its aim is to create a community of people who are happily committed to pursuing the art of music-making to their highest capacity through the provision of quality, accessible music education to residents of the Northern Rivers region.

It is centrally located in Lismore's CBD in a beautiful heritage-listed building, and is now fully accessible with the recently installed lift.

The Conservatorium delivers two types of programs: Community Music and the Music in Schools Program.

Community Music is just that – music for the whole community. Whether you are 18 months old or 81 years old, there is something for you at the Conservatorium.

We offer everything from group classes in Early Childhood Music, individual tuition in the instrument of your choice, through to a wide range of ensemble opportunities and professional development for music educators, childrens' services and community sector workers.

All classes in Community Music follow the Department of Education School terms and are held on site in our historic building, except for our outreach Early Childhood Music classes and Zoom classes that can be arranged.

Performance opportunities are available to students at our Twilight Concerts in weeks 3, 6 and 9 of every



term, and at other special events during the year including our Visiting Artists Program and the Northern Rivers Youth Orchestra.

We also offer a number of dynamic music programs in our outreach program to schools called Music in Schools that can complement and enhance existing music programs in schools.

Our locally-based, professionally qualified, talented and dedicated tutors

provide one on one, small group, and/or ensemble tuition, in response to the particular needs of the school community, offering students a high quality music education and inspiring musical experience during school hours.

Enrolments for 2022 are open now. For more information or enrolment check out the website: <https://nrcac.edu.au> or phone 02 6621-2266.

Uke lessons Zooming around the world

by Andrea Soler

I have recently developed on-line ukulele Zoom lessons for children and adults.

All you need is a ukulele and a smart phone or device with a webcam. I already have students in Australia and the UK, and it has been such a wonderful experience teaching a diverse range of abilities and ages.

The ukulele is a fun and easy instrument to learn. It's a great way to reduce stress, create a new hobby, sing along with and play music with others.

I tailor lessons to each individual student. We cover chords, strumming, finger picking, melody, how to tune, restring and sing along to your favourite songs too.

On-line Zoom lessons are a surprisingly fun and engaging way to learn. I've had feedback from students saying they love the exercises I give them, and they're getting so much out of



the lessons, and can't wait for the next one.

I will be running Zoom lessons during the school holidays, which provides a fun, boredom-buster activity for children aged six and over. You can purchase a block of four weekly lessons which I recommend as a way to kick some ukulele goals.

If you're interested in finding out more about uke lessons, check out my website for more info: andreasoler.com/ukulele-lessons



NRC | Northern Rivers
CONSERVATORIUM

Your place in music

ENROL TODAY.
FIND YOUR
PLACE IN
MUSIC.



6621 2266
nrcac.edu.au

FOLLOW US ON: