

## Human Rights Day 2020



Photos: Chibo Mertineit



# Mad mission to clear rail line

For the past 16 years, the local community has done little but argue about how the disused Casino to Murwillumbah rail line should be used (apart from a small 3km section from Bayshore Drive to Byron Bay that was resurrected to run a 'solar train' from the town centre in December 2017).

On one side we have TOOT (Trains On Our Tracks) and the NRRAG (Northern Rivers Railway Action Group) who want to see the return of a rail service. On the other is the NRRRT (Northern Rivers Rail Trail) who want to see the railway line converted to a cycle/walking trail.

The local council has proposed a compromise where the railway infrastructure remains in place and is repaired and a cycle/walking trail is build alongside the railway line.

Recently, Byron Council decided to prioritise the Byron Bay to Tyagarah section of the line to investigate running a shuttle service on the line to take some pressure off the heavily congested Ewingsdale Rd which is the main entry point to Byron Bay.

The problem is, much of the line had become so overgrown in the past 16 years that no-one from the council or their consultant engineers had actually looked at any part of this section, so



Day 37: 35 metres cleared in two hours, 2190 metres total cleared as of December 27.

they were flying blind. People had strong opinions but were operating in an information vacuum.

That's where David Michie's 'Mad Mission' comes in – a one-man plan to clear the line by hand, one day at a time, to a point where council staff and engineers can safely access the line and assess the state of the railway infrastructure and determine the feasibility of building a trail beside the line.

Note that much of this section traverses a wetland and floodplain and is frequently inundated.

The Mad Mission started at Bayshore Drive and David is clearing in a north-westerly direction to get to Quarry Lane where there is a connecting road and a possible loop walk/ride back to Bayshore Drive via Ewingsdale Road.

Over 2km of track has been cleared so far. At the very least the result of the mission will allow people to walk the line safely and develop an informed view about how it might best be used.

Follow the progress of Michie's Mad Mission on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/MichiesMadMission](https://www.facebook.com/MichiesMadMission)

## Letters

[nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com](mailto:nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com)

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.

### We are losing our soil

Pitt Street farmers really do not know how to run sustainable farms.

Some years ago I visited Roma to see the wild-flowers blooming. Only tiny remnants of once large National Parks and Reserves were left.

The remaining land was owned by wealthy Pitt Street farmers demanding maximum profits, were overstocked and hardly had any trees to shade their cattle. During drought they graze the long paddock.

National Parks staff had to shoot roos in case they stole wealthy Pitt Street farmers' grass.

I did a circuit through Mitchell, Charleville, Cunnamulla, St George and back.

Wild Goats denude bushes, grass and eat the bark off trees which die, increasing desert areas.

Roma Council had allowed signs – showing visiting farmers how to do Riparian Vegetation which can heal gully and sheet erosion – to fade and be almost unreadable.

Riparian Vegetation stops our soils during floods flow down rivers into dams now 1/3rd full of soil or flowing out into the ocean smothering sea-grass and coral reefs.

They were now mostly a sales office for farms and developments.

However, the Info Centres in each town had great activities like Star Gazing by a woman who had telescopes.

They had tours of historic museums, art galleries and you buy work by local artists.

The pubs in which you stay have their own historical artifacts and tours. Museum tours are often run by school teachers and farmers' wives.

Anne Sutherland  
Robina Qld

### Open letter to the Queen

Her Majesty the Queen, Buckingham Palace, London SW1A 1AA

Madam, Journalist Julian Assange is being held in one of your prisons, the notorious Belmarsh.

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, "Mr Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic anxiety and intense psychological trauma."

His legal rights have been trampled even to the point of eavesdropping on sacrosanct communications between himself and his legal team, whilst crucial documentation for his defence has been withheld.

Clearly, he is a political



prisoner with no hope of a fair and just legal hearing.

Your Majesty, you used your Royal Prerogative of Mercy on behalf of convicted murderer, Steven Gallant who, thanks to your intervention, is to be considered for release on parole ten months early.

On the other hand, Julian Assange, innocent of any wrongdoing, posted millions of top secret documents about high level gross violations of human rights, like the infamous US gunship massacre of innocent civilians in Baghdad ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLic1Y3re-A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLic1Y3re-A)).

He is being persecuted while the US Apache helicopter murderers remain at large.

How much more deserving of your intervention is Julian whose only "crime" has been to tell the truth about nefarious acts which powerful forces would prefer kept hidden?

In my [Change.org](http://chnge.org) petition, 4,420 people called on you to order Mr Assange's release (<http://chnge.org/petition/4420>).

We all hope you will use your good office to uphold the law and order the release of this good man.

This letter was read out publicly at a rally of support for Julian Assange in Byron Bay, NSW, Australia.

I have the honour to be, Madam, Your Majesty's humble and obedient servant.

Gareth W R Smith  
Byron Bay

## Notices

### Accommodation wanted

Looking for a self-contained abode out of town to rent for one year. Nimbin surrounds. Phone Meah on 0487-246-710.

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Victron 24 volt 50 amp battery charger very good condition \$800. Dometic 90 l gas electric fridge good condition \$700. Contact Michael Ross 0438-522-053 or email: [mrrned1962@gmail.com](mailto:mrrned1962@gmail.com)

### Open Learning classes

Nimbin Open Learning hope to resume regular classes in 2021, beginning on 10th February, with enrolments open in the preceding week. Previous classes have included yoga, tai chi, creative writing, art, languages, crafts and personal development subjects. If you have a skill or interest you would like to share, let us know on 6689-1477 or on Facebook at: [nimbinopenlearning](https://www.facebook.com/nimbinopenlearning) We will finalise our timetable during January, and hope to run a selection of classes throughout the year.

### Video production equipment wanted

YouTube artist at 'Blessings Infinite' seeking quality working sound, filming and photography gear, including accessories you no longer use, to make heart-based nature-inspired videos go next level. Can pick up Northern Rivers region and surrounds. Contact Rachael 0430-113-661, or email: [shazam\\_purple@yahoo.com.au](mailto:shazam_purple@yahoo.com.au)

### Oral Roberts calendar

To all those (40+) people who ordered the amazing calendar from Oral Roberts, please pick them up from Nimbin Environment Centre or Wai:bal Aboriginal Culture Centre (\$30). Buglebay!

## About us

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### NEXT DEADLINE:

Wednesday 27th January

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



# Community purchases missing link for walking track



by Teresa Biscoe, co-ordinator, Nimbin Community Centre

After the difficulties of the last few years with the loss due to fire of the iconic Rainbow Café and Nimbin Museum from the heart of the Village; drops in visitor numbers; Cyclone Debbie; drought; the bushfire in November 2019 and then the 2020 global pandemic to top it all off, it is great to have some good news for our village.

2021 promises to bring some new and exciting projects that will enhance and improve village amenity and infrastructure.

### The Rainbow Road

The Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, the Nimbin Community Centre and the Lismore City Council have been working together in partnership over the last few months to prepare a funding application to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for the long-heralded Rainbow Road Walking Track Project.

This is a substantial and important infrastructure project for the village that promises to be a major visitor attraction and addition to our public recreation zones for the village residents.

It will provide opportunities for education, application of new technology and creation of new experiences. Showcasing features of sustainability, bird-watching, rainforest regeneration and promoting the values of 'Aquarius'; it is unique.

Located within a stunning landscape, Rainbow Road will provide a cultural space for collaborative opportunities between local indigenous communities and the arts and the tourism sectors. It will add enormous value to visitor experiences of the tens of thousands who visit Nimbin each year, while providing valuable recreational opportunities for locals.

It provides a cultural space for collaboration between the arts and tourism sectors, and encapsulates Nimbin's vision for a nature-based tourism product that showcases its World Heritage-listed natural beauty.

It is a tourism product that will strengthen the community's social and economic resilience to disaster. The more resilient our community the better placed we are to deal with natural disasters – no doubt a feature of our future.

The grant, if successful, will see a walking trail constructed from Cullen Street through to Alternative Way and Cecil Street, traversing wetlands and areas that have been long neglected by the village, but are currently being rehabilitated.

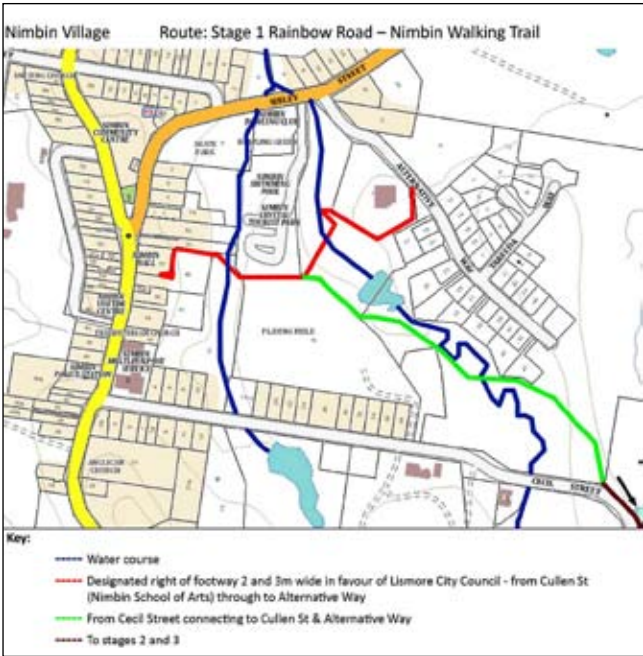
I would like to thank and congratulate the small group of people who have worked so hard to gather and process the information needed in the application for such a big infrastructure project. They are: Diana Roberts, Dr Kitty van Vuuren, Dr Wil Polson and Martin Soutar (LCC).

### Acquisition of 11A Alternative Way

The Nimbin Community Centre is excited, pleased and proud to announce the successful acquisition of the property at 11A Alternative Way for the Nimbin Rainbow Road Walking Track Project. The contracts were signed by the Nimbin Community Centre Executive and the deposit was paid just before Christmas.

This parcel of land is integral for the success of the Rainbow Road Project and when it became available for purchase while the funding application was being developed, we saw an opportunity to secure this for the community.

The Rainbow Road crosses this 2.29ha property. Its acquisition will enable the community to develop the land surrounding Rainbow Road into a park incorporating bird-watching, picnic areas, interpretive signage, a sculpture park and, importantly, rehabilitation of a significant wetland within the village boundary.



There is a proposal to call the area Aquarius Park as an acknowledgment of the significance that that initial festival with its "Aquarian" ideal is to the history, development and culture of the village since then.

### Finance for acquisition

The recent acquisition of 11a Alternative Way has been financed by Nimbin Community Centre, Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, Jungle Patrol Street Cleaning and Security, Nimbin Hemp Embassy, and Nimbin Headers Sports Club, in partnership with Rainbow Power Company.

There has been much behind the scenes work between these groups to secure the funds for this offer. That the community has raised the funds required to acquire the property is testament to community enthusiasm and commitment to the Rainbow Road project.

### Donations

The Nimbin Community Centre is still seeking donations from the wider community for the acquisition. We have 60 days from the signing to complete the payment for the purchase, and it would be great if we could get donations in before that date (21st February).

In order to secure the sale, NCC needed to dip into funds set aside for capital works at the Centre, and it would be great if we could recover some of that commitment. We couldn't start a public campaign to seek donations earlier as it would have weakened our position when negotiating a purchase price.

Any donation no matter how big or small would be gratefully accepted and would be dedicated to this wonderful project. If anyone would like to contribute to this project, they can deposit funds into a dedicated account: Summerland Credit Union: BSB 728728; Nimbin Community Centre Project A; Account: 22269890.

Please put your name with the deposit as we would love to keep a record of and acknowledge the generosity of individuals from our community. You can also go into the Credit Union and ask for the Rainbow Road Account.

These projects are a demonstration of what lies at the heart of our wonderful village community; the ability to work together co-operatively to create and improve village infrastructure and amenity for the benefit of all.

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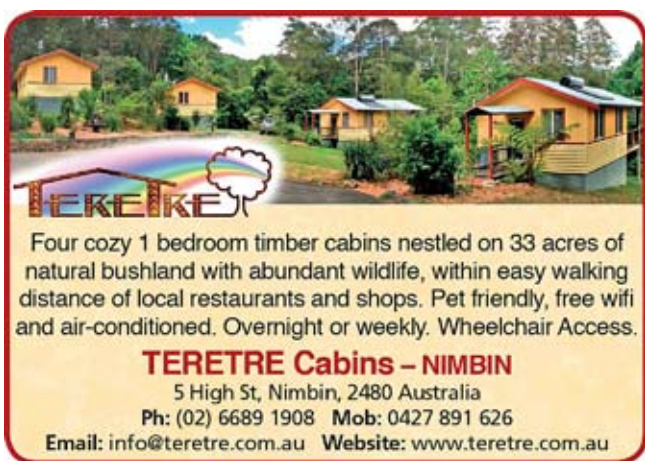
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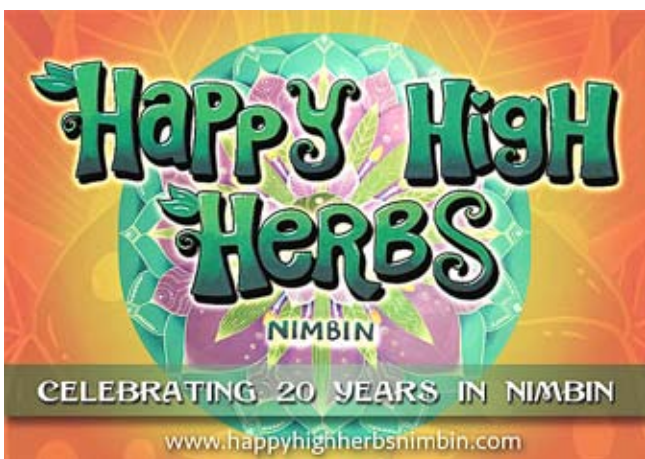
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# Welcome to the New Year, dear readers

2021 has arrived, and the great unknown continues to stretch out in front of us.

We can all agree that 2020 was incredibly challenging across so many fronts, and now that we have arrived in the next calendar year I see that there is the sense of hope, anticipation, and relief that always comes with a new year but simultaneously there is acceptance, understanding, uncertainty and caution.

Because unless you are eternally optimistic, it's fairly clear that we are living in tumultuous times and that things are different now. We are living in an era of change, complexity, upheaval and contraction.

Given where we are and what might lie ahead for us I have been reflecting on what I want to say in this column, in this year's first edition of our favourite newspaper, and of course I keep coming back to community.

I keep coming back to reflecting on just how lucky we are to be experiencing this disruption and change from within our own slice of paradise. Life for us hasn't really changed all that much.

Our freedoms haven't been dramatically reduced, our



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

access to nature and to our environment is unfettered, and our access to each other and to community still exists.

I'm heading to the markets later today where I will see people I know and care about, and we will chat about how we are and wish each other well into the new year.

We are lucky. Many of us don't really have any comprehension what life is like for people in other places, where life has changed dramatically and our inherently human ways of being with each other aren't available.

My heart goes out to those communities around the world that are doing it so much harder than we are, and I am grateful I live where I do.

I want to acknowledge here though, the ongoing impact on the arts and the impacts on the musicians, performers and events people amongst us who have had their livelihoods and lives turned upside down. It seems we can't gather the way we used to for some time yet and I desperately miss doing so.

I miss festivals, I miss live music, I miss theatre and I really miss dance floors. So, for our arts community, I acknowledge the impact and also if you have lost employment or suffered in any other way I acknowledge your experience.

If you have read my columns over the last few years you would know that I speak a lot about community resilience and connectivity as a source of strength and as a foundation to draw from when we are challenged. Covid has challenged my thinking about how to build community without larger events and gatherings, but I think it is more important than ever to continue to do so.

Perhaps the invitation is there for us to be more neighbourly, to know who is nearby and who you might be able to turn to for help

or who you might be able to support if disruption intensifies. I think the invitation is also there to build our own personal strength and resilience so that we can weather the storm.

For me that means that going into 2021, I am focussing on eating well, sleeping well, exercising, getting outside, putting boundaries around social media use, and finding time for simple pleasures and for connection with friends and family. For me these are simple actions that have a big impact on my resilience and well-being and I hope you have practices that can support your resilience as well.

I hope that your arrival into the year has been gentle, and I wish you all the very best as we continue along together into whatever scenarios will unfold for us. Council resumes meeting in early February, so next month I will get back to talking about Council matters as we head into an election year.

As always I can be contacted for community or Council matters at: : elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au or on 0418-639-927.

## 2020 – Good to see the back of you

A huge welcome to 2021. I wish everyone a happy NY and a loving and inspirational year to come. May 2021 usher in a new era of hope and community building that appears to have taken a back seat of late.

What a testing and somewhat bizarre year it has been – from drought, fire, floods, and then the global Covid pandemic.

I could not have imagined that our society would have been shut down, businesses banned from trading, people forced to stay home, and the rush on toilet paper that followed.

On a personal note, I have been experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety. Such a strange and uncomfortable feeling.

I think less news and a greater focus on the many positives in my life are in order. A kind of self-nurturing new year's affirmation rather than any radical shift in my day to day comings and goings.

I'm so blessed to be living in the Northern Rivers with a beautiful and loving family. This is what I need to focus on instead of being consumed by the 24/7 news cycle. Just put the phone away! Hopefully we are not heading back into a lock down situation and the coming year is one of positive social and environmental change.

In 2021, it's time to focus on continuing the journey of healing and reconciliation with our First Nations brothers and sisters.

It was great to hear that our controversial anthem has had a small but significant change to the lyrics. The word 'young' has been replaced with 'one'.

This has filled me with hope that the journey of reconciliation will continue and that the public debate and education process around this important issue will improve.



by Cr Jeff Johnson,  
 Ballina Council

The word 'young' was clearly controversial, historically incorrect and disrespectful, given that Australia has the oldest continuous human culture and society in the world.

There is still a long way to go on this journey. Indigenous recognition and empowerment is something that I hold dear. Over the last decade or so I have initiated several positive changes on Ballina Council including the flying of the Aboriginal flag in the Council Chamber and out the front of the Council building, establishing an Aboriginal Consultative Committee, pushing for an Indigenous community liaison officer position and supporting locally owned Aboriginal businesses by calling for tender writing workshops to increase local opportunities and business ownership.

What really bugs me though is that prominent landmarks in the Ballina Shire and beyond are not recognised by Aboriginal names and that the cultural significance of these areas/places remain

unknown to the wider community. While we do have 'information boards and stories' on the coastal cycleway route (which is a huge step forward), there are still many places, such as the Lennox Headland that are known by names that don't reflect the long and proud history of our Indigenous community.

For example, why is the Lennox Headland known as Pat Morton Lookout instead of an Indigenous word/name that reflects the significance of this location and the local history. My research has revealed that Pat Morton's only 'real' connection to the Northern Rivers was that he was born in Lismore before moving to Sydney and being elected to Mossman Council. Pat then joined the NSW Liberal party and served as leader between 1955-1959. I can't find any connection to Lennox Head.

On the other hand, Lennox Head has a long Indigenous history highlighted by a well-preserved Bora Ring (just off Gibbon Street) and the Lake Ainsworth area where expectant mothers would come to give birth in the healing tea-tree waters. I'm sure that the imposing Lennox Headland also has cultural significance to the local Indigenous community. Why is it not known or celebrated?

One of my missions for 2021 is to further the debate about the naming of culturally significant sites and have them recognised with Indigenous words and stories. With Council elections coming up later this year, my time on Council is likely coming to an end. If I can further the recognition and respect for our Indigenous community, and their long and proud connection to the Northern Rivers and beyond, then that could only be a good thing moving forward.



# Parliament at its best in support of renewable energy

NSW Labor amendments have greatly enhanced the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 to drive major private sector investment in renewable energy and to deliver a stable and reliable electricity network.

In an era marred by partisan politics, the NSW Parliament was at its best during its final sittings of 2020, working across party lines to pass this crucial Bill which hopefully will result in cleaner air we breathe, water we drink and the Earth we leave our children.

The other main benefit of the Bill is that it encourages investment in and construction of renewable energy infrastructure and modernising network infrastructure which will help to dampen electricity price rises under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (EIR).

Importantly, this fundamental shift to renewables is expected to create an estimated 6300

by Janelle Saffin MP,  
Member for Lismore

construction jobs and 2800 ongoing jobs within the next decade, the vast majority of them in rural and regional New South Wales.

While the Bill largely adopts Labor's 2019 election policy, I will support NSW Deputy Opposition Leader Yasmin Catley's campaign, through our NSW Jobs First Bill (still to be debated), to seek a firmer guarantee from the Government that these jobs will go to locals.

We need to take action on extreme weather caused by pollution. We just had the hottest November on record, 2019 was the hottest on record, and natural disasters like bushfires and floods are having catastrophic effects on natural and constructed environments.

As a result of the Bill, there is a projected 90-million tonne drop in pollution that destroys our lungs and our atmosphere, so New South Wales will be doing its bit as part of the global effort to reduce pollution.



Janelle Saffin and NSW Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Learning and Carers Jodie Harrison recently visited the Nimbin Community Preschool where they discussed issues affecting the preschool and wider sector with director Katie Pennant and educator Gordon Elland. NSW Labor successfully campaigned for the Government to extend its free preschool for another year.

We need to ensure an energy infrastructure network that produces, stores and sends power to our homes and businesses, and this Bill sets a framework in place – the Energy Security Target – to achieve this by monitoring electricity supply each year, particularly in summer.

Three Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) are planned, including one in New England which may benefit Tenterfield, and this legislation gives NSW Energy and Environment Minister Matt Kean the ability to add to the zones.

This Bill will be welcome in our Electorate of Lismore because we have one of the

highest take-ups of renewables in the State. We have pathfinder companies like Nimbin's Rainbow Power Company and Byron Bay's Enova Energy Australia, who really understand the need for sound business models.

While another Renewable Energy Zone may not end up being a good match for our region, a more targeted Special or Local Activation Precinct could be more appropriate.

What follows are edited extracts from two speeches I made in Parliament:

"This Bill has been a long time coming. It is both exciting and a little emotional, because the infrastructure, plans and legislation – the policy framework – should have been in place some time ago.

"...I thank the colleagues who I have worked with for many years, including the Honourable Adam Searle MLC (NSW Shadow Minister for the North Coast), who has worked for a long time getting together the policy framework that Labor took to the 2019 election.

"That framework was solid, sensible and sustainable and also fulfilled the objectives of the zero net lung-destroying pollution with certain dates and timelines. It also fulfilled the objective of cheaper, reliable and secure renewable energy.

"... The International Energy Agency in its Renewables 2020 report and World Energy Outlook 2020 report states: Renewables will overtake coal to become the largest source of electricity generation worldwide by 2025.

"That is only five years away. We need to get our act together and have this infrastructure. It also states: Renewables' continued cost declines are changing the investor landscape and the role of policies.

"We can see that reflected here and that is what Labor has been promoting, advocating and driving for the last two decades.

"The Agency also said we are not doing enough to tackle pollution worldwide. That is a key point. This Bill will certainly assist but we clearly need to do more in this space."



## On the same Page

**Nimbin NAIDOC funding**

Great to drop into the Widjabal Wia:bal Cultural Centre in Nimbin recently.

I announced funding for the 'Living Country' book project, in which local Aboriginal people will focus on what Country means to them in the NAIDOC 2020 theme of 'Always Was, Always Will Be'.

Thank you to Darren McElroy and Rose Cubis from Nimbin Aged Care & Respite Services; and Saskia Kouwenberg, volunteer at the Widjabal Wia:bal Cultural Centre, who are coordinating the project in consultation and partnership with local Aboriginal Elders.

Once the book is published it will be available for purchase with the proceeds going to the Widjabal Wia:bal Cultural Centre.

by Kevin Hogan MP,  
Member for Page

**Pacific Highway upgrade is finished**

Great to officially open the last section of the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway. What an amazing job it has been to watch this get built over the last seven years.

This section cost \$5 billion and is 144 kilometres long. More than 3000 people were employed on this project at its peak period with many more indirect jobs created.

This is certainly an historic event for our community. It is now a safer road, there will be less fatalities and quicker travel times.

Very exciting. Thank you to everyone involved in the construction of both projects.



Photo: Chibo Mertineit

# Putting others' welfare first

by Cr Darlene Cook,  
Lismore City Council

I hope you all had a very happy healthy and safe Christmas and New Year. While Covid prevented many family reunions and disrupted holiday plans, the fact that the North Coast remains (at the time of writing) Covid-free is a testament to our community putting each other's welfare ahead of our personal wishes, and staying home.

As we commence 2021 I think we all hope that this year will bring the pandemic to an end, that the lockdowns will have done their job of preventing the spread of the disease, and that we can come out of this experience as a more resilient and united community.

**Dunoon Dam plans scrapped**

After much debate, an extensive media and social media campaign, and an appeal from some Elders of the Widjabal/Wyabal peoples, Rous County Council voted to scrap plans to build the Dunoon Dam from their Future Water Project 2060.

As a consequence, the Integrated Water Cycle Management plan will concentrate firstly on groundwater from the lower Alstonville aquifer treated at Marom Creek WTP to increase supply, in conjunction with water efficiency measures such as Smart Meters and demand management public awareness campaigns.

Rous will now also intensively research direct and indirect potable reuse options (recycled treated wastewater for drinking purposes), in conjunction with its constituent councils and the NSW government, to provide the future water security the region must have if it is to expand and grow into the next century.

While many people are celebrating the decision about the dam, I understand that a rescission motion has been submitted, so the dam and its future will be discussed again at Rous'



February meeting.

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

**Farewell Isaac**

Everyone will be aware that our mayor, Isaac Smith has resigned from Council, effective from 31st January.

Isaac accepted a position as CEO of HART Services earlier this year, as he planned to finish his term at the elections in September.

However, due to Covid the local government elections have been delayed for a year, and that has made Isaac's position untenable trying to be a full-time mayor and a full-time CEO.

Isaac has experienced a very turbulent term as mayor. He had only just been elected when the 2017 flood ravaged the city of Lismore and surrounding rural areas.

This took an incredible personal toll on Isaac as he watched the destruction of homes and businesses. He worked tirelessly for weeks, assisting people in flood damaged homes to clean up and salvage their precious household goods.

The region has experienced drought, fires, Covid and several smaller floods during the past four years, and each

time you would find Isaac at the front line – volunteering at the evacuation centre in Nimbin, at the disaster management co-ordination centre, or helping clean up homes and businesses after the disaster.

We also learned early in this term that the Council's financial situation was worse than we had been told. The need for the consequent annual cuts to services and programs was extremely stressful for all councillors, but especially for Isaac who, as mayor, was the public face of Council dealing with the disappointment and criticisms from the public.

Throughout the challenges of his term as mayor, Isaac remained committed to improving the lives of people in his community. His love for his city was evident as he spoke with and listened to people on the street, always ready with a smile and a courteous and polite response to questions.

I thank him for his dedication and service to his community and wish him well in his new position at HART. An interim mayor will be elected from among councillors at the 9th February Council meeting to serve in that role until the elections in September 2021.

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



# shapeshifting

by Anand Gandharva

The problem with today's society can be explained with pyramids. They narrow at the top, and so the pharaoh governed society. Slaves build the mathematically precise route to the afterlife in the stars for one person.

Even ancient Athens used slaves, grew on the misery of conquered peoples. It wasn't just an invention of cotton in the US, but a time-tried economic system.

It gave us Spartacus, food pyramids, control, empires, the class society, so-called developed nations and 'undeveloped' ones, amongst others. In future the triangle may be our nemesis, standing for subjugation. I prefer balls.

Balls are a recent discovery, they bounce and, with the shifting of the centre of gravity, enable democratic egalitarianism. Eg, a dome, or half-ball, provides shelter at a minimum of building materials.

Forget the pyramid: try to kick a triangular basketball, if one can be made. It hurts and cannot roll. Whether one prefers the oval rugby ball or the round football, the principle of inflation surrounded by material is the same.

The old food pyramid invites us to eat a little from everything, and was compromised selling out medical know-how, to do the 'right thing' with commerce.

It conveniently forgets about health, medical costs, hospitals, nurses, sickies, opportunity losses,

Covid-19, climate change etc to pander to lobbyists.

Yet the triangle can be useful, like in trigonometry and triangulation, but it narrows to peaks and is



therefore exploited in control, security, road

building, leading organisations, bamboozling the majority to become workers, wage slaves. Meanwhile some get all the money. Yet all brains have valuable insights. In a ball, the 'best and brightest' gravitate to the centre. It is truly meritocratic.

Meritocracy has its own problems, like IQ tests that are designed by one culture, or the 'Peter Principle' – promoting someone until they reach their level of incompetence, like a good doctor becoming a hopeless hospital administrator.

The point is, merit is subjective and may not be valued, or be judged differently by others.

The system today believes we are tribal, omnivorous primates, who are engaged in a no-holds-barred struggle for life with nature on a bountiful planet (Darwin), eat whatever we catch (Spinoza), and follow advice by Machiavelli to the state to 'divide and rule' (a huge error in today's democratic world).

Thus, Smith's capitalism releases 'opportunity', waste, cheating and unbridled greed in our society, that is barely bound by his undoubted morals.

Marx could not have predicted that prudent savings would be taxed by big spenders and his bureaucracy would become an authoritarian monster, like McLuhan did not know about Facebook's social media addictions, or Malthus didn't figure about space travel to unite the Global Village with trillions of humans swarming across the Milky Way.

Our destiny is far and wide, and the Nimbin Valley may just lead the transformation to sustainability. It needs balls!

# The only question society asks is, how much?

by Bernadine Schwartz

As each year passes, society strays further away from the purpose of life, and if you're not spending money life isn't worth living apparently.

A world full of pretenders, driving flashy four wheel drives that never leave the tarmac, no going to the gym anymore without your designer gym wear on. I don't know what happened, but someone, somewhere got a tattoo, then somebody else did and suddenly, all these people young and old look like The Illustrated Man. It's a perfect example of the extremes society goes to, clones all around, embracing consumerism in any shape or form, and Australians are right up there.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, four out of every five Australians freely admit they buy far more than they need, and they wear it like a badge of honour. It's a worrying pattern of constantly updating phones, cars, electronics, home appliances and keeping up with the latest fashion, and they very rarely ask questions.

Like, where does all this stuff go when the novelty wears off? It stays right here on Earth.

Ron Milo is a systems biologist for the Weizmann Institute of Science, and he along with his colleagues completed a challenging study, successfully quantifying the mass of all humanity's stuff, synthesising previous estimates of the biomass of all living things for each year starting from 1900 through to 2017, based on field research, computer modelling and also satellite imagery from 1990 onwards, which accounted for all the vegetation and 90% of all living things, from minute organisms to whales.

Back in 1900, the mass of man-made materials was estimated to be just 3%, however since then it's doubled roughly every



Plastic waste keeps killing whale sharks. Courtesy Australian Marine Conservation Society

20 years and we're adding to this colossal mess, manufacturing and producing new materials and products at unsustainable levels that equals approximately the total weight of the world's population and this is every week.

And all our buildings, roads, and everything else we have ever manufactured, from jumbo jets to clothes pegs, exceeds the weight of all living things on the planet! Every living thing, all the trees, birds, insects, animals, aquatic life, right down to micro plankton. It shouldn't come as a surprise but the study also confirmed that plastic is ubiquitous, taking up double the space of every living animal on the planet.

Apple has sold 1.3 billion iPhones since 2007 and rare earth minerals (REM) are the

key building blocks in their production, with 90% mined in Mongolia, and they're called rare for a reason, yet less than 1% of REM are recycled and it's a typical example of out with the old and in with the new, a culture of continually updating and at the same time destroying the environment, and abusing the natural resources of these poorer countries.

A report from the IPCC says it all and I honestly don't know whether to laugh or cry. It warned the elite of society, who account for only 1% of the world's population, that to slow global warming they need to cut their carbon footprint by a third, politely pointing out that it's double that of the 50% poorest in our world, but what's the point of it all when their hands are tied and tightly, behind their backs.

I don't want to hear anyone say the world has changed for the better; I just don't agree. A 90-year old relative recently shared this little story with me and it speaks volumes. She was one of six children and every day, rain, hail or shine they would walk from Stokers Siding, to Uki school and back, a long journey, so they decided to save up for a bicycle but could only afford to buy one.

Every morning off they went, starting from the top of Adcock Road, named after the family, one riding and one perched on the handlebars, while the other four walked. They would ride a certain distance, then the rider would dismount and walk ahead, while the other would do a return journey and again the rider would get off, then two would go ahead on the bicycle till they reached the first, while the others kept walking and they repeated the process taking turns, until they all arrived at school.

Sharing wasn't taught, it was a part of life. The fundamental problem in this world today is we have given ourselves far too much personal freedom. The freedom to consume as much as we wanted, to waste as much as we liked, to be wickedly selfish, to ignore anything we didn't care to know and because saving Mother Earth is optional and there's no law to stop us from destroying her.

Our children will pay the greatest cost, never having the freedom to simply grow old and it's inhumane and immoral that I haven't the freedom to stop them. With intelligence comes responsibility and used unwisely it's a lethal weapon. This study unveils the magnitude of our impact on Mother Earth and the crime we are consciously committing every day, ecocide and genocide, or planetarycide.

No, you won't find it in the dictionary, it's not a word yet, but it should be. What better word is there to describe all this?

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**Covid-19 leaves a viral legacy in its wake, as 2020 recedes.**

One quarter of the Indigenous population live in remote areas, making access to health services difficult. Most communities have health services, but they are often at capacity and ill-equipped to handle the surge in demand an outbreak of Covid-19 would bring.

The Indigenous population is highly mobile, with people frequently travelling between communities, often over long distances. Living in close quarters in overcrowded

# Covid 2021

by Aniko Papp

housing, means disease can spread rapidly and widely.

Then there is the reality, underlined in the latest Closing the Gap Report to Federal Parliament, that Indigenous Australians are already sicker than the rest of the population, and have more comorbidities, which can make respiratory illnesses much more severe.

I reflect that within scant few weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic, at how quick were Governments to act with a rapid response which imposed rigorous controls and borders around indigenous remote communities. Although the purpose was to protect indigenous people, it was revealing at how readily the indigenous populace accepted restrictions which confined them to small remote townships. Was this because this is a compliant population used to being controlled by an alien bureaucracy? Or was it indigenous people accepting the bitter reality of their poor health?

Politicians from every political persuasion were united in admitting that the health for their indigenous

constituents is so poor, that Covid-19 would decimate such communities. How easy to lock down and lock up rather than resolve decades of endemic dire health problems.

I met one old fella who was wheelchair bound, with amputated toes and limbs, and I was shocked to realise he wasn't even 60 years old. His black skin was littered with thick operative scars. I had never seen such jagged sutures on anyone: it seemed like almost random hacking.

Another client of mine was not even 28, yet the protrusion on her bicep was for the dialysis machine. Clinics servicing only about 200 people in one remote community has a line-up of patients for dialysis, the stench of ammonia permeating throughout the frigid air conditioned demountable.

In 30 years acting as lawyer, I never acted for one, let alone a multitude of 19- or 20-year-old young adults, trying to access their deceased's parents' Superannuation, than when I worked as a lawyer in the NT.

I wonder if there is an inherent distrust in the medical systems?

I recall one of my grandmother clients confiding in me, "I don't want my grandson operated on coz when us blackfellas go into hospital, we don't come back. You know them whitefella doctors, you can't trust them." Stories of black women giving birth only to find a caseworker hovering and their newborn removed. Grandparents visiting the latest member of their family at hospital, to find an empty crib the next day and no way of knowing where the baby was.

I acted for a mother who had taken her child to hospital for treatment for recurrent scabies and then child safety become involved. The same mother was forbidden to return with the baby to her overcrowded home until it was fumigated. Fair enough but then where will families in that home reside during the process? Mum and family, after legal intervention, were reluctantly rehoused for a week in a motel, to enable the deep cleanse to occur.

I asked how could one stop scabies in her home when every house in that 10-house community was infested? When every person shared bedding with extended family? When hot water for disinfecting was expensive with almost no solar hot water systems in the sunniest regions on earth? The answer I received was that as long as that one house was fumigated, baby was safe to return. As to the next month

when scabies would doubtlessly return, child protection's response, "That's not in our budget to provide housing."

Governments are well aware that a relatively harmless infection with streptococcus bacteria, (the result of a scabies or skin sores) in the throat or on the skin, can lead to rheumatic heart disease (RHD). Most doctors in Australian cities will not see a case of acute rheumatic fever, the precursor to RHD. Young Indigenous Australians in the NT are up to 122 times more likely to have rheumatic heart disease than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

I had many a young mother undergo expensive heart surgery. I had many a client dead by 30 or 40 of heart disease. Yet affordable suitable housing seems so much harder to provide, then providing hospital treatment.

What will 2021 bring for our indigenous brothers and sisters? More lock-downs if there is another wave? Or will a Covid-19 vaccine be the band-aid solution that our Governments, both State and Federal, offer indigenous communities?

I can but hope that 2021 brings with it a realisation that there must be long-term solutions to chronic health problems and systemic inequities for indigenous Australians.

## How to choose a criminal lawyer



by John Adams

Charged with a serious offence, you will need a really good criminal lawyer. By 'good' I mean experienced and skilled. Like any profession, the hard lessons are learnt on the job, the best being one's own mistakes. The last thing you need is a baby lawyer who's still making theirs.

I was one of these – I blame poor mentoring – for more than the usual five or so years. About this time, I was retained by a quiet family man, a contract cleaner, who'd retire to his shed for a beer and smoke after work, then looked after the children while his wife worked nights.

Said wife had made a detailed statement. Coming home one evening, she'd found him at the laundry tubs attempting to strangle their dripping cat, complaining angrily that it refused to drown, then cutting its head off and getting her to dump both parts in a bin down the road. His defence; there was no cat. We took it to a hearing.

I had an enjoyable telephone chat with her employer, an actual madam, who told me my client's wife enjoyed her work so much she'd do it for nothing. But there was no way I could get that, over the prosecutor's objections, into evidence. He was no baby lawyer.

My client was scared of vomiting and refused to give evidence, insisting on a screen so he wouldn't have to look at her. My first mistake; should have given him a bucket.

One of my skills is close textual analysis

of prose, which means, in effect, spotting the inauthentic in the play of words. Her story was, to me, fantasy from beginning to end. All I had to do, I thought, was demonstrate this.

For half an hour, I led her to what I hoped would be a fatal admission. My last questions were, I thought, masterly:

Me: And how long had you had the kitten?

Witness: Oh... about six months?

Me: What was its name?

She was silent for an eloquently long moment, then came her answer, 'Oh, I think the kids called it something.'

What mother would not know the name of her children's kitten? I had the advantage of knowing my client was innocent. Like locksmiths, and unlike lawyers, cleaners are high on the list of people you can trust.

"Nothing further, your Honour."

Perhaps he didn't share my skill at textual analysis, or his judicial objectivity was affected by this most attractive young woman's demeanour. Anyway, he found my client guilty and gave him two and a half years.

We appealed and got a few months knocked off. I hired him later, after a friend spilled a bottle of red. He had a new woman and didn't bear a grudge.

But back to how to choose. You could google 'criminal lawyer' and be taken to websites with pictures of scales and gavels. With no-one ever revealing, until they send you the mandatory Costs Agreement/Disclosure document, what they charge. Fees can vary widely.

Word of mouth's best, of course, but you may not move in those circles. My suggestion is shop around; take advantage of the free 20 minute or half-hour offers. Maybe get a few to send you costs agreements. You could sit in the back of the court and watch them at work.

When you've got some names, google *law society nsw* and click on Find a Lawyer. Their date of admission will tell you whether you've got a baby-lawyer. Your freedom matters. The last thing you'd want is a lawyer like the younger me.

## What is it about, smoking pot?

by Michael Balderstone

Auntie Viv used to tell me it puts her in the Dreaming. Which is pretty much as good an explanation as I can come up with for why I love weed. Manure for the imagination, John the shrink called it.

All of which got me thinking about how hard it is to live in the Dreaming while managing 2021 life with its endless rules and regulations. It's a full-time job just remembering to do the rego, put out the rubbish on the right day, get the kids to school on time, make work on time. Etcetera. Time is huge. Dreaming doesn't respect it much.

What was it like before watches? Not just before mobiles and 'puters, but before time got so important. There were always the seasons and when we lived in touch with the Earth there was always change, and the weather must have dictated the day a lot. Now we have plans for years ahead.

The weather's perfect this evening to burn that patch of bush, says the blackfella in the Dreaming. The whitefella calls it a Sunday and he's bought tickets to go to the footy that day, months ago. For example.

The blackfella lived in the Dreaming and we've sorta lost touch with it largely. Lost touch with our imagination? Surely not that simple, but as Einstein himself famously said. "Imagination is more important than reason."

You cannot see the Truth without a bit of imagination. It's beyond logic. Beyond reason. Inexplicable. Destined to titillate and frustrate forever. Without imagination in the mix, you just cannot get it.

In Nimbin we're stubbornly trying to keep in touch with the Dreaming.

Drugs have done it, by Gad! "I told you so Gladys, they turn lazy and sit around dreaming all day, those hippies. Drugs is bad."

He might also have said, "Let's have a Scotch and not worry about it." My old man did, every evening, on time.

Drugs certainly have been a big part of it. The doors of perception have been blown open and there's no shutting them now.

The first time I got stoned was possibly the ideal spot. Certainly top grade, Afghani hash no less.

We're camped in the Kandahar caravan park, which was in fact an orange orchard. There was only one other camper, a battered Kombi I remember. We had driven overland from London



in an old heavy J4 Morris ex-police van that cost a hundred quid, decked out with street throw-outs.

It was 1973, I've burnt my ties and suits and set off looking for Gad, basically unable to handle the gulf between the rich and poor. Was it just dog-eat-dog or is there a God, was the quest. We turned right in Istanbul and drove the long way through Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. I saw my first hippies in the Tehran caravan park, a magic bus tour.

There was an old Afghani looking after the orchard in Kandahar and the odd campers. With hand gestures he invited me to have a smoke. I'd been choofing Gauloise in my suits working for the stockbroker, helping the rich get richer, so smoking was easy and I inhaled deeply on his hookah. I had no idea what I was smoking.

He lived in a tiny room underground, a cellar, with a rope bed and a chair and a hookah. I sat on the bed while I smoked and we made useless noises at each other, neither of us with any common language. I had to crouch down to climb out of his burrow and hit my head on the roof I remember, but then stepped out into wonderland.

The orange trees were liquid with multi-coloured rivers of energy running up and down inside their trunks. The sky was alive. Everything was pulsating and happening in a way I had never seen, nor been able to imagine.

And there was no going back.

I'm seriously glad I was 23 at the time and only knew alcohol as mind-altering; totally innocent about weed. So many kids start early, in their teens. Safe forbidden fruit, perhaps.



# MARDIGRASS: ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

by Michael Balderstone

We're planning MardiGrass like there's no Corona! What else are we supposed to do?

Who knows what will be happening on the first weekend in May this year. If Corona is loose, we'll go virtual or minimal or whatever's allowed. Maybe you'll have to have had the jab to be allowed in! God only knows what they have in store for us.

But we have to protest. Somehow. It's all just too ridiculous. Does the Hillsong Church really support a war on the best pain-killing plants in the Creation?

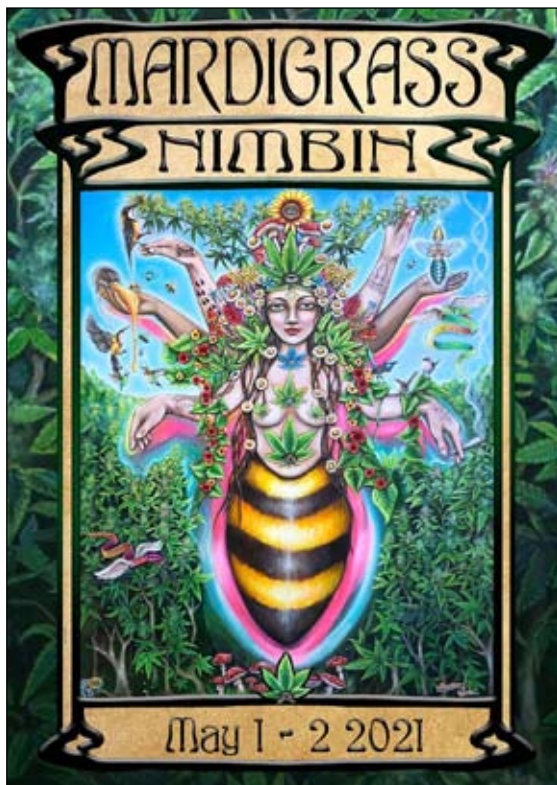
America consumed an amazing 67% more legal weed last year than the year before. About \$18 Billion worth, \$7 Billion more than in 2019. Medical pot is legal in 37 states with 15 states also legal for all adults.

Most states declared cannabis an essential product during the pandemic. On-line ordering and curbside pickup is booming. Mental health and Covid stress were overwhelmingly the main reasons people gave for using more pot.

But here Downunder, where the police get to have the final say on drug policy, it seems we ignore the experts who continually recommend decriminalising personal amounts of all drugs.

And it's not just our police commissioner, who gets paid even more than the PM himself by the way, but Gladys the premier and the opposition Labor leader both sided with the cops against the appointed experts. Why even have an ice inquiry if we ignore the findings?

And how come the police have such power in



these decisions when they have massive vested interests? Half their work and arrests comes from the war on drugs! Why not ask Big Pharma what they think as well?

So when our leaders are just not getting it, we need to somehow do our best to get the issue on the agenda. You can bet your bottom dollar the professional, highly-paid Pharma lobbyists haven't stopped working. It's all about how much profit they can make out of our pain relief. The stakes are huge and the last thing they want to happen is for us to be allowed to grow our own medicine in our backyards. No-one profits then. It's off the Monopoly board.

Performers of all kinds, artists and magicians, poets and musicians, please get in touch if you would like to be a part of MardiGrass 2021, May 1 and 2 this year.

And Uber drug-free drivers, we want to hear from you. Anyone in fact who wants to offer whatever volunteer services or talent to the annual cannabis law reform protest and gathering, do contact us.

If you want to be a Ganja Faerie, or have a market stall, or join Jungle Patrol, or simply volunteer and be part of it, please get in touch. If you would like to speak or share knowledge also... all contact details are at: [nimbinmardigrass.com](http://nimbinmardigrass.com) or visit the HEMP Embassy, or phone 02 6689-1842.

There is a good idea about the saliva testing roadblocks: we walk to MardiGrass this year. If you are concerned about losing your licence, do the trip on foot. Hitch-hiking acceptable.



## A Film Festival for Bangalow

A trio of Bangalow locals have banded together to bring the hinterland village its very own film festival.

Christian Pazzaglia, Ben Alcock and Lyn McCarthy (pictured) all have experience in mounting film events.

"Our aim is to deliver a memorable event dedicated to bringing the local community together to celebrate cinema. In a Covid-safe way, of course," Lyn said.

From January 14-23 the festival will light up the Bangalow Showgrounds and the A&I Hall, and will showcase an exclusive line-up of world-renown classics and new, critically acclaimed, films from around the world.

The opening night promises to be a glamorous affair. Film lovers, fashionistas and anyone looking for a fun night out won't want to miss seeing the beautifully restored version of Federico Fellini's masterpiece *La Dolce Vita*.

"It's 60 years since *La Dolce Vita* won the Palme D'Or at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival and this year Fellini would have also celebrated his 100th birthday," Christian said.

"We are very excited to be able to open our first ever Bangalow Film Festival with such a masterpiece of cinema."

In keeping with the 60s theme, the

screening will be an outdoor drive-in event, to be held in the Bangalow Showgrounds. Anyone with a vintage vehicle is especially encouraged to attend and the dress code will be Fellini's 60s, which allows for a multitude of possibilities from gorgeous gowns and black tie to circus characters, vagabonds and paparazzi. This will undoubtedly be a night to remember.

As well as *La Dolce Vita*, patrons can look forward to the Northern Rivers premiere of *High Ground* starring Jack Thompson and Simon Baker, the winner of Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival, *Descent*, the Australian premiere of *The Truffle Hunters* (an outdoor event where you can bring your dog) and an inspired blend of classics, new releases, film concerts and fabulous events for families.

"With our local agricultural shows, Christmas carnivals, music festivals, and other major events, being cancelled this year, we're looking forward to bringing the community together, attracting visitors to town to support local business, and showcasing some wonderful cinema," says Ben.

Full program and ticket sales available at: [www.bangalowfilmfestival.com.au](http://www.bangalowfilmfestival.com.au)

## Solar in my life, a positive power story

by Elowyn Paitson

I grew up on a Multiple Occupancy in the bush, in the beautiful hills that surround Nimbin village. The property we lived on, while close to town as the crow flies, was made remote by 12 kilometres of rough bush track and winding, corrugated dirt road.

The nearest mains power connection was over three k's away, and the steep, forested terrain meant that to connect mains power to the property would cost many tens of thousands of dollars, even in the late 1970s when the community formed.

The early years of my life were 'unpowered'. We used kerosene lamps and candles for light, gas and wood stoves for cooking. When I was small, our fridge was a bucket kept in the shadiest pool of the nearby creek, later replaced with a gas refrigerator.

My mother built the beginnings of our house with hand tools, her antique builder's saw and hand-drill prized possessions. We had no phone, no TV, and this was of course a decade or more before the birth of the internet.

We installed our first solar panels in 1985, when I was seven years old. A group of people on Tuntabul Falls community had organised a bulk-buy of solar panels. RPC founders, Dave Christmas and Peter Pedals, who were selling panels at local markets along with various off-grid inventions, installed the system on the roof of our tiny home.

RPC was in its infancy at this time; a collective of inventors, engineers, electricians

and dreamers who formed to bring sustainable power to the growing off-grid communities in the hills of Nimbin and beyond. Our first solar installation consisted of three panels and a second-hand car battery, no inverter. I remember the excitement my brother and I felt at being able to turn on a light with the tug of a string.

Our small set-up allowed us to run a couple of lights for several hours a day. We also had a 12v socket into which we could plug our earliest appliances; a radio cassette player and a teeny tiny handheld vacuum cleaner. RPC supplied a range of appliances modified to suit the 12v systems of the day: blenders, juicers, fans and lights.

I'll never forget Christmas morning, 1986. I was eight years old. I woke before dawn and waited through the morning birdsong for the sun to rise so that I could peer down from our loft bedroom and see our freshly-delivered Christmas bounty. So unexpected was the black-and-white television with its 12-inch screen and cigarette-lighter socket, I didn't recognise it at all until Mum plugged it in.

Our solar system brought in enough power to allow half an hour of TV each day. My brother and I squabbled over whose turn it was to choose the afternoon cartoons; Inspector Gadget or Secret Valley, Monkey Magic or Dr Who. In wet weather we nursed our batteries through by reverting to reading and playing by candlelight.

Over the years, RPC grew, solar panels and batteries became more efficient and more affordable, and our own solar system

also grew. By the time I was a teenager we were able to run a colour TV, stereo systems, multiple kitchen and bathroom appliances, and lighting throughout the house which had grown by then into a small hamlet.

My Mum bought one of the first laptops ever made. An IBM, it was one of 10,000 or so built for field agents working on telecommunications. My Dad tracked one down and Kali from RPC built a 12v adapter for the charger. A government solar grant in the late '90s allowed my Dad to install a new solar system on one of our cottages. He ran an independent ISP, Nimnet, from there for over a decade.

Throughout most of my 20s I lived away from Nimbin in various towns and cities and became accustomed to 240v living. When my first child was small and I returned to the bush to build my own home there, I was fortunate to receive the Renewable Energy Diesel Replacement Scheme grant, a 50% reduction in the cost of installing a new 24v system.

We were able to move off-grid with only small modifications to our lifestyle; using our flat screen TV and X-Box only when the weather is sunny, making sure the baking cycle of the bread-maker occurs during the middle of the day when the most power is coming in, or never using the vacuum cleaner during the washing machine's spin cycle.

Small sacrifices to be able to live in paradise, far from the bustle of suburbia. As mains power costs have risen sharply over the past decade, our system has more than paid for itself, while allowing a lifestyle that would



Nimbin Central students, Elly, Sofie and Tien planting trees for RPC as part of the school's Koala Corridors project

have been unattainable in town.

Rainbow Power Company has been a part of my life for almost 35 years. It was instrumental in bringing affordable, renewable energy to my family and so many others; locally, nationally, and globally. It employed my Mum for many years and myself for the last two, and I am both grateful and proud to be a part of a company with such a wonderful legacy, and such a promising future.



# ANDREA SOLER RELEASES FABULOUS NEW SONG



Andrea Soler breathes fresh air into what has been a difficult year with her new single ‘Things Look Better in the Sunshine’, a summery, chilled-out track, revelling in nature, going slow, and the simple things in life.

This song exhibits all the Andrea Soler hallmarks: a smooth and subtly-textured voice, lyrics that let the sunshine in, and a groove that will not be denied.

Six years ago, after three independent studio releases, two European tours and numerous Australian shows, this Northern Rivers singer-songwriter took time out to start a family and build a home in the hills near Nimbin.

Then, during lockdown, Andrea used the time to create and collaborate on new tracks with producer David White (Ed Sheeran touring stage production).

Musicians in Australia and the UK included drummer Steve ‘Smiley’ Barnard (Robbie Williams, Lily Allen, and Billy Bragg), James Ross and slide guitarist Jason Lowe.

Now her fans, and the whole world, can enjoy the result – and dip into some Andrea Soler music magic – with ‘Things Look Better in the Sunshine’, the first of many tracks that Andrea will be releasing from her lockdown collection.

‘Things Look Better in the Sunshine’ is a dub remix produced by Big Al (Abbey Road, UK).

It became available on all streaming platforms on 21st December, the Summer Solstice.

## Music like molasses



by David Barbara

Having heard a little of RB Lonetree’s live music, I’m not surprised that *Laughter and Molasses* is a nice album.

RB Lonetree is an experienced singer/songwriter and a good musician. So too are Michael Fairley and Jay Bishoff who collaborated with RB, co-writing and playing on many of the 11 songs.

The production on this album, RB’s eighth, is sonically beautiful, with wonderful musicianship by all the supporting artists: Parris McLeod (keyboards, marimba), Max Rex (guitar), Mal Webb (trumpet/trombone), Gary Ward (bass, organ), Hugh Jones (drums), Pix Vane-Mason (percussion), Chontia Robinson and Ochitha Karunaratne (harmony vocals).

The album has a good mix of different styles that sit together well. You can hear world music influences in the Mariachi-inspired brass in ‘Geronimo’ and tribal rhythms in ‘Dog Days’.

He shows his Australian roots in country rock songs like ‘Uluwatu’, R&B gospel in ‘Diana’ and alternate rock in ‘Regina Maris’. There’s even an homage to spaghetti westerns in ‘At Least my Baby Will’, with the odd verse spoken in Spanish.

Nim-FM Latin Radical presenter Warwick Fry pointed out that in ‘Loretta’ Lonetree courageously ventures into the hybrid culture of Latin America, the fraught imposition of the European Latins upon the Indigenous:

*For we are the immortals, my pretty one  
We were already gods when this world was begun  
Our blood-line runs right back to the sun  
To Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan.*

So check out *Laughter and Molasses*. Listen to it prior to its release at: [www.sonicbids.com/find-musicians/rb-lonetree-nimbin](http://www.sonicbids.com/find-musicians/rb-lonetree-nimbin)

[www.nimbingoodtimes.com](http://www.nimbingoodtimes.com)



Newly-formed Northern Rivers jazz band The Artisans will be playing their first gig this month.

Overcoming various obstacles to rehearse during Covid restrictions, the players have brought together a wide range of popular jazz and cabaret tunes, together with swing versions of recent pop songs.

The Artisans are: Lee Haslau (vocals), Brent Calcutt (keyboard), Bob Dooley (bass) and Mark Barber (drums); all experienced players with many gigs in various bands around the region behind them, now playing together for the first time.

They will be showcasing their diverse repertoire at the Nimbin Bowlo on Saturday 30th January, 7-11pm. It’s a free gig, with bar facilities and a full bistro menu available, but due to Covid restrictions, bookings are required on 6689-1473.

# The Channon Open Mic is back!

by Ray (Rayzor) Flanagan

After just over a year since Open Mic finished at The Channon in November 2019, we held our first and only session for 2020.

Unfortunately it was not well-attended, and I bear some of the responsibility for that – I was so excited to get the go-ahead from the Butter Factory Tavern’s manager that I did my usual email-out straight away – more than a month before the day. Subsequently most folk had forgotten by Sunday 20th. We were also out of step with our normal 4th Sunday routine.

Anyway there were a few performances. My band, The Tides, were able to extend our prepared playlist and enjoyed, once again, playing to an audience, as small as it was.

Local singer/guitarist Arti played a few songs then talked Kev into borrowing a guitar and trotting out some blues with Arti accompanying on drums.

The Tides came back and finished their second set as the dark clouds began to appear. Ah! Norm arrives to share a few songs and we wrap up the



afternoon as the clouds threaten.

Many hands concentrated on the pack-down but, alas, we were unable to outpace the approaching storm. We managed to secure the equipment under one of the gazebos, then sat tight while the rain-heavy clouds emptied their load.

The rain eased long enough to pack the equipment on board, fold up the three gazebos and bundle them in to the

back of the ute.

So we would like to see you at our next Open Mic on Sunday 24th January from 3pm. Anyone on the mailing list will receive a reminder the week before. If you want to receive a monthly notice, email me at: [thechannonfolkclub2@gmail.com](mailto:thechannonfolkclub2@gmail.com)

The Tavern restaurant will serve meals from 11am to 3.30pm and 5pm to 8pm and is a Covid-safe venue.

# Buy tickets on-line for Educating Rita

by Jenny Dowell

With Covid-19 restrictions easing, Lismore Theatre Company is looking forward to welcoming audiences back to the Rochdale Theatre in Goonellabah for *Educating Rita* for three weekends from 12th February.

This well-known play by Willy Russell is being directed by Kylie Fuad, who has taken up where David Addenbrooke left off when the play was postponed in March 2020.

Many people will remember the film *Educating Rita* starring Julie Walters and Michael Caine that tells the story of hairdresser Rita who enrolls in Open University literature studies to find her tutor is the hard-drinking and jaded academic Frank.

Through their interactions, they challenge each other’s thinking and come to realise



that Rita can teach Frank a thing or two too.

The actors, Elyse Dallinger and Gray Wilson, were asked to imagine how Rita and Frank might have managed Covid-19 lockdown. Their responses give us further insights into their characters.

“I never thought I’d be so disappointed to have time off work. Would usually love some time to myself but with all the pubs closed, it’s

just me and Denny stuck in the house driving each other crazy.

At least it has been a good chance to get some reading done... when Denny isn’t giving me dirty looks for doing it. I did try to give TS Elliot another go though... still can’t understand a bloody thing!” said Rita (Elyse).

Frank (Gray) responded “Well, there is nothing as

good as a lockdown for me to indulge my true passion: drinking. But then they had to come up with a way to teach university over the internet. I’m not a technician, I’m a bloody Arts lecturer! I’ll be glad to get out of the house again, Julia has been nagging me about my drinking the whole time. Bloody irritating, I can tell you.”

To find out more about Rita and Frank, audiences are invited to book tickets (\$23/\$17) through: [www.lismoretheatrecompany.org.au](http://www.lismoretheatrecompany.org.au) There will be no ticket sales at the door. Audience numbers will be reduced in line with restrictions, and there will be other Covid-Safe protocols in place.

It is hoped that good attendances will assist in reviving the Company’s finances after a difficult year of no performances.