



by Steve Krieg
Mayor, Lismore City Council

From the mayor's desk

What a start to the year it has been!

With the excitement of the election quickly fading, January has been a time of steep learning for all the councillors, but especially for the seven new faces in the chamber.

There have been several training and induction sessions, which have been filled with a lot of very

useful information about how council operates.

It has been great to have the opportunity to learn from past councillors, and I thank Crs Bird, Cook and Ekins for their openness and willingness to share their experience with the rest of us.

The most pleasing aspect of the training we have completed is that all 11 councillors have a common

goal, and that is to make our communities the best that they can be.

Citizenship ceremony

Personally, Australia Day was the highlight of the past month. It was a fantastic day of recognition for some wonderful people in our community.

Special congratulations must go to Di Lymbury, who was named Citizen of

the Year. To all the other winners and nominees, congratulations on striving to make Lismore and our villages a better place to live.

It was great that we had two Australia Day ambassadors join us in Lismore.

Thank you to former Olympians Kaarle McCulloch and Kevin Chavez for making the time to come and celebrate the day with us.

We also had the privilege of welcoming 27 new

citizens. It was such an honour to be a part of this very special day for our newest Australians.

The joy and excitement on all their faces was a reminder for me that we are truly blessed to live in such a land of opportunity.

We have a very busy schedule in February. I am looking forward to meeting as many people as I can over the coming months, as it is the people of our Local Government Area who shape the direction that we as a council should head.

Managing water issues

Firstly, I'd like to wish everyone all the best for 2022. Hopefully we are entering a new era where our freedoms are returned and our businesses allowed to do what they do best. One can only hope.

In the Ballina Council election I came second in the mayoral vote, but was comfortably returned as a councillor. Thank you to all who supported me. This will be my fourth term on Council, which is still a great honour and privilege.

As always, my focus will be on protecting our beautiful environment and trying to make the lives of our community better through access to appropriate infrastructure and services.

Ballina had its first full Council meetings on 27th January. A key part of the agenda at this first meeting was to determine our delegates to both internal and external committees. One of the key regional committees is the Rous County Council, which manages the bulk water supply among other regional functions.

It was disappointing, but not surprising that the pro-dam group on Ballina Council were able to secure the two Rous delegate spots. I nominated to hopefully provide a balance, but only had the support from the two Greens councillors.

It's a shame that the deceitful pro-dam campaign was so embraced by the voters in both the Ballina



by Cr Jeff Johnson
Ballina Council

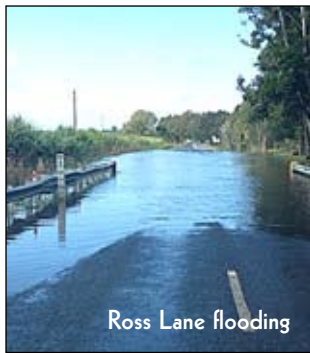
and Lismore Council areas. The effect of this is that the Rous board, comprising two delegates from each member Council (Ballina, Byron, Lismore, Richmond Valley) will now likely have a pro-dam majority.

My views on the dam are quite clear, the Dunoon Dam fails environmentally, culturally and economically.

Where I can, I will continue to push for a greater focus on fixing the existing leaks in the system (which account for approximately 20% of the bulk water supply in Ballina), a greater uptake of the dual reticulation/recycled water program throughout the Rous network, greater incentives for rainwater tanks and for initiatives like the Warnambool Rooftop Water Harvesting project to be considered as part of Rous' integrated water strategy.

Flood-proofing Ross Lane

The catch phrase 'Is Ross Lane Open?' is widely known



in Lennox. That's because after a few days of steady rain it is usually flooded.

Ross Lane is a major regional road that links Lennox Head with the Pacific Motorway, the hinterland villages and rural areas, as well as being the most direct route through to Wollongbar and Lismore.

When Ross Lane floods it causes major disruptions for thousands of people trying to get to work, school, childcare, etc.

Council currently has over \$4 million in grant funding for works to improve Ross Lane, including widening the road. It's important that the engineering designs for raising the road in the floodway section are incorporated into any future work program to avoid duplication.

My proposal for Ballina Council to receive a report on design options and additional grant opportunities to flood-proof Ross Lane was supported unanimously, and I look forward to seeing this key regional road upgraded as soon as possible.

ALP offers better future

I often get asked how a Federal Labor Government would differ from a Liberal National Government.

There are many answers to that question, but almost all of them can be traced back to a fundamental difference in the approach to governing that separates the two major parties, and can be starkly seen in the approaches of the two party leaders.

Scott Morrison asks us "How good is Australia?" It is, of course, a rhetorical question, but it's meant to invoke an affirmation in response: "Yes, our country is great as it is, and anyone who suggests otherwise is unpatriotic."

Most importantly, the question is in the present tense, it focuses on the here and now.

By repeating this question, Scott Morrison shows us that he is a leader without a vision for the future. He is happy with how things are now, and he wants to keep them that way.

Anthony Albanese, on the other hand, asks "How good can Australia be?" This is a genuine question that invites us to be honest with ourselves, and to dream big. It shows us that Anthony Albanese is a leader who is not satisfied with the status quo, who sees injustice and wants to fix it, who sees potential and wants it fulfilled. He knows that our country can do better, and be better.

The reason that I became



by Patrick Deegan

involved in politics is that I too see a better future for Australia, and for our community in Northern NSW. There is so much work to do in terms of tackling climate change, improving our national infrastructure, closing the health and welfare gap for indigenous Australians, and creating secure well-paid jobs for our kids – just for starters.

As someone who has worked on the front line of our social welfare system, I also have a passion for helping people who have slipped through the holes in our social safety net.

Better support services, better access to rehabilitation programs, and more opportunities to develop job skills are just some of the things that we desperately need to help people break out of the cycle of disadvantage.

That's why I get so frustrated by political leaders who sit on their hands and give us little more than slogans and distractions, when there is so much that needs to be done.

We can have a fairer, more sustainable and more prosperous future - we just need a Government with the vision and energy to make it happen.

Look out for each other

The management of the Covid-19 pandemic is, sadly, another example of how the Morrison-Joyce Government always chooses delay and bluster whenever the situation requires foresight and action.

After the failure of the vaccine stroll-out, the Federal Government has done it all over again with failure to secure enough RATs.

The spread of the Omicron variant has also caused interruptions to supply chains across Northern NSW, leading to empty shelves at supermarkets and other stores – including chemists.

The lack of availability of some types of drugs for such conditions as cardiac medication are forcing older patients to access alternative brands, which can look different and cause confusion for older and vulnerable people, potentially putting them at risk.

Given these unprecedented circumstances, it is more important than ever to keep an eye out for our neighbours and to lend a helping hand. Sharing items that are scarce at the shops is one way that we will all be able to get through the coming few weeks.

Keep a supply of essentials, but don't get more than you need. And if you can, check on friends and neighbours to make sure they are OK.

Patrick Deegan is the Labor Candidate for Page in the upcoming Federal election.

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WORKING FOR YOU AND OUR COMMUNITY

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On the same Page

by Kevin Hogan, Federal Member for Page

Thank you all for your support in ensuring our community remains safe and strong. It is fantastic to see Australia opening back up again, and I am exceptionally optimistic for our future.

I am looking forward to seeing work commence on the Nimbin Walking Trail. The 1.1km track will link Nimbin's main street, which features heritage murals and colourful street life. This is an important addition to the Nimbin tourist experience. Great for locals as well. This project is projected to create over \$3



million in extra economic activity.

Work has also commenced at Nimbin's Sustainability Hub, for an added building and composting facilities. The Hub is a wonderful asset in our community.

The Nimbin Chamber of Commerce will also be upgrading and expanding their website and the Visit Nimbin website with funding I secured for them last year. This will also help boost tourism in the area.

Advisory groups seek members

Our new council have been busy with induction workshops to introduce the wide range of the many council business units and activities to us all. During January we attended workshops on our code of conduct, code of meeting practice, policies, finances, and reporting obligations.

For February we have scheduled a tour of the major facilities, and workshops on assets, infrastructure, corporate services, planning and development assessments, and we will be starting to work in depth on the 2022/2023 budget.

February will see the first ordinary business meeting of the new council with the usual agenda of business matters that require decisions from the elected members. We have already been told that there will be a number of motions being put by new councillors to change or amend how we operate, including increasing the numbers of councillors appointed to some committees, including the Nimbin Advisory Group.

With the change of council term, the membership of three Council committees are open again for community members to nominate to join, with nominations for all three groups extended and now closing on Friday, 4th March.

The Nimbin Advisory Group 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, I 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: [https://](https://www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/expression-of-interest-nimbin-advisory-group-nag)



by Cr Darlene Cook
Lismore City Council

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

The Aboriginal Advisory Group is also calling for expressions of interest from our community.

The purpose of the Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG) is to provide community representation and advice to Lismore City Council on local government matters.

In particular, its policies, strategies and services affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA).

To work in collaboration with Council and the LGA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to:

- Improve cross-cultural communications, awareness and understanding;
- Develop cultural protocols for use by Council, in consultation with the LGA's Bundjalung people and Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- Encourage equitable access of Council facilities and services by the LGA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Provide advice and support on social and economic development matters that may impact upon the LGA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Support the achievement of the outcomes towards reconciliation as detailed in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan;
- Provide advice on strategies

to increase sustainable employment and economic development opportunities for the LGA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and

- Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's contributions to the Lismore LGA.

Community members will:

- Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and live in the Lismore LGA;
- Have strong knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, histories and cultural protocols; and
- Bring a range of skills and experience in the community development, employment, economic development, government and service delivery sectors.

To find out more or to nominate as a member, please visit: <https://www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/expression-of-interest-aboriginal-advisory-group-aag>

The Access and Inclusion Committee aims to provide advice that is strategic, impartial and based on experience to improve the lives of people with a disability who are living, working, playing and visiting the Lismore Local Government Area.

The Group will:

- Provide advice on the development and implementation of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-25.

- Provide input and advice to Council relating to the strategies in the Council's Community Strategic Plan concerning access and inclusion.

- Assist Council with the development of any subsequent Disability Inclusion Action Plans.

To find out more or to nominate as a member, please visit: <https://www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/expression-of-interest-access-and-inclusion-advisory-group-aiaig>

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

Renewables roll-out needs social licence with communities

I'm a strong believer in the urgent need for action on climate change and growing our renewable energy sector.

Just over a year ago the NSW Parliament passed the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 – with significant amendments by NSW Labor, and I welcomed this as a long-overdue shift to renewables.

The legislation was designed to drive private sector investment in renewables and deliver a reliable electricity network.

Unfortunately this has not been backed up with a clear regulatory framework.

Last year I lobbied the then Minister for Environment and Heritage, Matt Kean, and said there needs to be a government body to provide information and consult with the community.

People from communities across the electorate have come to me with concerns that there is nowhere to get independent information when a company says they are about to roll out a renewable energy project in their area.

Members of the community have questions about renewable energy projects – about where they will be built, what is the level of noise, the impact on the environment, the use of



by Janelle Saffin MP
Member for Lismore

prime agricultural land.

In the case of a proposed battery storage facility being built at McKees Hill, some community members wanted to know if the batteries could catch fire. They were told by the company that battery fires were negligible. Then lo and behold soon afterwards Tesla in Melbourne had a fire that poured out toxic smoke.

People are entitled to independent, scientific information, but there is no independent body to answer their questions and consult with the community. The Government is missing in action.

In the case of McKees Hill, the private company held a public meeting where there was strong opposition to the development on the proposed site. The company has now proposed a new site but has not given an undertaking to hold another

public meeting.

Because of the lack of process, the company is not obliged to consult with the community.

People expect such developments to have Local Government involvement and rules. Instead there is a lack of process around construction, and the consultation process is virtually non-existent.

As the Independent member for Wagga Wagga Joe McGirr said when raising similar concerns in Parliament: "The state is rightly embarking on a massive change to the electricity grid. There will be benefits for the environment and benefits for the city. It just should not happen at the cost of rural and regional people and communities."

I have written to the new Minister for Environment and Heritage, James Griffin, to again push the case for a role for government in the renewables roll out.

It is important that renewable energy developments have a social licence to operate within a community. Then there can be a better sharing of the benefits of the development.

Renewable energy needs to be rolled out in a way that is structured and gives people confidence as we work together to secure a clean energy future.

'Bali Angel' to run as Independent for Page

Renowned academic, Dr Hanabeth Luke is known for keeping calm under pressure.

The Evans Head local was famously hailed as the 'Angel of Bali' after helping an injured man escape Kuta Beach's Sari Club following the 2002 Bali bombing.

Today, she hopes to welcome a new era of integrity in politics, as she confirms plans to become the Independent candidate for the NSW North Coast seat of Page at this year's federal election.

Hanabeth has worked with farmers for more than a decade; running large landholder surveys and listening to the firsthand accounts of the many challenges the region's farmers are facing. She says that many of these people feel their voices are unheard.

"In both my work and social life I know that people are sick of the lack of integrity, transparency and competency of the Morrison Liberal/National Government. I believe we are in a crisis of truth and decency.

"This government has failed time and again to act strategically or with integrity.



"I support an honest politics that is fair, transparent and accountable. I want to see improved funding and better connectivity of our health and care systems.

"I will fight for a fair future with affordable housing and quality education for all the people of Page, as well as a rapid transition to a carbon neutral economy that supports our farmers and regional industries," she said.

Voices4Page convenor Vicki Gaillard said she was delighted that a candidate of Hanabeth's calibre

and experience had come forward.

"Hanabeth will bring science and research capabilities, wide local experience and engagement, strong advocacy, and integrity with her to parliament," Mrs Gaillard said.

"As a highly regarded senior lecturer in science and agriculture at Southern Cross University, as well as a volunteer marine rescue crew member, surfing champion, and a mother, Hanabeth is the local voice we need to fight for our region."

New Council, new challenges...

Our first real Council meeting is just about here, and will be interesting and also very long, with a record number of Notices of Motion submitted by new councillors on a range of matters. It will take time to work through all the new proposals that are being brought forward, and I will be surprised if we make it through the business of the meeting without needing to adjourn and continue at another time.

It will be the first meeting where we get into the business of Council and with a lot of work ahead of us. New councillors will be working hard to get up to speed on the broad range of matters we consider in our role.

There is a high level of engagement so far, which is encouraging to see. Since we kicked off in early January we have been undertaking various briefings and training to bring new councillors up to speed and to provide refreshers for returned councillors.

Council is a very large organisation that covers a lot of territory, and I am always impressed with the range of services that we provide to the community. Council is so much more than rates, roads and rubbish, which is an incredibly simplistic representation of the complexity of local government.

The organisation is an anchor in our community, and the work we do is deeply embedded across so many aspects of community life.

For example, we received a briefing on the services that the Lismore



Word of the Bird
by Cr Elly Bird

library delivers and the range and quality of programs is phenomenal, from having one of the most significant family history research centres in NSW to hosting the first and longest-running Human Library in Australia, to supporting people with learning how to use technology, to hosting children's reading programs, to sourcing resources in any of 42 different languages.

I was so impressed to hear about all of the good work the Richmond Tweed Regional Library and in particular our local branch delivers. If you are not one of the many thousands of people who are library members and users I encourage you to check it out.

One thing that was mentioned during the briefing was the high usage rates of the mobile library service in Nimbin, which is an indicator of the value that a permanent branch would bring to the Nimbin community, and I hope

that is something that might happen at some stage in the future. Like all things it is funding-dependent, but the value it could bring to the community is undeniable.

There are a couple of things I want to flag for readers as we get into the year, the first is the Lismore Flood Plain Management Plan which will be open for a range of community engagement processes in the coming months.

The initial stage of this is happening now on: yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au so please log in and join the conversation to talk about what our flood planning will look like into the future.

The other thing I want to plug is the launch of the 'Community Carers and Responders' project which is being spearheaded by Resilient Byron.

This project aims to train up 100 community carers across the Northern Rivers who will be trained in a range of disaster resilience skills.

It's an exciting project, and I strongly recommend that anyone who is interested in caring for and supporting your community register for the program which is totally free.

You can find it on Facebook or on their website: www.ccrnetwork.org.au

Take care out there, and I hope to see you somewhere as we settle into the rhythm of the year.

I can be contacted at: elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au or on 0418-639-927. You can also find me on Facebook: [Cr Elly Bird](#)

We could be non-binary about a lot more than gender

There are two types of people in the world: those who think in binaries... and then there's everybody else.

While gender may be the issue around which the idea of non-binarity is becoming familiar (an overdue recognition of the variety of individual experience), it is worth pondering just how much more non-binary we could all be, in relation to every issue.

We have evolved in a beautifully rich, complex, unpredictable swirling universe in which temporary states of order (like galaxies, planets, ecosystems and the species that depend on them) have emerged from the great beautiful formless underlying chaos of existence.

Faced with such an immense, unpredictable world, it is little wonder that humans have so often sought to withdraw into simplifications in a desperate search for certainty. Religion is probably the greatest example of the drug of certainty to which humans are so easily addicted. But the addiction to certainty is widespread in the form of rigid belief systems, and an obsession with being right. Complex social and political issues routinely get reduced to simplistic binaries that obstruct our capacity to understand and respond effectively.

Maybe it's because we have a left and a right side that binary thinking seems so natural to humans (and maybe that's why octopuses have such large brains), but it isn't an adequate way to carve up the world around us. Simple binaries not only misrepresent the real diversity out there, they are also a tool for manipulating how we think.

Political propaganda thrives on creating false binaries to corral people to one side or another. Them vs us, the virtue-signalling self vs the deficient other, the true believers vs the heretics, the noble citizen vs the deviant. Our social media echo chambers reinforce these divisions and modern life provides a constant reminder of the risk descending into this bonfire of the certainties.

The world is not neatly divided into binary couplets like oppressor/oppressed; victim/perpetrator; ethical/unethical; goodies/baddies, but these binaries all serve to suppress discussion about the complexities, nuances and context. The old George W Bush trick of saying "You are either with us or against us" is a manipulative device to quash debate. Sadly, once people take up their position on one side or another of these binaries, they often will not tolerate any genuine inquiry, or any alternative position, much less one that seeks to dissolve the binary itself.

Sadly, our use of binaries disables us from investigating a complex problem properly and working towards an effective response. For example, If we get stuck in a binary argument about whether it is overpopulation or inequality that is destroying the planet, we lose sight of the problem itself, and the many inter-connected causes of our predicament and the many ways we could address it.

We live in an ever-changing complex universe, in which each set of current conditions lays the groundwork for the emergence of the



by Aidan Ricketts

next. Part of our problem lies not just in binary thinking, but in the broader concept of linear thinking. The very idea that history is a single story unfolding along a trajectory of simple cause and effect, as though there is a single path unfolding and that we can control and engineer our future.

These are control fantasies, and frequently politics involves pitting one set of control fantasies against another. A politics based on smashing something and replacing it with a new utopian dream, has led to massive bloodshed and misery in the past and will again until we accept that we are all in this together and that even collectively we only have just so much control of our where we are heading. Whatever system we create holds within it the seeds of its own breakdown, and in that breakdown are the seeds of the next emergent state.

'Truth' and certainty are illusory commodities sold to us by religion, by fascism and other doctrinaire politics, by conspiracy theorists, new age gurus, charlatans and all manner of manipulators.

But critiquing the false certainty of binaries, linearity and capital T truth does not mean that we have to let go of empiricism, the possibility of evidence, and strategically informed responsiveness; quite the contrary. Once we get away from the mind-numbing need to have a solid answer one way or another to any given problem, we move into the world of curiosity in which we are free to seek further information and to experiment with new ways of approaching it.

Some people use science to seek certainty, but science itself does not deal in certainties but in curiosity and in evidence. The conditions can change, new evidence can emerge and old certainties can crumble.

Our society no less than our wider universe is an ever-changing complex adaptive system, and we have the ability to contribute to change in every moment in numerous ways large and small, individually and collectively. We will never know the full picture, as it keeps changing and evolving anyway.

It is for this reason that we are better off basing our political instincts on our deeper values, rather than upon certainties and projected outcomes, and remaining nimble change agents open always, questioning always and alert to opportunity. We will always be facing challenges, there will always be problems to address, there will always be repair needed and renewal to nourish.

We have no real choice but to work with what is, but if we keep our mind open to what is emergent we have a focus for our experimentation, our values and our hope.

The god of blame-shifting vs the god of tennis

by John Jiggins

In July 2021, the National Cabinet agreed to formulate the pathway out of Australia's lockdown-heavy suppression strategy to a post-vaccination setting that would allow us to live with Covid-19, the *National Plan to Transition Australia's National COVID Response*. A team of epidemiologists from the prestigious Doherty Institute were commissioned to model the parameters for this transition.

Their modelling was released in August 2021. Melbourne University Professor Jodie McVernon, speaking for the Doherty Institute, explained that a major concern of the team was to avoid a Covid-19 wildfire sweeping the country when restrictions were eased.

To avert this, Professor McVernon advocated a strategy of gradually releasing restrictions, starting once 70% of Australia vaccinated and removing all restrictions once 80% vaccinated was reached. She likened the Doherty Institute strategy to a 'slow-burn', not a bushfire.

"The epidemic is growing but it is happening more slowly, and we have time to reassess and to impose more restrictions as needed. In this lower scenario at 70% or 80% coverage, although we are seeing daily infection numbers growing, it is at a glacial rate in the order of tens or hundreds. By the time it reaches thousands, or tens of thousands, the horse has bolted," Professor McVernon explained.

As the model predicted, the number of Covid infections did rise slowly initially. Daily infections figures reached 1000 per day by the end of August, and were only 2000 by 15th December, in accordance with the slow-burn model. As the more transmissible omicron variant replaced the delta strain, the slow burn began to rapidly transform into the current wildfire of Covid-19.

News that the horse was bolting reached the media on the Tuesday before Christmas, 21st December, with the release of new Doherty Institute modelling that indicated that without the reimposition of low-to-medium restrictions, surging omicron cases could reach 200,000 daily in late January or early February.

PM Morrison downplayed the fears of the Doherty Institute, declaring the numbers were an "extreme case scenario" and were based on the assumption that "no-one exercises common sense". He stated, "The chief medical officer and I just want to assure people that those sorts of numbers are not what we expect. They are extreme scenarios." Effectively this meant, *Let it Rip!*

Case numbers exploded, doubling to 10,000 daily by Christmas, and reaching around 30,000 new infections daily by the New Year, though by then commentators were declaring that daily infection figures were underestimating the number of infections, possibly by a factor of three or five.

That Novax joker

In the pervasive atmosphere of fear unleashed by Covid-19, those who questioned the efficacy of vaccines – the so-called "anti-vaxxers" – were cast by the media as the enemy. According to the Morrison government and their allies in the Murdoch press, the leader of the anti-vaxxers was the Serbian tennis great, Novak Djokovic.

When Djokovic arrived in Australia on 5th January to play in the Australian Open, Border Force were waiting. Cheer-led by the government, a media storm erupted, calling for Djokovic's punishment.

Former prime minister Kevin Rudd labelled the government's management of the tennis player's fate as a national and international disgrace, designed to distract Australians from the consequences of Morrison's mismanagement of the epidemic: a testing system that had collapsed, hospitalisations rising exponentially, frontline medical workers at breaking point, empty supermarket shelves, queues for laboratory tests that snaked around city blocks, a thriving black market in rapid antigen tests, and the fact that in the week of Djokovic's arrival, Covid-19 killed more Australians than the Bali bombings, Black Saturday and Cyclone Tracy combined.

"Each time Djokovic leads the news, there are high-fives in the prime minister's office," said Mr Rudd. "At every stage, the government's strategists have attempted to squeeze more life out of this giant distraction."

When Scott Morrison first learned of the coming Covid-19 wildfire on December 21, there were 4,492 current Covid-19 cases: on January 26, scarcely a month later, there were 52,920 confirmed Covid-19 cases. Total confirmed cases stood at 234, 046 on December 21, and they were at 2,340,046 on January 26, an increase of more than two million in little over a month! That's about 10% of the Australian population. There were 8 daily deaths on December 21 and 69 on January 26. In the same period 1,150 Australians died from Covid-19.

But Scott Morrison had reaped countless media exposures for being "tough on borders and anti-vaxxers" and ensuring that the Australian Open trophy would not be won Djokovic. How good is Scotty?!

Glasgow COP26 – Last stand or breakthrough?

by Warwick Fry

In *Democracy Now*, Amy Goodman made the point that there were more fossil fuel lobbyists than nation states and climate change experts who had access to the Glasgow conference.

In short, Glasgow was simply a ratification of the largely ignored Paris accord and a disappointment. Expectations that decisive measures that needed to go beyond the flawed Paris agreement would be taken were not met. There were a few improvements and many disappointments.

The most dramatic disappointment was the last-minute change of wording from ‘phasing out’ coal to ‘phasing down’ coal, which had the COP26 President Alec Sharma in tears. A minor improvement was the agreement by the US and China to collaborate – at least on methane emission reduction. This was compared to the Reagan /Gorbachev agreement on nuclear disarmament in 1986. (*The Guardian* 13th November).

Australia had an outstanding success in its lead role of climate change pariah state. It colluded with India to have the wording of ‘phasing out coal by 2050’ to ‘phase down’ in the last moments of the conference.

The Australian PR pavilion was virtually outsourced to Santos to promote unproven and expensive ‘carbon capture’ as a world-saving technology. (One of the uses of



Australia’s pavilion at COP26 with Santos’ Moomba model provokes outrage. Photo courtesy Energy News Bulletin

‘captured’ CO₂ would be fracking – which kind of defeats the purpose.)

The flutter of hope at the bottom of this Pandora’s box of non-binding resolutions is that signatory nations agree to review and update their targets every year. Climate Action Tracker shows even if all COP26 pledges are met, the planet is on track to warm by 2.1°C, or 2.4°C if only 2030 targets are met. Under existing targets, the world would actually increase emissions by 13% this decade. The text suggests countries should recognise that accelerated action is needed “in this critical decade”.

The use of ‘target’ and ‘net zero’ as the weasel words of the year ignores the fact that we are already ‘warmed’. We have basically succumbed to acceptance of a ‘new normal’. The 1.5% target is to limit the growth of the ‘warming’.

This could serve to mitigate the growth of the effects of climate change: coral bleaching, bushfires, heatwaves, droughts, floods, redistribution of marine life... Not to mention the sociopolitical effects: water wars, mass refugee migrations... The ‘target’ of 1.5% is set to avoid more apocalyptic runaway disaster scenarios. Ice caps melting, sea levels rising, species extinction... but it does not solve the problem.

To draw on a classical allusion, it is as if Sisyphus were not only condemned by the Gods to roll a boulder up a mountain, only for it to roll back as he nears the peak. The Sisyphus of the ‘new normal’ would find that the boulder has rolled even further back from his original starting point.

Each time he starts over he has to push the stone further.

Australia’s position

ScoMo is doing his double somersaults with a half twist and back-flips. While throwing money at the ‘rescue’ of the Barrier Reef, his government is promoting a coal rail line to Gladstone.

While claiming that our emissions are ‘down’, he is basing the figures on 2005 emissions. He is encouraging and subsidising fossil fuel production while choking renewables. Last July the Federal government ‘invested’ \$260 million in diesel reserves, considerably more than funding for electric vehicles.

The best ‘three card trick’ is the carbon offset and carbon trading game. While the concept may have its merits, and some form of carbon trading is required to buffer the impact on some industries (aviation and agriculture

for example) of bringing emission levels down, the provision of being able pay a third party for offsets leads to the system being outrageously rorted.

As one commentator describes it, you can’t take a dangerous joy ride because you have paid a neighbour not to. The fact that our biggest gas producer, Woodside of Timor Gap notoriety, was involved in drawing up the next offsets trading scheme speaks for itself.

With our biggest buyers of LNG, Japan and South Korea, shifting to renewable resources, it makes no sense for Australia to keep on fracking. Meanwhile 13 countries, including heavy users like Vietnam, are phasing coal out.

Robert Hales and Brendan McKay point out in *The Conversation*: “Despite the Australian government’s recent climate announcements, this nation’s 2030 target remains the same as in 2015. If all countries adopted such meagre near-term targets, global temperature rise would be on track for up to 3°C.”

Australia’s projected ‘target’ (which the government hopes to legislate) falls far short of the rest of the world’s. It will fail to reach full carbon neutrality by 2050. It also entails expanding gas production.

The fact is that simply cutting emissions just won’t cut it. Australia has to face up to the fact that we have to cut production.

As fast as society consumes, mines too are busy consuming mother Earth

by Bernadine Schwartz

Whenever I’ve faced a crisis, there’s always been that light at the end of the tunnel and on many occasions it came rushing up to meet me.

Not today, the light grows dimmer with every year wasted and I don’t need a crystal ball to see a future that’s already mapped out before me. As long as governments persist in flaunting their contempt for our democratic system there’s no hope in sight, particularly when society scares me just as much, standing idly by doing nothing. And I’m terrified knowing our children are not in safe hands.

The logistics of catering to a needy society is truly horrifying when you have billions of individuals full of unrealistic expectations, and easily met if they have the cash. Yet they never question where it originated.

Every single item bought and sold, other than food etc, came courtesy of a ruinous mine and most will find this hard to swallow but they’ve become the essence of our modern lives.

Filthy mines like Garzweler, in West Germany, the largest in the world, is a living testament to the destructive nature of decades of mining, laying waste to 48 square kilometres of land and expected to be in operation

‘til the 2040’s.

It’s obliterated 90% of the ancient Hambach forest, that’s been in existence since the last ice age, the last remnants of a sylvan eco system, rich in biodiversity with 142 species of plants and animals.

What an indescribable violation of creation! All those creatures great and small, plants and ancient trees, quietly evolving side by side over millions of years, together shaping this majestic forest that stood the test of time. Then along comes humanity, who mercilessly reduce it to a tiny pocket of its former grandeur for dirty, brown coal. And even after all that’s been taken, the greedy bastards want more!

In South Africa, the Tautona gold mine gives you another perspective of size, with a network of underground tunnels 800 kilometres long and a living hell where death is not uncommon, caused by the sudden collapse of tunnels, burying alive workers trapped inside. And as usual, the rest of the world is none the wiser.

The Mponeng gold mine is the deepest on the planet, lying south west of Johannesburg, going where no human has ever gone before. It reaches down a phenomenal 4 kilometres, deep into the bowels of the earth, where our own kind have to withstand



Ugandan climate activist Nakate visits huge German coal mine Garzweler. Courtesy Associated Press

temperatures as high as 150 degrees Fahrenheit and their only relief, a slurry of ice pumped from high above. Yet we say, no life is worth more than any other.

Data from *Brilliant Earth* revealed worldwide gold mines pump out roughly 180 million tons of toxic waste into the planet’s rivers, oceans and lakes every year, and all laced with cyanide and mercury. And they don’t even get a slap over the wrist!

The promotion of so called eco friendly electric cars to fight global warming, is only adding to the endless list of existing mines, pushing the demand for cobalt and lithium even higher. Both are an absolute necessity and also essential for smartphones, laptops and lithium ion batteries.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo holds 50% of the planet’s reserves of cobalt and accounts for 70%

of global production, much of it from the labour of tiny children as young as six, living a life of misery digging with the most primitive of tools. What hypocrites we are, commemorating the abolition of slavery since 1986. How can anyone seriously believe white supremacy is dead and buried?

Half the world’s reserves of lithium lie beneath the salt deserts of the Andes, in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, a region that is one of the driest on Earth, yet it’s estimated that two million litres of groundwater is needed for every ton of lithium extracted.

The people of Salon de Atacama in Chile would willingly testify to lithium mining’s criminal practices, after squandering 65% of their groundwater. It’s left their soil and water contaminated and their land uninhabitable, forcing them

to abandon their ancestral settlements forever.

A report from Oxfam clearly shows compensation packages fall far short and when communities and individuals lose their lands to mines, resettlement typically ends with the loss of livelihoods and impoverishment.

Coal mining has destroyed the natural beauty of the Appalachian mountains of America, after years of slicing off roughly 500 hundred mountaintops, a long held practice of coal mines worldwide. Then thoughtlessly dumped over a network of running streams 3,800 kilometres long, that once travelled through the mountain range. Just like that!

What happens then, when mining corporations are done, leaving behind a desolate and barren landscape that’s effectively been made sterile?

Here in Australia, there are approximately 60,000 abandoned mining sites according to the Australia Institute, and many are small, however by Australian law, any abandoned mine requires rehabilitation to the point where it can be relinquished. This includes modern open cut mines, but there’s still not one example of a completely restored site.

Open cut mines can cost 100’s of millions of dollars, even billions, to

rehabilitate but the truth is no abandoned site can ever be returned to its former glory. In Australia, abandoned mines represent a huge subsidy to the mining sector, through the Federal government’s environmental bonds, worth roughly ten billion dollars.

However, the Department of Auditors General have expressed their concerns that government bonds fall far short, and many states are potentially facing serious liabilities.

What’s wrong with us? We’re living on the luckiest planet in our solar system, maybe even the galaxy, orbiting in the Goldilocks zone, where it’s not too hot, not too cold but just right for life. It’s the closest thing to a miracle, yet we’re sacrificing it all, not to survive but for meaningless objects that can never stand the test of time.

It’s that smell of money. It’s stifling the entire world, along with our morals, our responsibilities to our children and Mother Earth and if society won’t change, nothing else ever can. Other than being guaranteed a place on that extinction list.

There’s a big loophole overlooked. Money doesn’t come cheaply. It costs fresh air, clean water, fertile soil and our children’s future and our only Mother Earth. But even now, money will still have the last say.

Cannabis cures Covid? Maybe hippy dreams can come true!

by Michael Balderstone
President, Nimbin Hemp Embassy

When Covid arrived there were plenty of jokes from potheads that the immune-boosting qualities in weed might stop us catching it.

Our healthy, well-fed endocannabinoid systems maintaining our homeostasis would protect us. You know how weed is manure for the imagination!

Unfortunately, it is definitely not true, as we now know plenty of daily smokers around here who've got Covid, though no-one I know seems to have got too sick, or hospitalised.

I wish someone was keeping track of who gets Covid and how they fare. Do they use pot, are they healthy, were they jabbed...? Feel free to tell me your Covid experience: head@hempembassy.net

Then last week a mind-blowing story came out that all the CBD providers are crowing about across the globe. Oregon State University announced a discovery actually saying that cannabinoids CBDA and CBGA can prevent infection with Covid.

Those cannabinoids are in raw hemp, and it's growing legally all over the North Coast, though of course you are not allowed to use it.

And just in case you think this is some Nimbin hippy bull, this is what *Forbes* published after the announcement, as their editor's pick that day:

"Compounds in cannabis can prevent infection from the virus that causes Covid-19 by blocking its entry into cells, according to a study published this week by researchers affiliated with Oregon State University."

A report on the research, "Cannabinoids Block Cellular Entry of SARS-CoV-2 and the Emerging Variants", was published on-line on Monday by the Journal of Natural Products.

The researchers found that two cannabinoid acids commonly found in hemp varieties of cannabis, cannabigerolic acid, or CBGA, and cannabidiolic acid, also known as CBDA, can bind to the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

By binding to the spike protein, the compounds can prevent the virus



from entering cells and causing infection, potentially offering new avenues to prevent and treat the disease.

"Orally bioavailable and with a long history of safe human use, these cannabinoids, isolated or in hemp extracts, have the potential to prevent as well as treat infection by SARS-CoV-2," the researchers wrote in an abstract of the study.

The study was led by Richard van Breemen, a researcher with Oregon State's Global Hemp Innovation Center in the College of Pharmacy and Linus Pauling Institute, in collaboration with scientists at the Oregon Health & Science University. Van Breeman said that

the cannabinoids studied are common and readily available.

"These cannabinoid acids are abundant in hemp and in many hemp extracts," van Breemen said, as quoted by local media. "They are not controlled substances like THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, and have a good safety profile in humans."

Van Breemen added that CBDA and CBGA blocked the action of emerging variants of the virus that causes Covid-19, saying that "our research showed the hemp compounds were equally effective against the variants first detected in the United Kingdom and South Africa."

That's *Forbes*. CBD-rich cannabis, we now realise, is a truly remarkable and safe medicine.

We've bred high-THC into our smoking weed for decades now at the expense of other cannabinoids, especially CBD. But for thousands of years the plant known as God's Gift and used for medicine all over the East would have contained much more CBD and CBG and other cannabinoids. Modern-day stoners have just focussed on THC, but now we know there is much more going on.

CBDA and CBGA are raw and unheated cannabinoids and have zero to do with any psychoactive effect but we are still not allowed to use it. CBGA is probably best found by juicing plants before they bud up, or eating the tips.

Another reason why we need to be allowed to grow our own at home. In the future, throwing some weed in your juicer or chopping fresh leaves into the salad will be no big deal once we are allowed to grow our own.

When we can, some people will grow hemp for the CBD rather than a high THC plant. Overseas they're breeding plants with roughly equal amounts of both.

Honestly, given a chance, it is a plant that can truly help save the planet in an enormous way with its potential to clean toxins out of the soil, as it grows super food seeds, strong flexible fibre, and flowers that make the safest and most useful medicine on Earth.

Don't believe me, do your own research!

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ajherrington/2022/01/11/study-finds-cannabis-compounds-prevent-infection-by-covid-19-virus>

Can ozone therapy be used to treat long Covid?

by Simon Thomas

With Covid-19 infections skyrocketing, we are likely to see a huge increase in those unfortunate enough to suffer from symptoms 12 weeks or more after infection.

This syndrome is generally known as Long Covid.

According to national health statistics from the UK, at least 10% of those infected with Covid are in this category.

Like other post-viral conditions such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), there is currently no proven treatment for Long Covid.

That's why many doctors and scientists are searching for answers.

What is ozone therapy?

Ozone therapy is a complementary therapy which supports the entire body in increasing oxygen uptake at a cellular level, fighting the causes of disease and ageing.

Medical ozone is delivered via specifically designed protocols which deliver precise doses exactly where

you need it most.

With a wealth of scientific literature supporting its safety and efficacy, at home ozone therapy is rapidly becoming popular all around the world.

Why ozone therapy for Covid?

In a recent study of 65 CFS patients, ozone therapy was shown to improve symptoms in 80% of patients.

In addition, several different trials have shown efficacy of ozone therapy against acute Covid including shorter period of hospitalisation and lower mortality rates.

That's why a group of Italian researchers decided to conduct this trial: 'Fatigue in post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV2 (PASC) treated with oxygen-ozone autohemotherapy – preliminary results on 100 patients.'

Encouraging results

The patients were treated with a regime of autohemotherapy two to three times per week for three weeks. Nearly all the participants reported



improvement in their condition and 40% showed complete recovery.

The authors of the paper made this conclusion: "Ozone therapy is able to recover normal functionality and to relief pain and discomfort in the form of PASC-associated fatigue

in at least 67% of patients suffering from post-Covid sequelae. This preliminary evidence encourages further research to go ahead."

What is autohemotherapy?

This is a clinic-based method of administering ozone to

the patient where blood is removed, mixed with a measured amount of medical ozone (O₂/O₃ mixture), and re-introduced to the patient.

It is the most accurate way of treating with systemic medical ozone but not recommended for home use unless one has medical staff on hand.

Is there another alternative?

Unfortunately, while ozone therapy is a widely used and accepted modality in many countries, Australia's hard-line policies against complementary healing modalities make it impossible for doctors to administer it.

However, many people are now switching onto home ozone therapy methods which do not involve taking blood and have been found to be extremely safe.

Will it work?

At this time, there is insufficient data to confirm whether ozone therapy can improve the symptoms of Long Covid, hence the authors of the paper have called for more research.

Ozone therapy suffers from a lack of funding because there are limited options to patent and therefore commercialise the treatment.

Personal experience

I use regular ozone therapy sessions just to keep healthy.

It's quick and easy to use, with a large body of scientific work which attests to its safety and efficacy. Ozone therapy has been shown in numerous studies to have numerous benefits including:

- Increase oxygen uptake in the cells;
- Modulate the immune system;
- Anti-microbial qualities;
- Decrease inflammation;
- Increase mitochondrial function.

You can find out more about home ozone therapy at: naturalozone.co.nz a NZ-based company which services Australia.

This article is intended to educate the public about developments in scientific research. It is not intended as personal medical advice. For all relevant medical decisions, please consult your chosen health practitioner.


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Off-grid washing machines



by Diana Gosper
Rainbow Power Co.

Because I get asked all the time, I have done recent research and asked my colleagues, and read our previous articles, and here is what came out in the wash!

On my small off-grid (stand-alone) system, I use the Fisher & Paykel 'eco-drive' 5.5kg model, but I cannot find the exact model available any more. The good thing about this model and similar is that they use a direct current (DC) type of motor which soft starts, and they do not 'surge' the way other machines do, eliminating that occasional high power output and the need for a huge inverter.

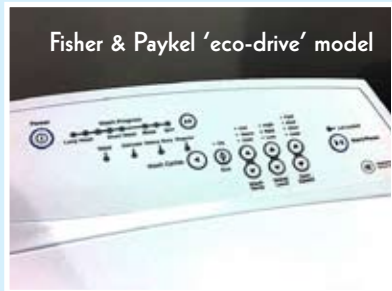
I can (and do) run my machine on a 300w inverter, although I would recommend not smaller than a 600w inverter. These days you could run the machine in the middle of the day, bypassing the batteries altogether, leaving them full for evening and night-time use.

Because I can no longer find that model (new anyway), I did some research and the below model runs the same 'smart drive' technology which results in the lower power consumption, and seems to draw about the same amount of power, in fact it seems to be even more efficient (annual energy consumption 300kWh) than mine, and a bonus it is also 2.5kg larger in the clothes washing capacity.

See: <https://www.fisherpaykel.com/au/laundry/washing-machines/top-load/top-loader-washing-machine-8kg-wl8060p1-92264.html>

A few things to note:

- Top loaders do take more water than front loaders;
- I never load the machine to full capacity. Full loads require higher start-up currents;
- I only use it on cold water to further reduce power consumption, and of course in the middle of the day when the sun is on the panels if and when possible;
- My 5.5kg machine was about \$750 new, and this 8kg one is about \$1300 new.



10 years ago we did an article on washing machines and some things have not changed since then. Enquire about getting one that has hot AND cold water connection, and with a setting where you can provide your own hot water rather than a unit that requires the use of a built-in heating element.

The 'star label' can be misleading if you're considering just the power usage, and water consumption is not a problem for you. This is because the star label assumes that you are using electricity for the hot water; so washing machines that use a fair bit of water show a low star rating (due to all the water they are theoretically heating up).

Most modern washing machines have a lot of electronics and need a sine wave inverter to operate. Don't run them on cheap dodgy generators!

If you would like to measure your machine's power consumption, you can get an energy monitor and test your load, and I would love to hear from anyone running a more efficient model, so I can update my next article. Hippy washing!

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Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

You can't have an apocalypse without breaking a few eggs.

So finally the plague is sweeping the land; making a mockery of the earlier waves of infection; if not death and hospitalisation numbers. And our region, unlike the rest of the nation, is poised to be the acid test for whether it is indeed the vaccines that are the factor that is keeping the hospitalisation and deaths low.

We are, after all one of the most proudly non-compliant populations in the country and our vaxx rate wouldn't be above 60%. It's poor science though. The gold standard is systematic reviews of randomised control trials. We'll be reliant on epidemiological data based on hospital intake. Should be very revealing though – one way or the other.

If it's any consolation, as we face weeks of isolation, perpetual testing and jab mandates, remember four times as many people died from starvation and starvation-related diseases than Covid last year across the globe.

Will this lead to a "Do they want fries with that?" Third-World vaxx roll-out? Is the future just an image of a health worker

injecting a starving child forever?

If that's not calming enough, it's worth recalling that the rate of extinction for other species has increased almost 1000-fold above the natural level since the end of World War Two, thanks to human population expansion. Still feeling put out?

It's all relative; Einstein established that. All species are distantly related, but the closer the relation to us the more important they seem to be.

If it's granny verses the Irrawaddy River Dolphin, its swarttotmaal (so long) dolphin.

It's the same relationship with the starving masses; as they're almost exclusively dark skinned it's not as important – Covid is killing white people, god it's killing Americans, worse still it could kill 'us'.

To be fair, omicron, the latest evolution of the virus, is more infectious and less virulent, and let's hope that it continues down that path. This is a wonderful turn of events for us – if not for the rest of 'creation'.

But I digress. We are, I gather from government sources, now transitioning from pandemic to endemic. So what does that mean? Not much really. It means we are going to accept that Covid is with us for the foreseeable future in a

specific area (that area being the entire world), instead of a disease being prevalent all over the world at the moment.

It's just a change in how we think about it; it stops being novel or new and joins other endemic diseases like influenza, malaria, typhoid, etc etc. And we continue to battle these diseases; they just don't dominate the news cycle because it's just the same old boring thousand deaths from the flu we get biannually or the same slowly decreasing 400,000 annual deaths from malaria, mostly in Africa.

We're all already over it – the vaxx roll-out has swept up 90%+ of the population, according to government sources and if it has long-term negative effects, we'll get a chance to watch that unfold in real time.

And when will the 'boosters' roll-out finish? I fear they will come in the waves, like the waves of the virus itself, but these boosters will receive increasingly less uptake until we get another very nasty variant or new viral plague. Which must eventually happen.

We're in the midst of an 8-billion people strong petrie dish. Nature abhors a vacuum and death will pop in for little visit for us all at some stage.

New lights at the end of the tunnel

Shapeshifting

by Anand Gandharva

An omission by scientists who look for intelligent life in the universe, like SETI, may be that when one assumes that nature creates intelligent designs on habitable planets (carbon-based or not), these societies could also be influencing us, for long already.

There is therefore a good chance of... an ancient, galactic state.

Why would they sit on their hands? Why not spread far and wide? Life ingredients are omnipresent. Its occurrence on other watery planets likely.

They may not have recognisable dresses, shirts and pants, but we assume for the moment they are friendly, and can translate their languages into English.

They are also not the ugly monsters from screens, but decent folks, living on billions of planets and moons. The rule, after all, is: where there's life, intelligence follows.

Aliens may have seeded life on this planet by tinkering with apes 200,000 years ago, or longer, or placed us here.

Alien induced, creations by the 'Gods', or a comet in the ocean?

Further to Anaximander's, Leary's, and Crick and Orgel's seeding ideas, we may be a (rogue) part of galactic humanity, isolated due to this world's excess instability: ice, floods, comets, volcanos, earthquakes, viruses, wars, intolerance, 'worlds in collision', pollution, etc.

Many survivors becoming predators after Earth upheavals. But unification is coming closer.

Mankind may soon discover other worlds, like people explored Earth, discovering other civilisations and untold riches. New technologies, poetry, trade. Another era. Aquarius.

Being a troubled part of a galactic state may explain why there are pyramids all over Earth. Stable structures, narrow at the top, which can be seen afar and mirrored management controls. They have similar angles, corridors and chambers, building techniques, etc.

For example: why is Cheops king's chamber at exactly the intersection of trapped cosmic rays, has an acoustic chamber, a narrow shaft directed at the time to nearby Sirius? (Too small for a physical body, but big enough for a spirit self, water, energy like lasers.)

Everybody is familiar with

elusive UFOs, shaped according to prevailing fantasies, from stars and cigars to discs. Hallucinations from the collective unconscious?

UFOs seem capable of impossible turns, incredible speeds, disappear in fifth dimensions – in short, do all those things one would expect from advanced civilisations.

Earth lies on an outer arm of the galaxy, light years from the galactic centre, a huge black hole. We live billions of years after the Big Bang, in a backwater, near the edge.

Saying the universe is impossibly old and big, is admitting we are miniscule. Intelligent microbes. Compared to the cosmos, much smaller than ants.

Split personalities at that, with heart and brain functions, who live relatively short lives, but merge our DNA.

While drawing conclusions about the purpose of universe is impossible without religious dogma or scientific assumption, it is clear people are on a journey.

The question is how to behave? Like dangerous carnivores, battling all but our DNA group, or tolerant herbivores?

A lasting civilisation in the galaxy must be peaceful, not scary. Caretakers, not exploiters. As long as most consume consciousness, no aliens may land here.

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A moment

by S Sorrensen

There's a light rain on the roof of my shack under the cliffs at the end of the world. The sun, having packed its overnighter, will be back tomorrow. Probably.

Me, I'm sitting at the table looking at the light hanging above it and talking to myself. Well, not exactly to myself... I'm talking to my reflections.

I have done this many times over the years: sit here, at this table at night, and talk to these reflections of me in the windows. (It's like therapy, okay?)

But there's a difference now. A difference that has me staring at the light. (I can see from the corner of my eye that my reflections are also staring at the light.)

The difference now is not the reflections looking older; it's not the now-lined and painted walls surrounding the windows; it's not the highly efficient LED that has replaced the car bulb in a vegemite jar. No, none of that.

The difference is this: There are no insects buzzing around the bulb hanging over my table.

None. Not one moth or weirdly shaped insect that I wish now I had taken the time to find out more about. Or at least to have found a name for it.

In the past, it and hundreds of other insects would invade my shack every summer night, attracted to this shiny thing that had never been a part of their evolutionary history. They were attracted, but it was not good for them.

They would circle the light until, confused and exhausted, they would drop onto the table below to die. A mound of chitinous exoskeleton and hot wings.

A lucky few would land in my glass of shiraz (or it may have been cab sav) and die a happier death. I realised I had to keep my wine glass covered with a coaster between sips.

But tonight, my wine glass, though uncovered, will see no visitation from a moribund moth, only from a pair of lips tight with apprehension.

Look, we all know that the planet is not in a good way. Actually, it's in a very bad way. We cope with this awful reality by distracting ourselves buying stuff.

Or by disappearing into our screens. Or by blaming others. Or by sipping organic South Australian shiraz.

It won't help.

Staring at the light and seeing no insects circling it has affected me. (And so too, probably, has the organic shiraz.) No insects is a bad sign.

Homo sapiens, with its diversity of cultures, lived for hundreds of millennia with an important understanding: that we and nature are one. Everything is connected. Intricately, deeply and beautifully.

Indigenous peoples know this. But they and their knowledges are being wiped out by a rogue culture that seems to have been attracted to a lethal shiny thing (metaphorically speaking).

This one consumerist culture grew strong and took over the planet, unable to curb its addiction to the glossy immediate rewards of unsustainable exploitation and unchecked growth, despite the insanity of it all. It is condemned to its attraction until it spirals into death.

Despite our recent forgetting of our connection to nature, we are still connected to it. Despite the separation modern living creates, we can still feel the planet's imbalance, even if subconsciously.

The planet's distress makes us uneasy. We are all grieving, even if we don't know why.

Look, humanity is not bad, I say, it's just this deviant all-consuming culture that we sometimes mistake for humanity. It's a recent aberration and we can change it!

I nod my head, and raise my glass. The others do too. All agreed then.

The early years

by Jazmin Theodora

I was born at the end of 1938. My father's name was Freddy and my mother's name was Dorothy. They got married in December 1937, when Mum was 17 and Dad was 20. I was born the following December. I remember that my mother's three younger sisters lived at home with my grandparents in Mortdale in Sydney.

It was absolutely lovely growing up with a big family. As a child I had quite a high IQ. When I was about two years of age, my Aunt Gladys who was about 16½ years old, started to teach me to write small words, do small sums and to read. Around 1943 when I was five years of age, I went to St Declan's Catholic Primary School in Penshurst. I had to walk up a big hill alone to get to the school. As this was a religious school, we were taught by nuns and the nuns were hideous.

I was told in the 1950s that I was born without a floor in my urinary tract (whatever that means), so that explained why I wanted to go to the toilet every 30 minutes to an hour. Instead, the nuns used to force me to stay in the class and consequently I would wet my pants. Then they'd cane me and put me in the corner of the class until the next break. I was a very effeminate child – the first day that I went to this Catholic school I wasn't allowed to have a doll. I used to steal my mother's younger sister's dolls as she was only about eight years older than me.

The first day that I went to this school I took my aunt's tea set with me. It was made of blue and white enamel. At the first break I sat in the playground and took the tea-set out of my bag. I filled it up with water and started to pour myself a cup of tea. One of the nuns came up to me and screeched at me. She confiscated my aunt's tea-set and I never saw it again. They caned me again and I was sent to the corner of the classroom once again.

In 1942 when I was aged four, my aunt taught me words like Sing-a-pore. One day the paperboy threw the newspaper over the fence and I opened it up to see the headline "Singapore fallen". I ran up the front steps to the kitchen and said "Nan, Singapore has fallen". She replied, "Oh god they'll be down here next, raping the women and bombing Sydney." She was very freaked out by all the propaganda during the war years.

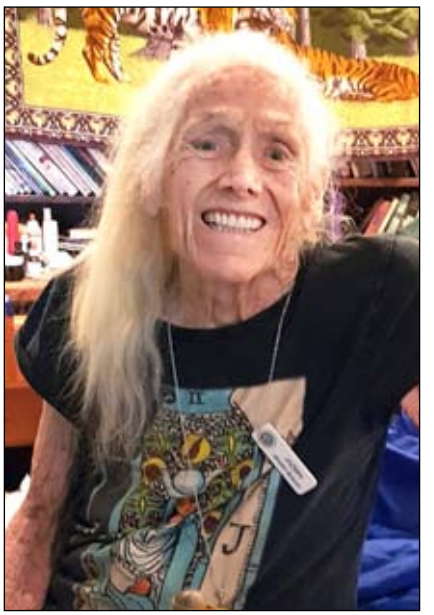
I didn't learn anything at St Declan's School. I became hopeless. It affected my school life. When I was approximately 5¾ years old, I came home to my mother and said to her, "If heaven is so beautiful, I want to go there straight away. I hate it down here and I hate the penguins."

My mother told me that I wasn't allowed to call them penguins. I told my mother that Aunt Mary called them penguins too and that I hate them, I hate them, I hate them! My mother was so freaked out by this that the following day she took me up to the public school in Mortdale. The teacher there was called Miss Stone – she was one of the most beautiful women I have ever known. I only had to go to school for around six weeks before the holidays began and I had to repeat that class the following year. I topped the class the following year.

At the end of that year, my father got a job on one of the largest sheep studs in the world – Bundemar, which was situated between Trangie and Narromine. My brother and I had correspondence schooling as the nearest school was 50 miles away. I spoke out as I had been encouraged to do.

During the depression my grandparents had lived on a two-house block in Newtown. My grandfather cultivated gardens on the spare block to grow food for us and provide food for all the people who were out of work during the depression.

Even though I was very effeminate child,



I was a very good athlete. I could swim like a fish and run like the wind but I wasn't competitive. I did it because I loved it. I think that's at least part of why I have lived such a healthy life.

I was incredibly lucky. My mother's father was an incredible humanitarian who would not allow us to be belted. He encouraged open discussion at the dinner table, so I grew up being unafraid of saying what I wanted to say, and this got me into a lot of trouble sometimes.

I was still 14 when I left school and got a job in a pottery factory by lying about my age – by telling them I was 15. Then I got a job in the office of United Artists where my American boss took a liking to me. I was so blessed. We used to get free passes to films and different shows that were on in Sydney.

I saw Katherine Hepburn and Robert Helpmann in the Shakespearean play The Merchant of Venice in the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney. I was up with the gods and the man next to me felt sorry for me and kept on lending me his opera glasses so I got close-ups of them both on stage. It was absolutely magnificent.

When I left the Tivoli that night I think that I understood the essence of Shakespeare.

The Hole at Happy Hollow, part 3

Diary extracts from an intentional community secretary, Clarice Cleareyes

Any resemblance to you or your community is purely coincidental.

The hole is creating huge problems for our community. Some stupid bastard put a photo on facebook. People are turning up just to see it.

Luckily we've got Wendy and Fred near the entrance. They're stopping some cars from driving in, asking their destination, exactly who are they visiting, and other friendly questions.

They only stop cars they don't recognise, which is creating problems of its own. They don't know everyone, especially the members who seldom leave their houses and survive with supermarket deliveries to their door.

Unfortunately, I've become the go-to person re the hole. Some members ramble on about its future, past, reason for being, and anything about holes, in history and folklore, in songs, cultural significance, uses and abuses. Hardly drawing breath they go on, and on, and on. The mad theories are exploding.

Another two weeks has produced only four more contributions addressing the problematic hole.

1. Geoff reckons it's a plot created by that community up the road with whom we share a border. He thinks it's a deliberate act to undermine our reputation. (Geoff means Misty Hills but won't spell it out because he fears



litigation.)

2. Jill sees a long-term use for the community. By building two walls around it, then erecting a stable surface on one edge, it could become our own private tip. It would take years to fill. Perfect for dead washing machines, fridges and mattresses, often difficult to dispose of. The community could charge \$15 per trailer load. Properly managed, it could bring an income for years.

3. Johanna suggests lining it with a dam liner to create a huge swimming pool. There'd be no chlorine, a la natural, much better than the local pool, always available to community members and friends, summer and winter. We could teach all the kids to swim and have regular pool parties. She added she thought it would bring us all

together.

4. Martha wants a meeting, but not at night because she gets too tired after 6pm.

Darren has written a long letter, apologising for being late with his contribution, with a report on his findings. He lowered a weight on a 20m rope, and didn't hit the bottom. He's sorry he can't come to meetings but he gets too stressed when people discuss matters with so much energy. He'll help when we know what we are doing.

Next step is the meeting. I hope someone will volunteer to be the co-ordinator of the hole. The eight suggestions will go out with the meeting notice. We can discuss them, then vote on a plan. I'll send proxy forms in case someone can't come but want to have a say.

I hope Peter is up to keeping the meeting on track, sometimes he lets people rave on about something that happened 12 years ago, which has nothing to do with anything.

He agrees the meeting should be soon, in the next two weeks, preferably on a Tuesday. So it will be the 15th at 5pm. Jill said she'd do tea and coffee and will get Sally and Bert to make some of those delicious biscuits they produce on special occasions. Is there any petty cash for milk?

I want it all to go away. Roll on Tuesday the 15th. Then I can get on with my own life as it was before the hole.

Music at The Regent

February sees the return of the Sunset Soirées to The Regent, intimate gigs on the alfresco balcony from 6-8pm every Saturday night.

These shows are a feast for your senses, with great music, food and drinks on offer.

Saturday, 5th February features the gorgeous voice and originals of the talented Mr Jesse Witney; Saturday the 12th hosts world-folk songbird Andrea Soler; on 19th February Leif Larkin (pictured above left) presents his Realm of Music; and 26th February will see soul-blues beauty with award-winning Elena B Williams (pictured above right) with special guest, Rachel Heaton on violin.

On Wednesday 16th February from 7.15pm, The Regent proudly presents *The Vagina Conversations* #7, a fundraiser for the Tweed Shire Domestic Violence Impact Fund.

With MC Zenith Virago at the helm, these are powerful, humorous, touching and educational presentations from a range of speakers including Sophie Hardcastle, Swarna Taylor, Sophie



Welsh, Lissie Turner, Marita Schlink, Rosie Jones, Sarah Temporal and the fearless and fabulous Mandy Nolan. Rated 14+ years, tickets are \$35/\$25.

Friday 18th February sees local rising star Ollie Twohill launching his new single 'Silk Dress' from 6.30pm on The Balcony. The track is garnering international acclaim and buzz. Tickets are \$10 on-line or \$15 at the door.

Hat Fitz and Cara return to Murwillumbah with a new show to blast the blues away on Friday 25th February at 8.15pm. Their combination of folk, roots and gospel blues with



old-time flavourings will take you on a musical journey with toe-tappin' highs and heartfelt lows. After many delays, the show is definitely going ahead; don't miss out and book now. Tickets are \$35/\$25

Enjoy great foodie delights with Khanthaly's SE Asian Kitchen, crispy pizzas, coffees, sweet treats and a locally-stocked bar, offering the famous 'sloshies' – the alcoholic version of a kid's slushie, made to your individual taste, icy and delicious.

Tickets and more details can be found at: the-regent.com.au/live-events



TONGA DISASTER FUNDRAISER

Family fun day at
NIMBIN BOWLO
Sunday 27th February, from 9.30am

- Tongan buffet, affordable for all
 - Monster raffles
 - Live Polynesian music
 - Kids games, water-slide, facepainting
 - Social bowls
- All proceeds to go directly to a nominated hospital or school

lismore players postponed again



Lismore Theatre Company regrets that its production of *Running Up a Dress* by Suzanne Spinner has been postponed for the second time.

The play was due to open on 18th February, but will now open on Friday 25th March.

The stage is set at Rochdale Theatre, the company's home in Goonellabah, and rehearsals have been adding the final touches to movement and timing for *Running Up a Dress*.

The season will run for six shows only over two weekends until Sunday 3rd April. Friday and Saturday shows start at 7.30pm with Sunday matinees at 2pm.

Audiences will be limited to a

maximum 75% capacity. Those who have already purchased tickets will have first choice on the new dates.

"Live theatre, and particularly community theatre, has been hard hit by this pandemic, so we thank audiences who have stuck with us during this tough time, and we hope people will come along to see this wonderful play and support us to continue providing shows into the future," said Director Sharon Brodie, who is also LTC President.

Tickets are available at: www.lismoretheatrecompany.org.au (\$25/\$20) or contact Jenny on 0402-651-394 for a special price for 10 tickets or more.

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FEARLESS AND FABULOUS

Enrol at the Con



The Northern Rivers Conservatorium (NRC) is excited to be back in 2022, providing quality music education and performance opportunities, while inspiring a lifelong passion for music.

Despite the upheaval of the past couple of years, the Conservatorium continues to creatively deliver music programs and ensembles within a Covid-safe environment – enrolments are now open on-line or phone 6621-2266 to discuss.



This year NRC is delivering an exciting visiting artists program including Coast, Lior's Through Nature To Eternity, Gelareh Pour's Garden, and international artists Avi Avital and Giovanni Sollima, along with the Con's very own program of events.

The Con is kicking off the year with the 'Festival of the Con' on Saturday 12th March, the NRC annual Open Day. This event features a forecourt concert, demonstrations, master classes, workshops and building tours of our gloriously renovated all-accessible heritage building. All welcome to come along!

For more information, visit the website: www.nrcac.edu.au

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Your place in music

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