

Major road improvements underway

It's great to see Tuntable Creek Road open to traffic once again, after it was closed due to 11 landslips and a major landslide that closed access from The Channon to Nimbin. A temporary single lane has been built while our Road Team work on a permanent solution.

To build this single lane, the ground under the road was strengthened and the slope above the road was excavated. It's amazing to think that up to 160 eight-metre-long soil nails and over 400 square metres of sprayed concrete were used to make this happen.

During heavy rains, the temporary road will have some limits to keep people safe. If the road is closed because of bad weather, you'll see signs showing the closure at The Channon and

Nimbin. Council will keep you updated on Facebook to make sure everyone knows what's going on.

Another road affected by the natural disaster was Crofton Road. The pavement and drainage on this road was badly damaged. To fix this, the culvert pipe under the road will be replaced. Work will start on Tuesday, 4th April and is expected to take two days.

To keep drivers safe during construction, the road will be completely closed between 7am and 5pm around the site. The road will be re-opened outside of these hours, so you can still drive on it in the early morning or evening.

Pedestrians will be able to use a side track to get through. We thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

Opera in the Gardens

On 19th March, we held our last in our series of Opening our Heart events, Opera in the Gardens, with one of the most spectacular performances I have ever seen.

Paul Tabone, Mirusia, Joshua Robson, and Jayde Westaby blew us all away with their amazing voices and talent. They truly are some of the best opera and theatre stars in Australia.

From *Phantom of the Opera* to *Les Miserables* and *West Side Story*, the hits just kept coming and the crowd loved every minute of it.

Despite the hot and sunny weather, the 2500-strong crowd came dressed in their best and were completely captivated by the performance.

At times, you could hear a pin drop in the audience.

It was an unforgettable experience that many people will cherish for a long time.

Our goal was to have something that could appeal to everyone who attended the Opening our Heart series of events, and I think we achieved that.

Thank you to everyone who came out to support the series.

Councillor numbers

During last month's council meeting, Councillors decided to start the process of decreasing the number of Councillors from 11 to 9 with a referendum at the 2024 Local Government election.

However, there has been a rescission motion lodged to change this decision, so the topic will be discussed again at the April meeting on Tuesday, 11 April at 6pm.

Wayfinding Project

The Nimbin Wayfinding Project is making great progress. We installed the first on-road component, the speed humps, back in February, and we're currently working on getting a detailed design for the off-road parts of the project.

This includes The Blister, The Green Bank Parklet, and a pedestrian link from Cullen Street to the Western Carpark.

We are going to show these designs to the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, Nimbin Community Centre, and 7 Sibley Street, and get their thoughts.

To keep the same look and feel across the village, we are using the same landscape architect who worked on the Rainbow Road Walking Track to lead this project.

I'm sure that the end result will be a beautiful



From the mayor's desk
by Steve Krieg
Lismore City Council

and functional addition to Nimbin.

I'm excited to see this project come to life and can't wait to share more updates with you all. As always, if you have any questions or feedback, please don't hesitate to reach out to Council's contact centre.

Hopes for new state ministers to scrap local planning panel

The NSW State election is done and dusted, just needing the formal declarations of the seats in the Legislative Council to see how the new government is structured.

As a Labor supporter, I'm hoping the Minns' government can rule in its own right, and not be dependent on the cross bench in the upper house to get its business passed.

I was very pleased to see Janelle Saffin win this seat of Lismore so comprehensively. The swing in her support was 16.5% the last time I checked – a wonderful achievement in a seat that traditionally was held by the Nationals and was only won by Saffin by a small margin in 2019.

The fact that Janelle and Labor were in opposition didn't stop her from



by Cr Darlene Cook
Lismore City Council

putting our voices to Parliament, representing us in Ministerial offices, and demanding substantial help for us after the flood disaster of 2022.

Janelle has worked tirelessly for our community and to get us the funds and services we need.

Now she is a part of the

new Minns government, she is going to be a powerhouse to be reckoned with; Macquarie Street isn't going to forget Lismore anytime soon!

In February, Lismore Council was told by the State Government that the Planning Minister had decided to impose a Local Planning Panel on us which will permanently take over all planning decisions for the future of Lismore.

The Minister demanded that Council choose people to sit on that panel from a predetermined pool. We refused to do so.

The Minister chose, in the last few days before the Government went into caretaker mode, to appoint people to sit on the panel himself.

He then demanded that

Lismore Council pay all the costs of this panel – a cost estimated to be \$100,000+ per year.

At the March Council meeting, Council refused to provide that funding.

With a change in Government, I am hoping that whomever is appointed as the new Planning Minister, and the new Local Government Minister, will reconsider the decision to impose this planning panel on Lismore, listen to our concerns, and overturn this dreadful decision which strips away your local representatives right to support you in planning matters and any dispute you have with developers.

Councillor numbers

Also at the March Council meeting, a motion was put to

hold a referendum to reduce the number of Councillors elected by the community to represent them, from 11 down to 9.

The proponents of this motion refused to speak on the motion and their rationale for putting it forward. They provided no estimates of the cost to hold the referendum (around \$85 – \$90,000); their idea seems to be that other Councils don't need that many councillors to represent their population, so Lismore should reduce our numbers.

Some Councillors believe this motion was designed to specifically get rid of certain councillors who didn't get a quota of votes at the last election.

As I was absent from the meeting at a family funeral, my voice wasn't heard on this

important issue.

Traditionally, if a motion would bring a controversial change to the way we operate, and if all Councillors voices have not been heard on the matter, the Mayor should use their casting vote to maintain the status quo.

This time, however, when the vote was tied at 5/5 the Mayor used his casting vote to drive the change.

As a consequence, I have moved a rescission motion on this item, so the motion can be debated again in April – hopefully with all Councillors speaking on the merits or demerits of the motion.

And as always, I can be contacted by phone on either 6626-0154 or 0427-895-316, or via email: darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au



Well-attended flood anniversary events

by Kevin Hogan,
Federal Member for Page

Last month we saw a number of events around the region for the anniversary of the floods, including the 'Recognition of Boaties' event at the Lismore Turf Club.

These events aimed to reflect on what had occurred and importantly focus on our future.

All the activities that were held in Lismore and neighbouring towns were fantastic, well attended and sent a very positive message about the resilience

of our communities and their hopes for the future.

I congratulate all those involved in making these events happen.

There is a lot more positive business activity coming up in the near future as we return to normality with Primex and Beef Week, both in Casino, being examples of events to look forward to.

Student leadership

The past year has shown the importance of leadership in our communities.

I am therefore really looking forward to our up-coming school leaders events being held in Lismore and Grafton.

Schools place a high emphasis on developing our future leaders, and I am pleased to recognise these students at a special event where we can discuss aspects of leadership, share stories and listen to great guest speakers.

Naomi Moran is the guest speaker at our Lismore event. As General Manager of *The Koori Mail* and as a significant community leader during Lismore's floods, her leadership story is one we are all keen to hear.

Logging moratorium needed over proposed Great Koala National Park



Photo courtesy NPANSW

by Dailan Pugh, NEFA spokesperson

The North East Forest Alliance welcomes the election of the Minns Labor Government with their promise to create a Great Koala National Park, and calls for a moratorium on logging within the park proposal until the promised assessment is complete.

The Forestry Corporation is targeting the proposed Great Koala National Park in smash-and-grab operations to extract as much timber as they can, while they can.

They have been removing thousands of Koala food trees from one of the best Koala strongholds in NSW, compounding the impacts of the 2019/20 wildfires and causing immense damage to Endangered Koala populations.

To avoid compromising the integrity of the Labor Government's assessment process this vandalism needs to stop.

We look forward to working constructively with the new government to ensure a comprehensive and robust review of the Great Koala National Park is undertaken.

NSW Election 2023 a very civil affair, democracy in action

by Janelle Saffin MP Member for Lismore

The recent NSW Election was from my point of view a very civil affair, and I thank all involved – my fellow candidates, volunteer campaign teams, the media, and of course, the voters who exercised their democratic rights.

Counting continued at time of writing but I'm ready to serve a second four-year term as your State Member for Lismore in a Minns Labor Government so that all of my election commitments, large and small, can be delivered.

It remains a great honour to represent the people of our Electorate of Lismore.

Large-scale election commitments

- Keep open Murwillumbah's four public schools, consulting all school communities on infrastructure upgrades, including the continuation of Murwillumbah High's capital works.
- Additional policing resources for Murwillumbah Police Station, starting with \$3.7 million for recruitment of additional officers, provision of other services and upgrades, and an implementation plan to make Murwillumbah Police Station 24/7. This commitment delivers on a promise made by The Nationals in 2007 but never kept.
- Invest \$30 million in a Build-to-Rent pilot program in the Northern Rivers, tasking Landcom with delivering the extra affordable rental unit stock within two years to Lismore, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Ballina.
- Deliver \$5 million to Resilient Lismore, in partnership with Reece Foundation, for their Two Rooms and a Bathroom rollout to 250 flood-impacted homes as well as restoring essential plumbing to at least 100 homes.
- Allocate \$250,000 to develop an Economic and Environmental Recovery Plan for the Northern Rivers region and Tenterfield



Janelle Saffin, her staff and campaign volunteers celebrate a stunning team victory at the Lismore City Bowling Club. Photo courtesy Lismore City News

Shire LGA to help eight local government areas 'build back better' from the 2022 floods and better prepare for future natural disasters.

- Allocate \$5 million for four projects to start the Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative, a 10 to 15-year strategy aimed at improving water security and catchment health of the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Evans river catchments.
- Deliver \$1.4 million to Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital towards construction and commissioning of the purpose-built hospital facility at Wollongbar, located on the border of Ballina and Lismore electorates.
- Deliver \$400,000 to Lismore City Council towards constructing and maintaining a disability-friendly public amenities block in Nimbin's Peace Park, recognising a 15-year campaign by the Nimbin Advisory Group for this facility.
- Deliver \$2 million to Tweed Shire Council to fund urban flood mitigation projects prioritised from the outcomes of the Murwillumbah Central Business District Drainage Study.
- Significantly boost funding for Lismore Women's Health & Resource Centre as part of NSW Labor's \$100-million investment in 20 women's health centres across the state over five years.
- Remove the EPA waste levy from Kyogle Local Government Area, saving Kyogle Council and local ratepayers an estimated \$400,000 a year.

Upgrading 'Legacy' roads

Invest more than \$41 million in funding for the upgrade of 'legacy' roads and bridges projects across the Lismore Electorate. These include:

- \$12 million to Kyogle Council towards the replacement of council's remaining 30 timber and composite bridges.
- \$7.5 million to Lismore City Council to construct a roundabout at the Alphadale crossroads, Bruxner Highway, to improve driver safety at a notorious black spot, and in the interim reduce the speed limit from 80kmh to 60kmh on approaches to this intersection.
- \$4 million to Kyogle Council towards improving flood immunity of the Clarence Way at Tunglebung and Culmarran Creeks between Sandilands and Bonalbo.
- \$3.12 million to Tenterfield Shire Council to ensure completion of a major upgrade of Mount Lindesay Road between Legume and Woodenbong.
- An additional \$14.6 million in funding for emergency road repair, providing more than \$3 million to Lismore City Council; \$2.9 million to Kyogle Council; \$4.1 million to Tweed Shire Council; \$3.1 million to Byron Shire Council and \$1.5 million to Tenterfield Shire Council.

Small-scale election commitments

- \$50,000 to Nimbin Chamber of Commerce's Aquarius 50 Organising Committee – towards staging a regional festival in May to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the original

- Aquarius Festival in 1973.
- \$165,000 to Friends of the Koala (FOK) Incorporated – several small grants, including \$50,000 towards upgrading its Community Education Centre in East Lismore, \$75,000 for a chlamydia vaccination program, and \$35,000 for a koala data base.
- \$50,000 to Tenterfield Shire Council – improving Tenterfield Aerodrome's disaster readiness capacity, including purchasing and installing a water tank and pump, and safety works.
- \$50,000 to Kyogle Family Support Services Neighbourhood Centre Incorporated – purchasing an AWD vehicle to support community participation and inclusion in its social programs, particularly West of the Range where services are limited.
- \$40,000 to Hub 2484, Murwillumbah – delivering much-needed flood preparation and flood recovery projects to support local residents of this postcode who were severely impacted by the 2022 floods.
- \$40,000 to North-Tracks Works, Lismore – towards running its innovative youth support program post-floods.
- \$30,000 to RiverTracks, Murwillumbah – towards running trade skills youth workshops designed to educate and empower youth at risk of disengaging from education.
- \$30,000 to Back-Track Works, Tenterfield – constructing an amenities block at its training hub to support youth participating in its training and skills development programs.
- \$20,000 to Kyogle Football Club – draining the sub-surface perimeter of its main adult ground in Chauvel Street, which is also used by school groups for athletics carnivals, future proofing it during localised flood events.
- \$15,000 to Kyogle Golf Club – towards purchasing and installing new fire-safe glass doors and essential plumbing work.
- \$15,000 to Woodenbong Progress Association's Resilience Group – fitting out two shipping containers, already funded under the Community Building Partnership program, as an emergency evacuation hub on a site near the Woodenbong Showground.
- \$10,000 to Murwillumbah Croquet Club Incorporated – repairing, prepping and painting the exterior of its historic clubhouse.

The next four years – lest we forget the past 12

by Sue Higginson MLC

After 12 long years, we are now watching the back of the terrible Liberal National NSW Government. This is huge, a big reason to celebrate!

With an eye on the environment, the past 12 years have been shocking. We have seen the dramatic increase in land clearing, the intensification of logging in our public native forests and a loosening of the rules for native forest logging on private land.

The declaration of war by the NSW Nationals against koalas was a low point for our state and not even the threat of koalas going extinct in the wild by 2050 was enough to convince the Government to stop clearing habitat.

This same Government also watched the number of native animals and plants that are sliding towards extinction increase dramatically while weakening the laws that were designed to slow the extinction crisis, all the while operating a failed system to offset biodiversity loss.

They have allowed multinational corporate interests to pillage the waters of our inland rivers like the beautiful Darling-Baaka and have failed to manage or regenerate coastal rivers here in our northern home.



On election night, Sue Higginson, Cate Faehrmann, Abigail Boyd, Amanda Cohn

They poured fuel on the climate crisis with new coal and gas projects and stood by while the disastrous climate-induced floods and fires tore through our communities. Over the past 12 years they approved just about every coal and gas project the fossil fuel sector applied for which has destroyed woodlands, water, cultural heritage, farmland and lives.

Since we signed the Paris Agreement, where we agreed to reduce our deadly greenhouse gas emissions, they approved 26 new coal and gas projects, including Santos' filthy unnecessary Pilliga Narrabri coal seam gas project.

On issues of integrity, it has been truly awful. We saw two premiers leave under the cloud of ICAC (Independent Commission Against

Corruption) and the entitlement of jobs for the boys and the pork-barrelling reached a whole new level. Former Premier Berejiklian admitted pork-barrelling is normal practice, former Deputy Premier Barilaro actually called himself John "Pork" Barilaro and then really excelled by throwing a qualified woman out of the way as he thought he could roll into a cushy post-politics commissioner job in New York!

Now we have a change of government, we don't yet know the final make-up of the parliament. As I write, the votes are still being counted across the state and the upper house is not yet settled. We know that across the state, support for the Greens at the grassroots level

grew. We saw swings to the Greens in many seats across the state.

Here in our region, the incredible Tamara Smith MP for Ballina retained her seat and grew her support significantly, as did Jenny Leong MP for Newtown. In the seat of Balmain, it was nail-biting, but on preferences we have retained that seat through the succession from Jamie Parker to Kobi Shetty. Labor fought very hard to take Balmain from us!

Here in Lismore, Adam Guise and the team ran a fantastic pro-active positive campaign raising all of the big issues that are affecting us locally, particularly housing, disaster recovery, cost of living, forests and climate change. Janelle Saffin MP is to be congratulated for retaining our seat with increased support.

So here is the rub, Labor now has the chance to change the direction of our state. It can't do worse than the last 12 years. They have promised good for public sector workers, which is so exciting. They have made a commitment to reform on housing, for renters and on pokies, but they are a bit weaker than what we would have hoped for.

However, its promises on the environment are very, very weak. They have promised to investigate making the Great Koala National Park on the mid-north coast,

but not stop the industrial-scale logging of those areas identified for inclusion while they do. They have also promised some gains for koalas around south western Sydney.

They have said that they will not take on Santos' Pilliga Narrabri gas project, saying it is already approved, which is a massive cop-out, as it does not have its final approval and is currently trying to expand its scope on to the Liverpool Plains before even commencing! They have also said they will not look at coal mine approvals that have not yet commenced, nor are they planning to end the destruction of our public native forests.

The Upper House as always is our hope as the check on any Government agenda. While we don't yet know the final make-up, we do know joining me and Abigail Boyd will be Cate Faehrmann and Dr Amanda Cohn. We are your Greens Upper House team.

It is our absolute commitment that we will work around the clock to push this new Government to go further and faster on the things that we were put in Parliament for, including tackling the extinction crisis, ending forest logging, ending coal and gas, strong action on climate change, protecting the right to protest, access to housing, real pokies reform and legalising cannabis.

Blinky makes a chilling point

by Chibo Mertineit

Early in March, Lismore had a very special visitor, Blinky, the giant burnt koala puppet, a confronting representation of the estimated three billion native animals lost in the bushfires of 2019-2020.

Blinky made it into the *New York Times*, *Al Jazeera*, and *The Guardian* when it was used in Melbourne to be part of the worldwide campaign as COP 26 was starting in Glasgow, in October/November 2021.

Now it was on its way from Melbourne to Brisbane, to be the centrepiece of an Extinction Rebellion (XR) climate protest.

Blinky and the team stopped first at the courthouse in Taree to support the mother and daughter team in court, Juliet and Luca Lamont, who were sitting in different trees in the Yarratt State Forest in an attempt to slow down the logging operation and raise awareness of Forestry Corp actions.

From there they went to the protest camp in Doubleduke State Forest, nine kilometres south of Woodburn, before arriving Thursday afternoon at the Quad in Lismore.

The howling animatronic puppet

was built with the knowledge that it would be used by environmental and other groups. The employees of the company Creatures Technology donated their time, using mostly recycled and remnant materials.

The two loudspeakers and PA, playing howling koala sounds, are built under and behind the seat of the trike, with smoke billowing from the neck.

It travels in a special trailer with a winch and ramps, and reappeared in Lismore for the farewell gathering for Violet Coco with the Greens, as she was leaving the next day for her appeal in court in Sydney against her outrageous sentence of 15 months gaol for blocking one lane of the Sydney Harbour bridge in 2022.

Finally in Brisbane at the Extinction Rebellion climate protest, Blinky was led by a group of Red Rebels, representing the collective grief, sorrow and blood of all the species on earth.

The protest march moved from King George Square to Brisbane's Parliament House where the Queensland Legislative Assembly was sitting.

They were protesting the Queensland Labor Government

still funding new coal- and gas mines, supporting the Greens bill by Michael Berkman to stop this as well as highlighting the latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report, saying that it's NOW really our last chance to stay within 1.5°C; we have to stop all new mines.

As XR activist Lee Coaldrake said, "Despite the pleas of climate scientists, despite the IPCC reports into climate change, despite the strident warning of Antonio Guterres (Secretary General of the United Nations), our governments continue to support, subsidise and encourage new developments by fossil fuel industries."

A big thank you to the workers and their boss at Creatures Technology for their foresight and effort to create this shocking and confronting creature for a wake-up call.

Thanks to Megan, Dave and Steve to go down to Port Melbourne and get trained to use Blinky and for stopping on the way to support environmental activists.

Blinky is now waiting in Port Melbourne for the next exciting outing. What are you doing this month?



Life abounds in rock piles



Bald Rock; a massive collection of outcrops, boulders and rockpiles
Photo courtesy Neils Photography

by Scott O'Keeffe, ecologist

Rock heaps of all sizes dot the entire Australian terrestrial landscape. Tourists love photographing them and farmers loathe mustering stock in them.

Depending upon your point of view, they are either attractive objects or annoying obstructions. In either case, they are just big lumps, even if they are attractive ones.

But rockpiles and outcrops are not inanimate objects. They are the basis of varied and unique ecosystems that range in size from the tiny to the tremendous. They are so distinct from their surrounding landscapes that they are comparable to islands in water.

I think many people are familiar with a few iconic animals that depend upon rockpiles. The various species of Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale sp.*) are charismatic native animals that have been the object of well publicised conservation programs that have great public support.

This affection is directed at the animals and not so much at their

environment. Partly because of this, most people are unaware of the enormous number of other plant and animal species that will benefit from these conservation efforts.

Rock outcrops and piles have only recently been closely studied as ecosystems. Although there is still a great deal to be discovered, we are beginning to understand the complex processes and rich biota that comprise rockpile ecosystems.

The physical and biological characteristics of each differs according to its size, position in the landscape, climate, weather and geology.

Rock piles provide refuges for many species of plants and animals. Most of these are uniquely adapted to the conditions found in boulder strewn landscapes. Even small outcrops are important refuges.

Reptiles are particularly diverse in rockpile ecosystems. 60% of Australia's reptile species are found primarily in rocky outcrops. The Cunningham's Skink (*Egernia cunninghamii*) is an example of a native reptile that inhabits



Ferns such as Cheilanthes distans that grow on rockpiles are able to withstand desiccation. Photo courtesy Tony Rod

rockpiles, including those in agricultural landscapes.

Frogs too have diversified and adapted to these unique environments. For example, there are several species of frogs in Queensland that take advantage of the miniature water catchments in rockpiles, and the temperature gradient in vertical cracks in the rock.

Cracks and crags are important for other vertebrates like microbats and birds of prey. My first close encounter with a Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens*) was in a rockpile where it had established its day roost in a shady, cool crack between boulders. I came around the corner of a big boulder, and I was inches away from it.

Because rock piles are old and persistent geological features that weather slowly, they provide relatively stable conditions over millennia. Flora and fauna adapt to these conditions, often in unexpected ways.

For example, many rock-dwelling plants have characteristics similar to those found in desert plants. They can survive the loss of most of their water during hot, dry periods.

Australia has many unique ferns and mosses that thrive on rockpiles. They desiccate when it's hot and dry, but rapidly rehydrate when water is available. Not what we normally expect of with ferns and mosses that we usually associate with wet, shady places.

The resilience of rock pile ecosystems comes from their physical stability. Despite this, rockpile ecosystems are fragile. Even seemingly harmless disturbances can seriously degrade rockpile ecosystems.

Livestock grazing and resting on rockpiles can crush plants, dislodge stones and shingles. Cattle can be especially destructive. They deposit urine and faeces that alter soil and surface chemistry. They also break exfoliating rock and spread weeds. These can seriously damage whole plant communities.

Feral animals are also a serious problem in some areas. Goats and rabbits can obliterate plants and prevent regeneration. Rabbits can occupy cracks, holes and crannies when they create large warrens. In doing so, they exclude other native animals.

They may also increase local

populations of foxes. Foxes are not just effective predators, but they are important vectors for diseases that can affect wildlife.

Although fires are an integral process in rockpile ecosystems, changes in their frequency and intensity can have serious long-term effects. One consequence is the replacement of long-lived perennial native plants with weeds.

After European settlement, rockpiles were plundered for stone that was used as building material. Many were also destroyed when land was first cleared for agriculture. The latter has again become a threat as new rock-crushing technology is being used to break down smaller rockpiles and convert them to cropping land or pasture.

In NSW, the fragility of rockpiles is recognised in the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* in which the loss of rockpiles is recognised as a key threatening process. However, crushing stone using new technology, quarrying stone, and rock collecting are legal activities and rockpiles have weak formal protection. It's tempting to call this a game of rock-scissors-paper.

Despite the threats, recognition of the ecological values of rockpiles is resulting in some successful conservation measures. Some jurisdictions are restricting activities that threaten rockpiles. Permanent conservation agreements and stewardship payments are being used successfully to protect rockpiles on private land.

With the increased interest in rockpile ecology, the demand for their conservation grows. With relatively small effort and expenditure, these biodiversity hotspots can be well protected.

I'm creating my own small rockpile in a revegetation area using old chunks of weathered concrete.

malurus@posteo.net

Community Centre News



by Nimbin Community Centre Management Committee

Aboriginal Cultural Centre

Last year Mahlie Bayles took over co-ordinating the Aboriginal Cultural Centre. He, Leroy Vaz (Old School Concreting) and Francis O'Brien have been working hard since the beginning of the year to landscape and improve access to the front of the Cultural Centre, as part of the Creative Koori, Waibal Art Grant.

On 15th March they made a major milestone in the project with a cement pour. They had a wonderful volunteer turnout. Many thanks to all those who turned up on the morning. The Nimbin Community Centre is proud to auspice the grant for the Cultural Centre and support its re-opening as an Indigenous Cultural Hub in the village.

Bark Hut garage and Aquarius50 organisers

Last month we lost our lovely new tenant Sally Flannery and her slow fashion shop 'Worn Better', due to a family emergency.

Thanks to Sally for the interior makeover of the space – it is really warm, colourful and fresh. We wish her the best of luck and hope she will be able to return to the village in the future.

We are excited to announce that the space will now be occupied by the Aquarius 50th anniversary organisers until the end of May. Aquarius veteran Graham Dunstan, one of the directors of the original 1973 festival funded by the Australian Union of Students, will be managing the space.

It will be an organising hub and workshop space in the lead-up to the event and a contact hub during the celebrations.

Since joining the anti-war movement in the 60's, Graham has become a life-long political activist. He is creating flags and lanterns



for the 50th Anniversary celebrations and would love to attract some craft-minded individuals who can help in the lead-up to the May event. You can contact him on 0407-951-688 if you are interested in getting involved.

Our volunteers

At the heart of the Nimbin Community Centre, our volunteers are a vital part of managing and maintaining the Centre and its grounds. Volunteers are involved at many different levels of the organisation, headed up by the management committee. This committee is made up of people who are passionate about contributing to their community and caretaking precious community assets for the present and into the future.

While dedicated to this role, most members either work full-time or are committed to other community organisations that also benefit the Nimbin community.

Heading up the current committee as president is Dr Wil Polson, our youngest and newest committee member. Wil was born and raised in Nimbin where he developed close connections and learned the value of contributing to community.

After completing his PhD in media and communications at RMIT he returned to Nimbin with his partner Baden in 2020 and joined the NCCI committee in 2021.

In Wil's words, "Joining the committee has been a great way to find out what's going on and how to best contribute to the community I know and love. It provides an opportunity to help shape this wonderful community asset for future generations to enjoy".

Wil is actively seeking other young people to join the committee so, if you're

interested, please contact him.

Occasionally we get an office volunteer who supports the co-ordinator in the office, but usually our volunteers want to work outside. We currently have a wonderful crew who work closely with our maintenance and grounds staff to ensure the centre is kept clean, tidy, and cared for.

They are a dedicated team that bring a passion for gardens and community spaces into the Community Centre and their input is highly valued.

Paul Sims – since becoming a volunteer in 2018 he has helped to create garden beds, contributed to discussion about grounds improvements, built terraces and steps, made concept plans and cleaned away tonnes of litter. He loves seeing his good work being enjoyed by the community.

Moni Moore – retired to the Rainbow Region over a decade ago and is passionate about gardening and the community. She loves working with the team at the Community Centre Gardens and would like the gardens to become a showpiece for the village.

Chris Duffy – is passionate about caring for the land and has been busy at his home, planting trees in a land regeneration project. He really enjoys the team work at the community centre and is appreciated by all for his hard work and quiet dedication to the task.

Jane Treasure – loves working in the gardens at the Community Centre. "It's a really peaceful place to work. Every weed I pull out, every bit of mulch I put down and plant I put in makes a difference to the well-being of the community."

If you have some spare time and want to make a difference you would be welcomed as volunteer at the Nimbin Community Centre. It's a great way to make new friends and get to know what's going on in the village.

We are also registered with Centrelink if you need to do volunteering.

Please contact our office co-ordinator on 6689-0000 or email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au and she will be happy to advise you about how to become a volunteer.

Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

Politics dominated the month of March. The NSW State election was the main focus of attention. The past year has been a rather tumultuous period already with Labor unseating the Liberal National Coalition on the national stage.

Going into the State election, ALP's Janelle Saffin held a majority of 2% in a three-way race with main challenges coming from the Alexander Rubin (Nationals) and Adam Guise (Greens). As it stands at the moment, Janelle Saffin has enjoyed a swing of +20%, easily defeating the other contestants.

Janelle has been a very active participant in the wider community, engaging with a number of Nimbin community organisations following the floods of 2022. Janelle and her team attended many community meetings in the village during the last year, gaining an understanding of the community's needs and subsequently showing her support for local initiatives including funding for a new toilet block in Peace Park as well as financial support for the Aquarius50 Festival.

The Chamber congratulates Janelle on her and the ALP's success, and we look forward to working with the Labor team to improve the amenity of the village.

Changes to the Lismore City Council management structure, including replacement of the GM John Walker with the new incumbent Jon Gibbons have ushered in restructuring of their Economic Development team with a view to improving promotion of the region's tourist facilities and special events held in the area.

The Chamber is currently working with Council to upgrade both Nimbin's web presence and social media profile in an effort to attract more visitors to the village. A walk through the village with Council officers has been scheduled to highlight areas of potential improvement which include drainage, signage, trip hazards, and entry and exit beautification on both sides of the village.

We are very pleased to see that Council has commenced road works on Thorburn Street to resurface the road, finally dealing with the massive potholes that have given locals



much grief. There is still a long way to go upgrading the main thoroughfare both in and out of Nimbin as well as outlying roads, but vehicle owners are somewhat relieved at the improvements that have already reduced the impact on mechanical repair bills.

Economic times are rather uncertain at the moment, particularly given that we have already suffered many challenges including floods, bushfires, Covid and more floods. Interest rates are increasing at the fastest rate ever on mortgages, with the majority of these being way bigger than in the past, making repayments very difficult to service.

Compounding inflation is out of control with food, fuel prices, building materials, services and just about anything else increasing week to week.

Keeping money in the local economy through buying local, recycling, using local contractors, growing your own fruit and vegetables, trading with each other and lending a hand to those in need is a solid step towards getting through this difficult period.

Aquarius50 is moving along well with many contributors of content coming forward, the 10 days of activity will be very exciting and interesting. Remember, 'You are the festival' and anything you can contribute to making this event a success will benefit everyone far and wide. Much good karma is to be earned by those who put their shoulders to the wheel or hands in their pockets if they don't have the time.

For more information and the opportunity to donate time and/or funding, contact: www.aquarius50.com.au

Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, with our member's support, is working towards building a better, stronger and more vibrant future for our children and the community as a whole.

Nimbin School of Arts annual report

by David Hallett, President

During the early months of 2022, events at the School of Arts were still under the shadow of the Covid pandemic. The March Blue Moon Cabaret was cancelled, while the Artist Gallery's Nimbin Art Fair was postponed until the Winter school holidays and MardiGrass was postponed to September. Also other hall hire for classes was absent largely until 2023.

It was significant that Blue Moon Cabarets returned in August and November both for the performers and as essential fundraisers for the NSA. Also returning was the hall's Spring Arts Exhibition held in September, and the Nimbin Fashion Show which was a great success thanks to the management of Samara Burcher.

The NSA assisted once again as a sponsor for both the Nimbin Performance Poetry World Cup in September and the Community Xmas Lunch, while also supporting the Roots Festival in October. The classical music concerts in 2022 were a highlight of

the hall's cultural calendar, both popular and very well attended.

The School of Arts maintains a good co-operative relationship with long-term tenants, the Nimbin Artists Gallery and Perceptio Bookshop. And in the absence of funds from major events in early 2022, it was very beneficial to welcome Juliska Rado's Hemp Couturier in Studio One and Cate Debus' on-going hire of kitchen facilities.

Moreover, the School of Arts has also welcomed a growing number of new dance, drama and acrobatic classes this year.

The robbery at the hall in February of stage lighting, cabaret fundraising alcohol and other items was both a shock and a considerable setback. Some equipment has been returned, but the security and safety of hall facilities remain significant priorities.

The School of Arts has been very fortunate in the community support that followed the robbery. The various donations, together with the fundraising art auction and trivia show held

after the robbery raised sufficient funds to replace the stolen goods, but the support also showed the respect that is held in the wider community for Nimbin's 119-year old town hall.

Critically there is major work that needs to be funded at the hall: repainting interior and exterior, refurbishing decks, fire escapes and stairs, re-cladding of the south wall, ongoing kitchen improvements, office and mezzanine storage and security, etc.

During the past two years of lockdowns and cancellations, all major work and improvements to the hall have been postponed, but now there is a growing list of pressing needs to be addressed.

The School of Arts is managed by a small dedicated team, so it's especially pleasing to welcome new committee members in the past year: Sue Landers, Mandie Raval and Caroline Todd; while also acknowledging the resignation of Kylie Kingston who served as the Hall's treasurer for many years, along with volunteer assistant Angus Edwards.



The AUKUS Orchestra, Iraq, Assange and the China Scare

by John Jiggins

On Saturday 18th March, a small rally to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War gathered in a park outside the Lismore Memorial Baths.

The Iraq War was an illegal invasion of a sovereign nation, Iraq, by a group of nations who called themselves the 'coalition of the willing': Australia, the UK and the US, an alliance that has recently rebranded itself as AUKUS.

The proto-AUKUS brought devastation to Iraq with hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed, mainly civilians, and with millions more forced to become refugees. Although the Iraq war was one of the major disasters of this century, whose lessons need to be learned, it was an anniversary the complicit Australian mainstream media, who acted as cheer leaders for that war, ignored.

An Australian citizen, Julian Assange, is currently imprisoned by the AUKUS alliance, rotting away in Belmarsh prison. He has been there for four years, convicted of no crime, because his "crime" was

the unspeakable crime of exposing the truth of their war with the Collateral Murder video and the Iraq War Logs.

On a day of record heat, a crowd of 50 or so sheltered under shady trees on the lush green lawn before a small but colourful stage, centred around flags and banners created by Peace Bus captain Graeme Dunstan. The slogans read: Free Speech! Free Press! Free Assange and End the US Alliance.

Graeme Dunstan delivered a passionate speech, powered by his outrage at the imprisonment of Assange, the extraordinary cost of the AUKUS submarine deal, the growing number of US bases and forces being stationed around Australia, and the way Australia was being forced into a war with China, as we were coerced into the Iraq war by a cheer-leading mainstream media.

"We are an occupied country," he declared. "This is an occupying army. What happens next? The next step is plunder. The occupying army steals what it wants from us. We are no longer a sovereign country. We are an occupied country and there is pillaging going on right now."



Dunstan lamented the treachery of the Albanese government which had sold out Australia. A new peace movement had to be built, he said. He deplored the war-mongering of the MSM with "hysteria for war, dribbling from their lips."

Byron Bay filmmaker Kym Staton, who is making a film about Julian Assange, also spoke. He read a poetical speech about Australians marching to a hellish future, passively watching "as the Mandela of our time walks a long walk toward freedom every day around a six-metre cell."

"This is a fight for our right to know," he said, declaring: "Humanity is tethered by a rope of greed to a chain of criminality to an anchor,

dragging on the bottom of an ocean of lies! But there are some with the strength to set us free!"

Media commentary

The media bloodlust was suitably restrained on *Insiders* the next morning, when host David Speirs discussed the AUKUS deal with his hand-picked journalists, the mainstream media's two premier China hawks and warmongers, Peter Hartcher and Greg Sheridan, who tried their best not to gloat too noticeably now their 'China Scare' policies had been adopted by the ALP government.

War between the US and China over Taiwan will occur in 2027, Hartcher and Sheridan prophesised, and



they should know because they are the ones most vigorously beating the drums for that war. Australia would be immediately involved, Sheridan predicted, because the Chinese would strike Pine Gap.

Strangely, the approaching war with China filled Greg Sheridan not with fear, but with a self-satisfied complacency: AUKUS version 2 won't be the disaster Iraq was, Sheridan reassured those *Insiders* viewers who might have concerns they were watching history repeating.

All this flew past host David Speirs unchallenged. Neither did Speirs question Hartcher about his rabid warmongering in the 'Red Alert' series published in the

Sydney Morning Herald the week before the AUKUS announcement.

The accompanying SMH editorial went far beyond calling for nuclear submarines, demanding missiles armed with nuclear warheads and the reintroduction of conscription, and declaring China to be a clear and present danger; policies "your" ABC's premier journalist clearly finds untroubling and as unworthy of discussion as the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq.

Nor was Speirs concerned that some might perceive a panel of Hartcher and Sheridan assessing AUKUS to be unconscionable propaganda for a third world war.

The persecution of truth



by John Jiggins

The Assange Campaign is holding a conference in Brisbane, called The Persecution of Truth, at the State Library of Queensland Auditorium 1 on Sunday 30th April.

The seminar will be similar to the Belmarsh Tribunal, recently held in Sydney, although it will be in two parts: the first concerned with the need to protect whistleblowers; the second with the role of citizen journalism.

Both whistleblower protection and citizen journalism are crucial to our democracy and were central concerns of Julian Assange. They have imprisoned Julian, but his ideas march on!

The theme of the seminar is the undermining of our democracy by powerful, hidden forces in politics, law enforcement, and the security establishment who, with their allies in the mainstream media, misuse the media and the law to harass and persecute whistleblowers to hide their own misdeeds.

Speakers are David McBride (Afghan War

whistleblower), Greg Barns (assistant to the Assange legal team), Professor A J Brown (Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith Uni), Kellie Tranter (writer and lawyer), Terry O'Gorman (Qld Council for Civil Liberties), Stella Assange (wife of Julian Assange) and John Shipton (father of Julian Assange).

I will be talking on Citizen Journalism versus Corporate Journalism, and why Julian Assange is the great citizen journalist of this century, and how mainstream media – corporate journalism – evolved into the propaganda machine we see today, craving bloodlust, slaughter and war.

Once, journalists were celebrated for defending free speech and campaigning for popular government. In the last century they were transformed into the stenographers of power.

The seminar will acquaint Queenslanders with Assange, who has been imprisoned for many years, corralled and silenced, and encourage them to get behind a great Queensland, sadly betrayed by his government.

Fossil fuel divestment initiative

by Jeff Johnson

Ballina Council as of 28th February 2023 had over \$129 million invested in various banks and financial institutions. I've previously written in the NGT about the Fossil Fuel Divestment Initiative that Ballina Council has supported since 2015 when a motion that I brought to Council was supported by the majority.

This position was strengthened a couple of years later by stipulating a 0.05% preference for non-fossil fuel aligned bonds or institutions. It's a real blight on our current National Party-aligned Council that this smallest of margins was removed, and as a result over \$40 million has been reinvested with the fossil fuel-supporting institutions.

There are 537 Councils across Australia. If we assume that the average Council has approximately \$70 million in term deposits, that that would equate to over \$37 billion in funds. If you included all the publicly owned companies, universities, and 'ethical' super funds, the number grows ten-fold.

It would be great if the State or Federal Government could invest a proportion of these funds into renewable energy projects that would speed up the transition, provide a greater 'interest return' for local governments and an on-going revenue stream for government-owned corporations.

Fossil fuel-aligned is a term given to institutions that continue to provide finance to new coal or gas projects or enabling existing projects to expand. Where does your bank stand on this important issue? Check out a

comparison table here: marketforces.org.au/info/compare-bank-table

If you do decide to swap 'banks', make sure you let them and everyone else know why.

Australia is the world's third largest exporter of fossil fuels behind only Saudi Arabia and Russia. That's not a group that I want our country to be compared with. There are also over 100 new coal and gas proposals in the 'pipeline'. It is widely acknowledged that it would be an absolute disaster if the majority of these were given final approval.

With the recent IPCC report clearly stating that we are losing the race to keep under the 1.5° cap, reducing carbon pollution and moving more rapidly to 100% renewables is becoming the most important policy our politicians can have. Given this fact, why is the Federal Government, which was partly elected on a promise of greater climate action, even considering additional fossil fuel projects?

The hold that the fossil fuels lobby groups such as the Minerals Council have over the major political parties is a national shame. There are currently billions of dollars in existing subsidies to the coal and gas industry that barely get a mention, and the tax revenue received by the government is insignificant compared to the problems that the industry is causing.

I really hope that there can be a rising up within our population and some intense lobbying of all politicians to draw a line in the sand and to say no to any new coal or gas projects. Now is the time for the Federal Government and all the recently-elected State Labor Governments to act on this issue.



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Tweed corridor destruction ‘not looking to the future’

by Lydia Kindred, NRRL spokeswoman

Dedicated and respected pro-rail groups on the Far North Coast say the opening of the Tweed ‘Rail (Bike) Trail’ has shown that pro-bike trail groups and Tweed Council have bulldozed the project through, have refused to be inclusive throughout the process and lack vision for a more sustainable transport future.

Northern Rivers Rail Ltd (NRRL) has been watching with great interest and concern at the work that Tweed Shire Council (TSC) has done to pull up heritage railway tracks between Murwillumbah and Crabbes Creek.

The Tweed Trail with an all-community approach could have seen many more outcomes to protect rail infrastructure for future generations and the prosperity of the Far North Coast. NRRL support having both rail and bike trail beside each other within the railway corridor, which is a minimum 32 metres wide.

This week marked a moment that so many Northern Rivers locals have dreaded because of the lack of adequate public transport in our region, especially off-road. Our roads are becoming more clogged and we need solutions to the bottle necks and ever growing emissions which contribute greatly to our climate change problems.

Extending a service from the current Byron Solar Train to Mullumbimby and up to Bangalow as well as to Yelgun for festival-goers would eliminate the frustrating and climate unfriendly situation that exists now in the Byron Shire.

We still have the tracks within the Lismore and Byron Shires and several railway companies are working together to bring regular passenger train services to these sections of our Northern Rivers Line. Ripping up the tracks in Tweed Shire was very short-sighted.

Tweed Council managers are saying



that they now expect 27,000 bike track users utilising their section, which is well down on the 300,000-plus they said in their Business Plan.

The Solar Train attracted 100,000 paying passengers in its first year of operation, which puts a real perspective on what rail can generate financially for the region if it is extended in both directions out from Byron Bay.

Regular large music festivals will benefit as well as the tourists and locals who need public transport in our region.

Historical significance

The historical significance of the original rail line between Murwillumbah and Lismore, which opened on the 15th May 1894 with 9,000 attending, has been ignored.

The line was the first in Northern New South Wales to be opened, and allowed freight and passengers to access early shipping to Byron Bay for transport in and out of our region.

After its huge success, it was extended to Casino in 1903 and Grafton in 1905. A branch line was built to Kyogle in 1910 and extended to Brisbane in 1930.

Our Far North Coast Branch line started here 129 years ago and its popularity grew for servicing Northern

NSW.

Plans to extend a line from Casino to Tenterfield in the late 1920s to link the Northern Tablelands line with Sydney did not happen because they saw the benefit of our North Coast line being more cost-efficient and a quicker link between Sydney and Brisbane.

Memories of the old ‘Surf Train’ remind us that we had the most profitable rail service in NSW, before the manager was sacked and the wonderful Motorail, morning freight delivery and two daily passenger services were scrapped for the XPT, which only ran through our region late at night.

This terrible time-tabling, that locals were virtually unable to use, was the reason they stopped all services to one of the fastest growing and most visited regions in Australia back in 2004.

We will continue to fight for the rights of our locals and visitors for off-road public transport.

The fact that no community consultation was done before the rail trail was pushed through by TSC is of great concern to us, but we are working hard to return the line so that everyone can be included.

Northern Rivers Rail Limited has a website: www.northernriversrail.com.au

Gully of the giants

by Anastasia Guise

In a twist on the old David and Goliath tale, a group of passionate locals are standing up against Forestry Corporation to protect giants.

In fact, a whole gully of giant old trees up to 450-years old that are in immediate danger as logging advances through this old growth valley in Doubleduke State Forest.

There is a brave person, affectionately known as Possum, up a high tree-sit, tied off to logging machinery, stopping work in Doubleduke this morning in March.

Spokesperson Naomi Shine said, “We all want these magnificent old trees to continue to exist in this native forest that is right on our doorstep – along with the diversity of wildlife they are home to.

“Saving these towering trees also supports climate stability on which all life depends. It is time to end native forest logging for good.”

Doubleduke is a rare and important native forest that is home to all three great owls – the Powerful Owl, Masked Owl and Barking Owl, as well as a range of

other vulnerable species such as our iconic koala. It is also a hotspot for the vulnerable Yellow-bellied Glider, spotted in this forest a week ago.

Right now this forest is being destroyed by NSW Forestry Corporation at an alarming rate, even despite their own government’s reports on the devastating impacts of the bushfires.

Naomi Shine said, “This is simply a desperate grab for the last intact mature pockets of our native forests from a corrupted corporate entity that knows that its time is up.”


“Shockingly this actually costs taxpayers’ money to destroy native habitat, accelerate species extinction and release carbon. In fact, a taxpayer loss of \$28 million over the past two years.

“These native forests belong to us all, and brave locals will continue to stand up to protect these magnificent forests and the iconic species that call them home.

“By ending native forest logging, the NSW public will be secure in the knowledge that these magical forests will stand for generations to come, playing their essential role in preserving our biodiversity and climate.”



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Legalise Cannabis Party rolling on

by Michael Balderstone

I spent Saturday at Pottsville encouraging people to vote for Legalise Cannabis. I'm still gobsmacked that we have to get people elected to be taken seriously.

And Jeremy Buckingham, who looks like he may get elected, will have a job ahead of him convincing other Members of Parliament that their laws are so, so wrong.

It's changing at the polling booth, where I found there were plenty of people from all walks of life openly saying they are voting for us. The stigma on weed is slowly shedding, and sometimes I think not so slowly. Except in Parliament.

Both the Labor Party and the Greens left us off their how-to-vote cards hoping we would be less noticed, but even so as I write this we are sitting at 4% of the vote. Less than One Nation, but more than the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers who both have big operations with lots of finance behind them.

We really are a small bunch of dedicated volunteers determined to get heard. Very few polling booths were manned, we had few corflutes and they get souvenired very quickly if you turn your back!

My sincere thanks to the handful of

people who helped during the election, they know who they are.

To run in the NSW election, we had to be registered 12 months ago. You may remember us begging for members to join. And then we had to find candidates prepared to put their name on the line. Paranoia is rife in the weed community understandably; you can lose your job just like that.

We had 18 people on the big white sheet and as well 23 lower house candidates with some polling 10% of the vote.

Quite extraordinary, and I know the Labor Party is taking note of the high numbers. It's us against Big Pharma and Corporate Cannabis, and the police who seem to get the final say on suggested changes. Like they are the drug experts!?

MardiGrass

MardiGrass is just around the corner, same war different battle. This year's program has a few lovely surprises.

Wilfred the weed-smoking dog is coming. I've been busy and missed Wilfred along with lots of other mainstream stuff over the last 50 years, but I read that Jason Gann is an award-winning creator and actor, a weed activist and entrepreneur devoting much of his life to educating and supporting



cannabis and mental health causes. His TV series with Wilfred is world famous!

Fantuzzi is coming to MardiGrass for the first time. For 50 years he has travelled the planet inspiring people with his music and dance. He is flying in for Aquarius50 but will come early to enjoy MardiGrass, and he will lead the sacred 420 ceremony.

There is a big program of entertainment, music and speakers. Sport of course, as well with the Hemp Olympix! And lots of comedy, we need it.

Changing the cannabis laws for us who have had our eyes opened is such a no-brainer. Ending the drug war, the same.

Drug use is a health issue of course. Humans just trying to have less pain and enjoy their day more.

It's all about profit, and who isn't playing the monopoly game?

The Labor Party has promised to have a drug summit and we can hope that will educate some politicians about what is really going on in their own backyards.

Like harassing cannabis which is so smelly and bulky just encourages young people to use powders and pills. Do we want ice or weed?

Teaching happens by repetition, and undoing the lies about cannabis will take a long time yet. Nimbin should feel good about itself flying the flag for cannabis law reform these last 30-odd years.

Finally, people are listening, and every day hundreds of new people are discovering its medicinal wonders now.

The plant is really running the revolution, people just think they are.

<https://nimbinmardigrass.com>

Mardigrass 2023: A Weed University weekend

by the MardiGrass Organising Body

2023 MardiGrass Hemposium will be an all-Aussie affair showcasing an amazing collection of Cannabis experts across medical, industrial, science, politics, culture and more!

MardiGrass is an extraordinary chance to share and learn about our favourite plant ally and healing herb. A Weed University weekend! And as advocates for freedom for all minds, plants and fungi, MardiGrass 23 will also deep dive into mushrooms, MDMA and the emerging world of mainstream psychedelic therapy.

MardiGrass is super excited to welcome canine comedian Jason "Wilfred" Gann, who is best known for co-creating and starring as the "bong smoking dog" character in the hit "stoner" comedy series 'Wilfred'. In 2019, Jason became a ganjapreneur and launched the celebrity cannabis brand, Wilfred Cannabis in California.

In 2023, we are thrilled that Dr Karen Hitchcock will be speaking at the Hemposium on the current state of medical Cannabis in Australia. Karen is one of Australia's first authorised prescribers of medicinal cannabis.

Additionally, she is a therapist in the St. Vincent's hospital trial of psilocybin-assisted therapy for depression and anxiety associated with terminal illness, along with Dr Martin Williams, Psychedelic Research in Science & Medicine [PRISM], who is returning to MardiGrass to share his thoughts on the landscape of psychedelic assisted therapy in Australia.

Wellness coach, Bek Houghton, will facilitate a panel on the "good, the bad and the ugly" of the February TGA announcement about rescheduling MDMA and Psilocybin for medical use. And on a fungal tangent, we are excited to welcome Caine Barlow, Guerilla Mycology, who will present



an introductory workshop on mushroom cultivation.

The 2023 Hemposium will host experts in medicinal cannabis to discuss the role of cannabis in the treatment of disease and disorders, as well as the promotion of overall well-being. Drawing on both scientific research and experience as practitioners Dr John The – PlantMed, and Dr Jamie Rickcord – Ananda Clinics, will speak on Cannabis for healing, health and wellbeing.

"What's next?" will be the big discussion point for 2023 around weed legalisation. Leading Cannabis law reform politicians from the Greens and Legalise Cannabis [LC] parties will discuss their efforts around roadside drug testing, adult use, removing past cannabis convictions, fixing the medicinal cannabis scheme, and decriminalising psychedelics.

Victoria's newly-minted LC State MPs Rachel Payne and David Ettershank have recently introduced a Bill to Parliament to allow medicinal cannabis patients to drive when not impaired — like what we do with every other prescription medication. We look forward to welcoming them to MardiGrass! They will be joined by LC "veterans" from Western Australia, Sophia Moermond and Dr Brian Walker.

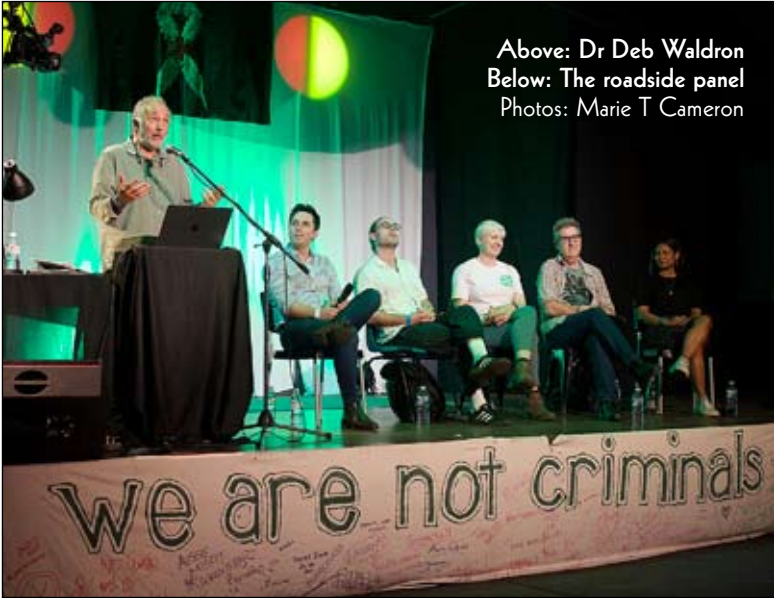
And long-time MardiGrass supporters from the Greens party will join us again for the Hemposium including the Sniff Off crew exploring justice and Cannabis, and David Shoebridge, now a

Federal Senator, will share his steps towards legalising Cannabis federally. In 2023 we welcome back Dr Will Tregoning from Unharm to discuss research conducted into persuasive propaganda for legalisation.

This year's MardiGrass Industrial HEMP Expo will promote global and local hemp solutions for medicine, food and industry. In 2023, located outside The Hemp Club in Cullen Street, the Hemp Expo will feature local hemp legend Paul Benhaim speaking on hemp plastics; Malcolm Lee on CBG; hemp engineer Martin Ernegg; interactive farmers, Hanna and Leon of Hemp Threads; and a Master Gardeners Forum to answer all your questions about hemp farming. Learn how to make hemp balm with The Hemp Club!

And a shout out to MardiGrass legends and stalwart supporters of Cannabis law reform who will share their expertise and inspiration again with us in 2023: Ex-magistrate David Heilpern, solicitor Steve Bolt, master gardener Kog, Dr Pot, Radic AI Conscious, hemp historian Dr John Jiggins, and Dr Deb Waldron. Craze Co and friends will descend on MardiGrass again for all weekend glass-blowing demonstrations in the markets area.

MardiGrass 2023 will also explore Cannabis laws and experiences in other countries, and welcome HQ from Bani Tenang Horticulture Centre in Malaysia, as well as Marc Selan who operated a Cannabis Club in Spain for a number of years.



Above: Dr Deb Waldron
Below: The roadside panel
Photos: Marie T Cameron

It's time this magnificent herb was welcomed into mainstream Australian life, and the persecution and prejudice to stop. Medical cannabis has been a growing international phenomenon over the last few decades.

In 2013 Uruguay became the first country in the world to legalise the sale, cultivation, and distribution of recreational cannabis, with Canada launching legalisation in 2018, and

Thailand grooving into the green dream in 2022.

Australia is only now starting to catch on and catch up. The 2023 MardiGrass Hemposium aims to expand the mind as much as that special weed herself, and is a space to inform, learn, agitate, inspire and connect in this massively important green revolution.

Let's not take another 30 years! Help us overgrow the government!

Ganja Faeries celebrate 30 years



Photo: Sue Stock

by Faerie Nuff

This year we are celebrating 30 years since the Nimbin Ganja Faeries first joined the Drug Law Reform Rally Parade. To mark this momentous occasion, we are going to have a little party, and you are all invited.

On Saturday 6th May at 2pm the Faeries are having a party in Allsopp Park with feasting, fun and frivolity. We are also performing a cabaret piece on Friday night in the hall at the Green Cabaret and of course we will be proudly strutting our stuff in the MardiGrass Parade.

You can be a Ganja Faerie. We have begun rehearsals: Fridays 5.30pm at the Nimbin Community Centre dance studio. Just rock up.



Glover and Sorrensen

MardiGrass Program at a glance

FRIDAY 5 MAY				
Town Hall	Hall Garden	PLANTEM PARK Indica Arena	Hemp Bar Cafe	Cullen Street
				3 pm: Footpath Protest
			4.20 pm: Suppositorium @ Hemp Bar Cafe	
				5 pm: Opening Ceremony @ Allsop Park
6 pm: Hemp Couturier Fashion Show		6 pm: Comedy The Laugh Mob!		
7.30 pm: Great Green Cabaret Featuring: Musos, poets, acrobats, mimes, dancers & comedians!	7 pm: Documentary 30 Yrs of MardiGrass			7 pm: Nimbin Street Drummers @ The Blister
	8.30 pm Deadly Films The Good Deed & Bastard	8.30 pm: Music Fantuzzi		
	9 pm Disco Sista's Chill out Sounds	9.30 pm Music Monkey & The Fish		
MIDNIGHT CLOSE				

SATURDAY 6 MAY				
Town Hall	Hall Garden	PLANTEM PARK Indica Arena Sativa Stadium		Around the Village
10 am: Hemposium Conference Featuring: Wilfred, David Shoebridge, Paul Benhaim, Dr Martin Williams, Dr Karen Hitchcock, Fiona Patten	10 am: Hemposium Featuring: Radic Al, Dr Deb Waldron, Master Gardener's Forum & Mushroom Cultivation	10 am: Hemposium Featuring: Legalise Cannabis MPs from Victoria & WA; Cannabis in Thailand, USA, Malaysia, Spain, & Sniff Off on Justice & Cannabis	11 am: Hemp Olympix 2 pm: Fringe Olympix	The Hemp Club, Cullen Street 10 am: Industrial Hemp Expo & Talks
			3 pm Music Harry Kemp	SKATEPARK 12 pm: Comp & Prizes
4 pm: Kombi Konvoy & 420 Blaze				
5 pm: Hemp Olympix Joint Rolling Competition		5 pm: MJ Music Awards	5 pm: Music Bluntfield	SKATEPARK 5 pm: Comp & Prizes
6 pm: Hemposium Conference Panel: TGA Decision to Reschedule MDMA & Psilocybin	6 pm: Hemposium Featuring: Dr John Jiggins, Cannabis historian & Caine Barlow, Psilocybin Fungi	6 pm: Comedy The Laugh Mob!	6 pm: Music Blue Lotus Flame	MINGLE PARK 7 pm: Daizy's Disco
7.30 pm: Comedy Featuring: Glover & Sorrensen, Steve Allison and Mandy Nolan	8 pm: Movies Doco: 30 Yrs of MardiGrass Short Films: The Good Deed & Bastard	9 pm: Music Happy Africa Band	7 pm: Music Super Orbit	
9.30 pm: Music				

SUNDAY 7 MAY				
Town Hall	Hall Garden	PLANTEM PARK Indica Arena Sativa Stadium		Around the Village
10 am: Hemposium Conference Featuring: David Heilpern, Dr Brian Walker, Dr Jamie Rickcord, Dr John Teh	10 am: Hemposium Conference Featuring Dr Will Tregoning [Unharm], Entheogenesis Australis [EGA] & Psychedelic Research in Science & Medicine [PRISM]	10 am: Hemposium Featuring: Mullayways, Kog's Growers Circle & Dr Andrew Katelaris	10 am: Pot Poet's Breakfast 11 am Music King Bee 12 pm: Hemp Olympix	The Hemp Club, Cullen Street 10 am: Industrial Hemp Expo & Talks
2.30 pm: 30th MardiGrass Cannabis Law Reform Rally & Parade				
		4 pm: Cannabis 420 Honouring Ceremony by Fantuzzi		
5 pm: Hemp Olympix Joint Rolling Finals 6.30 pm: Music Fantuzzi	5 pm: Disco Sista's Groovy Sounds	5 pm: Comedy The Laugh Mob!		Daizy's, Cullen Street 7 pm: Daizy's Disco
		7.30 pm: Music Gold Coast Reggae 8.30 pm: Music The Hoochers		
10pm CLOSE				

MardiGrass Comedy Show

On Saturday 6th May, the MardiGrass Comedy Show will deliver kilograms of laughs at the Nimbin Town Hall (aka School of Arts), at 7.30pm.

This comedy show, like the MardiGrass festival/rally itself, is an act of rebellion against injustice. Being there and having fun IS the protest.

In a long tradition that rolls from a distant smokey past, your hosts Glover and Sorrensen will present yet another evening of stand-up comedy at its best.

Alan Glover (activist and tall guy) and S Sorrensen (not so active and tired) have invited stand-up legends Steve Allison and Mandy Nolan to share their insights into this what-the-hell-is-happening world.

Steve is an international performer who delivers snappy one-liners, hilarious stories and funny home truths, all with a clever laid-back and friendly style of comedy that everybody can relate to.

Mandy is, well, Mandy. Funny as all get-out. Real as fudge. Three acts, four friends, and 90 minutes of fun and facts, laughs and lampoons, jokes and jabs.

Join S, Alan, Steve and Mandy in an entertaining protest against insane government policies.

MardiGrass armband entry, an all weekend pass, costs \$30 for locals.



Steve Allison



Mandy Nolan

Performance workshops

Throughout May at the NORPA Makers Hub at Lismore Showground, leading artists from around Australia will facilitate free workshops in dance, theatre-making and physical theatre, both for professional and community-level actors, dancers, theatre-makers and movement artists.

Workshop leaders include Kaz Therese (NSW), Jenni Large (TAS), Emma Saunders (NSW) Nigel Poulton (NSW), Thomas ES Kelly (QLD), Julian Louis (NORPA's Artistic Director) and Margot Politis of Milk Crate Theatre (NSW), with more announcements to come!

Applications close 7th April. For more info and applications, visit: www.norpa.org.au

NORPA Creative Speed Dating event

The NORPA Makers Hub at Lismore Showground is hosting a fun, free 'Creative Speed Dating' evening event on Thursday 25th May for all local creatives working in any discipline to gather, connect, share their practice and find out more about each other in an entertaining, informal way.

Who knows what collaborations may come about as a result?

The NORPA Creative Speed Dating event will be held on 25th May at NORPA Makers Hub, Lismore Showground. For more info and to register, visit: www.norpa.org.au



Workshop leader Thomas ES Kelly



Love for One Night 2022 Season



Lismore Regional Gallery pop-up space will host 'Hiromi Hotel: Rainbow', a sensory installation that takes inspiration from the rainbow, drawing on the colours and symbology of this natural wonder.

Hiromi Tango's therapeutic process involves gently wrapping fabric to build twisting organic forms and create spaces for reflection

and human connection.

Visitors are welcome to create their own pieces from material provided at the gallery to add to the artwork.

Hiromi Tango is a revered contemporary artist based at Tweed Heads.

Her work has been exhibited at major national art museums and regional galleries across Australia and at international exhibitions

in the United States, Belgium, Dubai, and the Asia Pacific.

The 'Hiromi Hotel: Rainbow' exhibition is open until 15th April at Lismore Regional Gallery pop-up space, 46 Magellan Street, Lismore.

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am – 4pm, Thursdays until 6pm. For more info, visit: lismoregallery.org

Opera in the Park



Soprano Mirusia singing The Kiss Waltz song

by Omega Breakspear, text and photos

The Opera in the Park was the finale of the Lismore Opening our Heart series of events on the one-year anniversary of the 2022 February/March natural disaster.

Held at the Lismore Turf Club, hundreds of locals showed up to enjoy the concert, many dressing up for the occasion.

Featuring some of Australia's leading opera and theatre stars, highlights

included beautiful soprano Mirusia singing Il Bacio, 'The Kiss Waltz'.

Tenor Paul Tabone, baritone Joshua Robson and mezzo Jayde Westaby also performed with songs ranging from the Phantom of the Opera to Delibes' 'The Flower Duet'.

There was a standing ovation at the end of the concert for the talented singers and their accompanying musicians.

Everyone had a lovely time picnicking on the grass under trees while listening to the concert on the warm summer afternoon.



Mirusia with the Lismore City Council volunteers

Well-travelled protest singer

by Warwick Fry

The legendary US folksinger Woody Guthrie wrote over a thousand songs, hundreds of which became embedded in the American cultural psyche (think 'Goodnight Irene').

He was essentially a widely-travelled protest singer, and the first musician to have the label "This machine kills fascists" stuck on his guitar.

If Woodie were alive today, in the age of the internet and social media he would be like David Rovics.

David is a prolific songwriter whose songs reveal the threads of fascism in the fabric of our supposedly enlightened society.

His lyrics pick out the absurdities, hypocrisies and contradictions of the powerful, his music expresses the anger and defiance of resistance.

I first came across David's music when we were expressing our protests against the Iraq war through the playlists on our community radio 2Nim-FM. There was a trove of memorable songs about interventions in the Middle East.



But as I was to discover, David consistently identifies the issues that reveal the hand of fascism even as they emerge – exploitative landlords, racist police, persecution of whistleblowers, political prisoners – hardly a week goes by without a new and vibrant song emerging about a current issue.

While his music is posted on his websites, David spends much of his time touring. Live tours seem to be his favourite medium. He regularly tours Europe, with a preference for Scandinavia.

A second tour of Australia some 15 years ago was aborted when an official immigration official picked up on a joke he made on

public radio in Europe about smuggling marijuana.

David had just finished a tour in Japan and was about to head for Australia, when his visa was cancelled and he was not allowed to board his flight.

After sleeping a couple of nights in the airport lounge he went to New Zealand instead.

David's latest song called 'Shooting the Messenger' is about Julian Assange, and he is interested in visiting the region where Julian spent his boyhood.

He will be playing at a house party in Lismore on 7th April at 6pm. Those interested should email Chris at: treehouseindustries@yahoo.com.au

Musical treats at Open Mic

Nimbin Bowlo's monthly Open Mic nights are a cornucopia of musical genres and performance styles, with plenty of pleasant surprises.

With the Sibley Bistro open 5-8 pm with a delicious seasonal menu, and drinks at Club prices, a splendid time is (practically) guaranteed for all.

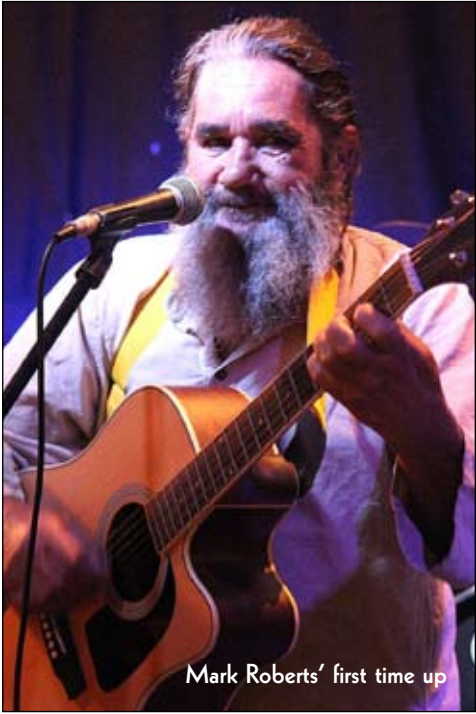
While the listening is enjoyable in itself, it's lots of fun to get and share your own materials, whether originals or covers.

Just put your name on the board to get your 15-minute spot – three songs or so.

A PA, drum kit and back-line amps are provided, as well as the Club's plug-in acoustic guitar, and you can get the house band to accompany you, or plug in your backing tracks.

Spoken word performances are also much appreciated – poems, stories and stand-up – and are a good way to road-test new material.

The nights are held on the second Wednesday of the month, starting around 6pm. Next is on 12th April.



Mark Roberts' first time up

Singing and ukuleles for seniors

Join us on the veranda at Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services, 81 Cullen Street – the rainbow-coloured cottage at Nimbin Community Centre – on Thursday mornings from 10am to noon.

Bring your voice or your ukulele or both! We have spare ukuleles if you don't have one.

Complete beginners are very welcome, and individual coaching on the ukulele can be arranged for free.

Light refreshments will be served. If you can make a \$5



contribution, that would be wonderful.

All people aged over 65 or Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders over 50 are eligible. Just drop in any Thursday

from 10am.

This is a Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services initiative, bringing people together to share and connect.

New documentary on native plant caretaking

Lismore Quad invites you to share in the debut screening of the beautiful documentary *Our Place, Our Species*, an inspiring journey into the world of native plants and their caretakers in the Bundjalung region.

The documentary shines a light on Aboriginal people of the Northern Rivers who work to preserve and protect the region's native plants.

Local presenter and sound artist, Mitch King travels on country to learn from each of these caretakers.

The participants share their stories and knowledge of the plants and reflect on their own connection to country.

Each bring a range of perspectives to the topic of ecology while also joining together in acknowledging and valuing



People sampling native bush food as collected by Delta Kay, one of the caretakers featured in the documentary. Photo Kate Holmes.

the importance of First Nations practices.

Our Place, Our Species will screen outdoors at Lismore Quad, 110 Magellan Street, on Friday 20th April at 5pm.

The screening will be accompanied by performers and dancers of the Indigenous dance group Nini Nahri Gari.

This is a free event. Bring a picnic blanket or a fold-out chair. A food truck will be at The Quad on the night.

More info at: lismorequad.org.au

Print Fest and Zine Fair

by Holly English

Byron Bay has it all: conspiracies, controversies, celebrities, hippies, bands, babes, baes, beaches, Bay FM, and an abundance of privileged linen, brand new Range Rovers, expensive drugs and designer sunglasses.

But what is it missing? Well, a lot of things. Like affordable housing, for instance.

But y'know what else? A dedicated Print Fest and Zine fair celebrating self-publishing, independent art, zines, comics, posters, screen/lino/riso printing, pictures, posters, drawings, doodles, underground literature, indie press, alternative publication, experimental art, contemporary tactile design, and everything in between.

Are you an artist? Zine maker? Dick doodler? Picture book publisher, photo flicker or DIY aficionado? Slick store front, gallery or artist collective? Got something sick to sell to stoned hippies? If you answered 'yes' to one or more of these questions, we want you at Byron Bay Print Fest.



Featuring award winning and shortlisted local makers and creatives, Nickolla Clarke, Holly English (pictured) and Benjo Kazue, with interstate artists locked in from Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane and the Gold Coast (including seminal Melbourne DIY establishment Sticky Institute, The Canberra Zine

Emporium, and Small Zine Volcano), it's gonna be totally slay, bae!

Only a short walk off the main drag of Byron Bay, the Scout Hall has a playground and a flat, grassed outdoor area, with an oval and basketball court nearby. Dog friendly, with a sausage sizzle by the Byron Scout Group.

And we're working on some live music, DIY craft tables, coffee, and rugs to sit on and bask in the sun admiring the art. So, bring the kids, a wallet full of fifties and stay for the day. Entry is free!

Print Fest is organised by interdisciplinary artist, gonzo journalist, freelance writer and lousy barefoot beatnik Benjo Kazue. He is writer and founder of DIY literary journal and indie publishing house Cosmic Phallus, recently shortlisted for the Broken Pencil International Zine Awards for Best Zine and Best Literature Zine, and appearing at Brisbane Writers Festival later in the year. See ya at the zine fair.

Here's the lowdown: Byron Bay Print Fest, Saturday 29th April, 2023, Byron Bay Scout Hall, 12 – 4pm.

Hungry Ghosts

Lismore Theatre Company *Hungry Ghosts*, a new play by Northern Rivers local James May is set in Sydney in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics.

It urges audiences to look beyond the stereotype of 'the junkie' and see the hopes, fears and dreams of these people who crave a fix and like most us, are searching for meaningful connection in their lives.

Central to the play is the relationship between Shayne (Elyse Dallinger) and Lily (Krystle Winter)

"It's tumultuous and toxic," says first-time Director Junia Wulf. "Shayne is emotionally stunted. She wants to be in love but doesn't really know what love is."

Lily on the other hand knows what she wants from life and is focused on her own advancement.

"Lily doesn't take her relationship with Shayne as seriously as Shayne does so she is surprised by Shayne's feelings," says Junia.

"These are people who have feelings and a yearning for love, just like most of us," Junia said, "but their capacity to give and receive love is somewhat limited."

The cast of *Hungry Ghosts*, which also includes Sarah Jane Loxton, Crystal Amber Bock and John McPherson, is fortunate to have input into the development of their characters from Karen Farrell, Manager Partnerships, Marketing and Communications at The Buttery.

"The Buttery is pleased that LTC is producing this play that deals with the impacts of drugs and helps to de stigmatise the language around users and mental health conditions," said Karen.

The set for *Hungry Ghosts* will be minimalist, so special

lighting effects can create atmosphere in the many scenes in settings such as a share house, a shopping mall and a nightclub.

There will also be some haze effects using approved products that are hypoallergenic and safe for those with asthma.

Hungry Ghosts opens on 28th April for six performances over two weekends. Shows are Friday and Saturday nights at 7.30pm and Sunday afternoons at 2pm.

Bookings can be made at: www.trybooking.com/CGBBS (\$25/\$20 pp), or contact Jenny on 0402-651-394 for bookings of 10 or more at \$15pp.



Shayne (Elyse Dallinger) Lily (Krystle Winter) John McPherson Tameika Watts, Sarah Jane Loxton, Kylie Fuad Photo: Richard Johnson

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