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A protest on the site last year. Photo: Chibo Mertineit

The politics of 'waste to energy' incinerators

by Jo Immig

With the NSW election looming, voters need to carefully consider the policy positions of all parties and independents in relation to the NSW government's policy to build a 'waste to energy' incinerator in Casino.

The NSW Government passed the regulation permitting waste incinerators during the Northern Rivers flood disaster and without direct community consultation.

The NSW ALP did not oppose the regulation. Only the NSW Greens are vocal opponents of the technology and proposal for waste to energy incinerators.

Waste incinerators are known to create serious air and water pollution as well as tonnes of toxic ash requiring hazardous waste disposal. Research shows the energy produced from burning waste is the dirtiest form of energy, worse than coal and gas.

Incinerators also stigmatise communities where they are located and despite the promise of jobs in the waste sector, they are job destroyers.

The NSW regulation restricts waste incinerators to four regional locations in NSW, leaving the greater Sydney region safe from incinerators.

The Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct was

named as one region, along with Lithgow, Parkes, and Goulburn.

Exactly how and why the Richmond Valley and other regions came to be named is unclear and certainly needs further investigation.

It's even more baffling why these areas were chosen since the NSW Chief Scientist advises waste incinerators should not be situated near food growing regions as contamination of produce is the key source of exposure to the pollutants they create.

The communities in these nominated regions were blindsided and are rightfully concerned and angered they are now being forced to defend themselves from the Government's ill-considered policy and regulation and the powerful waste incineration industry.

Richmond Valley Council has been a vocal supporter of waste incineration and is spearheading expressions of interest in the Northern Rivers. They recently passed a motion to 'press pause' on the process until after the NSW election. The position of other councils participating is unclear, although some have unofficially said they would not support a waste incinerator.

Ultimately councils would have little say once a proposal is on the table. The decision-making powers sit with the

NSW Government not local government, which is why the position major parties have in relation to waste incineration is important. Whilst our local major party candidates standing in the NSW election may have a position opposing an incinerator, the party policy would override their personal positions.

The NSW Coalition is actively pursuing options for 'waste to energy' incineration. Contrary to common sense it appears the National party are pushing for waste incinerators in regional areas. They are doing this without community consultation and with no social licence in the communities nominated in the regulation.

The NSW ALP considered the issue at their 2022 state conference and have a position that effectively leaves the door open to the waste incineration industry. The ALP has made no commitments to repeal the regulation should they be elected to government.

The NSW Greens have a waste policy that does not support 'waste to energy' incineration and advocates a Zero Waste Policy and steps towards a genuine circular economy.

Waste incinerators are being greenwashed by their proponents as well as the NSW Government and councils that support the

technology. They claim incinerators play a key role in the circular economy.

Not so. Waste incinerators are supposed to only burn residual waste, which is the 20% of waste left after organics and recyclables are removed. Residual waste is largely plastic waste. Introducing an expensive and polluting technology to burn wasteful plastic is a license for the fossil fuel industry to keep making plastic. That tap needs to be turned off.

Waste incinerators also have generational impacts. The cost to build one is around half a billion dollars and there are liability issues for councils required to sign contracts to supply waste for twenty to thirty years. Failure to meet contractual obligations means they risk being sued and this could prove very costly to ratepayers.

The proposal for a waste incinerator in Casino is an election issue for the entire Northern Rivers. We all stand to be impacted by the pollution it would create as does the environment.

A waste incinerator located in Casino would need to source the tonnages of waste to burn from the entire Northern Rivers region locking us into decades of toxic pollution and unsustainable waste management.

Upgrades improve patient experience at Mur'bah Hospital

Patients, carers and staff at Murwillumbah District Hospital are set to benefit from a suite of improvements to hospital facilities as part of an almost \$2 million renovation.

Construction work commenced on 28th January to upgrade the emergency department triage area and reception, medical imaging reception, palliative care room and fire safety measures throughout the site.

District chief executive, Wayne Jones said the hospital will remain open throughout the refurbishment works, and people should continue to present to the emergency department if they

require urgent medical care.

There will be some changes to public access at the front and rear of the hospital, which will be clearly signposted.

"Patients rate the care they receive at Murwillumbah Hospital very highly, and these upgrades will build on the already excellent experience our staff continue to provide to our community," Mr Jones said.

"The enhancements to the hospital will create a more accessible ED triage and waiting area which caters for all patients, including those with a disability."

Upgrades to the medical imaging

department will improve patient flow and disabled access and create a purpose-built brighter reception area – all improving the patient and staff experience.

Palliative care room improvements will create a calm and peaceful environment which feels more like home. There will be facilities for family members to stay overnight with their loved one and a living room will provide a breakout space with tea and coffee making facilities.

"We will also redesign the space to enable patients to enjoy the beautiful views that surround the hospital," Mr Jones said.



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by Chibo Mertineit

It was a really hot Australia Day in Brisbane, as we gathered in Queens Park in the morning. Hundreds of people were already there next to a huge Aboriginal flag, at least 20x10m, and other big banners.

'No pride in genocide' caught my attention, as it reflected the theme of this event. It was stated on their Facebook page that this date "will always be #InvasionDay, join us as we shut down Brisbane city to remind the city we don't celebrate genocide."

On this day in 1788 the first fleet of 11 ships arrived from England with around 1400 people, half of them convicts, at Sydney Cove and raised the Union Jack there. Captain Phillip Arthur decided that Botany Bay was not a suitable site, where the first ships already arrived on the 18th January 1788.

More and more people were coming while we waited for the start of the event. The organisers, Brisbane Aboriginal-Sovereign embassy and Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance –WAR had provided water, sunscreen and face masks under some shade-giving gazebos. By the time the traditional opening and the speeches started, Queens Park was nearly full.

Speakers were saying that they have had a voice for over 65,000 years, referring to the planned referendum on a Voice for Indigenous people, before their land was stolen, that there is a war against the indigenous people on this land and it all started with the first invasion 235 years ago through racist violence.

The huge number of deaths in custody of indigenous people was brought up and that it is still happening. There was a Royal Commission over 30 years ago to look into this issue and their recommendations still have not been

fully implemented. The stolen land and children and the intergenerational trauma were mentioned, that the indigenous people were not allowed to speak their own languages and that they were restricted in their travels.

There were powerful and demanding speeches saying that they wanted a treaty before a voice to parliament, which has only an advisory function. In between there were chants like, "Always was, always will be Aboriginal land", "Invasion Day" and "treaty".

It reminded me of the 50th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra last year, where a few elders expressed their support for the Voice to parliament which comes from the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

At the end of the speeches we got out of the park and marched through the streets of Brisbane to Musgrave Park. There must have been around 10,000 people, because a lot were waiting in the shade near the park. It was a very vocal and peaceful march.

We could smell the huge BBQ before we entered the park, and as one speaker said earlier, "They want us to have a BBQ and drink beer."

There was no beer and I sat in front of the stage where Dale Ruska from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) was holding the last speech of the day before the music took over. It was an impressive historical account of the injustices suffered by the Aboriginal people.

Later on I reflected on the history of Australia Day. There were nearly 40,000 indigenous people marching from Redfern in Sydney to Hyde Park and then to the harbour in 1988, the 200-year anniversary of the invasion.

Then there was Paul Keating speaking on International Human Rights day in Redfern in 1992 as Prime Minister,



saying that it was us who took the tribal land and the children away and we have to change (please look it up on YouTube, a less than 10-minutes speech).

And then there were the nearly one million people on 28th May 2000 walking over the Sydney Harbour Bridge for reconciliation.

There are 365 days in the year, and we have to celebrate on the day of the invasion? Maybe 3rd June, the day the Mabo judgement came out, or maybe 8th May.

Any other day than the one we are having now might be a good step.

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Towards Nimbin Aquarius 50th anniversary



by Benny Zable,
NAFI president

I pay my respects to Elders past and present of the Widjabal/Wia-bal people of the Bundjalung nation, the lands on which we live upon here in Nimbin. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we walk.

At the recent Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc meeting on 20th January, the committee fully supported my proposal regarding the protection of the restored Nimbin IMAGINE circle, using Oral Roberts' painted bollards from Lismore.

In February I will negotiate my case with the Lismore City Council brokered by Lismore Greens councillor Adam Guise.

On 25th January, a public meeting was arranged by the Aquarius50 organising group. We shared a wonderful spread of food before a Welcome to Country by Uncle Cecil Roberts with Steve Didge and Lee.

As the meeting began, the



Benny restoring the mural.
Photo: Yagia Gentle

Nimbin Hall was blacked out by a gale-force electrical storm. In spite of this disruption, there were fruitful discussions with some of the people in attendance.

Significantly, Michael Jack has decided to resurrect the old Rainbow Chai Tent trailer towards Nimbin Aquarius 50th. The Sunday 14th May Channon market will be dedicated to The Aquarius 50th anniversary and related groups.

This will be an opportunity for all organisers to pull together in the spirit of Aquarius to promote events planned at The Channon market (weather permitting).

Financing

Financing has become a big issue, and there is currently no funding available from existing groups to support a visit from Phillippe Petit,

world-renowned performance artist and wire walker, who performed during the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival.

If there are people from the community who would like to help finance this project to bring out Phillippe Petit, it will require a total of \$16,000 for Phillippe's travel and performance expenses.

If these funds are able to be raised somehow, Phillippe's partner and manager Judith Friedlaender will match the extra \$16,000 needed for her to come out and support his work.

Call me on 0427-149-237 or email me on: bennyzable@gmail.com if you are interested in sponsoring this endeavour. So far Michael Jack and I have both pledged to put in \$1000 each.

I got word from Nathan and Shelli from our sister town Woodstock, who will



be exhibiting their copies of Harsha Prabhu and Graeme Batterbury's 'Some Children of the Dream' exhibition in Woodstock Museum during the anniversary.

This exhibition launched the Nimbin Woodstock Connection. It was attended by a Woodstock councillor who put the motion for Nimbin to be a sister village to Woodstock.

The town board carried it unanimously, and an official certificate was sent by the town supervisor, Woodstock's equivalent to a mayor.

The then Lismore City Council mayor Merv King responded back in kind.

David Hallett was our first official representative, sent over in 1997. See: www.nimbinweb.com.au/resources/nimbin_woodstock.htm

With three months to go until May 2023, I personally will be busy working on unfinished projects and NAFI targeted events.

1973 Aquarius Festival diary

by Maireid Sullivan

This diary 'letter' was written late in the evening of Wednesday, 11th April, 1973 (after midnight into Thursday am), following our weekly general meeting. At that time I was known as Margaret Sullivan.

The diary entries published here have been annotated with later comments.

Majik Caravan

The past few days have been wonderful. The Aquarius Magik Caravan "group" is really together now.

We had a meeting Monday evening and decided to contribute worthwhile songs. So-o! everyone who had a song of value to each other, sang. It was so wonderful – so happy. We really came together for the first time.

We've all got our own little things to contribute: a complete puppet show, acrobatics and a variety of music. Plus we've all decided to do group songs, i.e. 50s-type gospel, rock and country and other such as children's and singalong. Absolutely marvellous!

Our first show will be tomorrow night and we all feel that we will be happy enough to make others happy.

The Aquarius Magik Caravan was launched on Friday 13th April 1973 and held performances at town halls around the Nimbin area, ranging from Casino to Byron Bay.

Journey to the Aboriginal settlement

Today I went with Graham Dunstan, Richard Neville, Paul Joseph and a few others on an 'expedition' to the Aboriginal settlement at Woodenbong, about 90km north-west of Nimbin, to speak with Aboriginal Elders about rumours of a curse on the Rainbow



Maireid with daughter Brigitte in 1973

Region.

This trip, an official Aquarius Festival 'overture', was part of the NUAUS policy of respectful acknowledgement for indigenous communities.

Apparently the Aboriginal community had a system of policing, or discouraging, or punishing wrong-doers in the very old days which was simply to go out and "sing them" – make it public by singing about it.

The people used to complain and condemn (curse) people or things or creatures that disturbed them.

Anyway, apparently whatever happened was of that nature and not severe or permanent.

But our silly interpreters are unsure of the intentions of these people and interpret these things rather superstitiously, I must say.

The traditional Irish/Celtic approach to dealing with wrong-doing by a member of a community or tribe who hurt or offended a member of another family/tribe, the family must 'sing them out' publicly until they make reparations.

As a traditional Irish/Celtic singer, the fact that Australian Aboriginal people also "sing them" captured my attention.

British travel writer Bruce Chatwin's masterpiece, *Songlines* (1987) was an inspiring confirmation, and Eric Rolls' *Sojourners* in 1992 was an eye-opener!

One thing which really affected me was the style of living these people had succumbed to.

Their structures were really adequate and quite attractive. But the children are going to the 'white man's' school – therefore, are not learning in their old tradition. The teenagers aren't even learning, just sitting around playing 45s and drinking beer. Not at all interested in history.

The Elders are getting too old to dance and too used to an un-stimulating way of life and non-interest from the youngers, so they're carrying their culture to the grave.

Unfortunately the younger ones don't have a cultural replacement for the old. They're supported by the government and discouraged from entering the 'white society' or from being creative themselves (mainly because they have no leaders). What a dilemma!

The 'indigenous ritual' that followed in Nimbin, just before the festival, which 'everyone' attended, was a symbolic gesture of diplomatic respect for the descendants of the 'ancient' people of the area.

Determining the borders of our Community

Some 60 people are now a family. We recognise each other as a tribe or unit, and will continue to work together as a self-supporting community, starting with arts and crafts and the Aquarius Magik Caravan, plus, of course, our individual 'other' means.

What a strong sense of unity and purpose has come in this past week!

Aquarius50 public meeting triumphs over adversity

by Greg Bork and Dafydd Hyett

The Town Hall meeting on Wednesday 25th January was extremely well attended, with over 75 enthusiastic community members gathering.

The scene was set, a huge seated circle ready to review the proposed program to see what was planned for the Nimbin Aquarius50 Festival on May 12-21 this year. But before we commenced the heavens parted, welcoming a ferocious thunderstorm. The sound of hail on the roof of the hall was deafening, and the whole village went into a blackout. The storm eventually subsided, candles appeared, phones turned into torches, and undaunted we were ready to begin.

Uncle Cecil Robert's Welcome to Country included acknowledgement of his grandfather Uncle Lyle Roberts Jr who at the 1973 Festival was the first Elder to make what is now called in Australia a 'Welcome To Country'. Uncle Cec was supported by Steve Didge with a welcome song.

Chair of the Aquarius50 Organising Committee, Dafydd Hyett began by talking about re-invigorating Aquarius, and how Nimbin itself is a significant part of that dream.

Many of the buildings in the village are owned by the community as a result of the 1973 Festival as well as good stewardship by community elders over subsequent years, providing a magical site unlike any other festival. Dafydd updated planning progress with an outline of the program, mostly drawn from input offered at previous town hall community meetings and subsequent consultation.

Dafydd and fellow committee member Michael Balderstone each gave a spirited plea for support for community members to get involved, emphasising the theme from the original Aquarius festival: "You



Photo: Benny Zable

are the festival".

We want people to come with purpose, only those who want to engage with the process to contribute energy and spirit. We don't want spectators. It's about keeping the dream alive, making the world a better place.

Fellow committee member Jeni Kendell asked people to think ahead between now and the festival by growing food in preparation for the event, making art or creating something to share.

Greg outlined Aquarius50's acceptance by the Government-backed Australian Cultural Fund, advising that we are now able to accept tax deductible donations. People offered suggestions for fundraising. Local entrepreneur Christopher Dean came forward offering \$10,000 on the proviso that this amount was matched by others. Immediately five hands went up committing \$1000 each and we were halfway there. Please be in touch if you would like to join Christopher's spirit of collaborative generosity.

The festival's new and only paid staff introduced themselves; festival production manager Dex Tallo and festival administrator Greg Bork, who are working hard to ensure smooth

delivery of the festival.

Greg introduced the new website at: aquarius50.com.au where you can update on much of what we discussed about the program, getting involved or donating. We then invited participation from the community with an organising committee member at each table set up to provide information and gather details of willing volunteers, who filled out their information forms by candlelight.

Aquarius50 Festival is looking for enthusiastic and committed volunteers for key roles including accommodation, cast, travel, transport, ticketing and vendor co-ordinators; administration, graphics and production assistants; and décor, site and technical supervisors.

Experience is great but not essential, though you may need your own computer and good skills for some roles. You'll work with Dex and Greg to help put together this significant community event, and can be flexible with hours and location.

We welcome input from around the globe; with modern technology the possibilities are limitless. If you have something to offer to make the Aquarian dream a reality, please contact us via the website: www.aquarius50.com.au

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World class festival and event management course

The Nimbin Aquarius50 Festival committee is pleased to announce Dr Robert Harris (pictured), principal of Event Training Australia, who is conducting an event management course over two days at the Nimbin Bush Theatre on Monday 14th and Tuesday 15th February.

The course is presented at a pivotal time in Australia's entertainment and event history.

The entertainment industry faces its some of biggest challenges to date.

The Covid-19 pandemic in the short-term shut down many events, and its long-term impact is far-reaching, profound and yet to be fully played out.

Now restrictions are lifted, the vitally important



contribution that live entertainment and social commentary have on our lives and society will once again be realised.

Rob is one of Australia's most experienced event management researchers and practitioners.

He has an international reputation as an event management educator, having developed and

delivered programs through to master's level in locations around the world, including the United Kingdom, Malaysia, China and New Zealand.

The course is designed for both aspiring and established event managers who want to gain the benefit of many years of direct experience research and networking in the event management arena that Rob has to offer.

The stimulus for the programme to be presented in the Rainbow Region at this time is preparation for the Aquarius50 celebrations.

The original Aquarius festival shaped the area which we now know as the Rainbow Region. The time has again come for "the counterculture to roar."

The 10-day Aquarius50

event from 12th to 21st May will be the platform for the revival of our utopian dream, and participants in the course will have the chance to hone their skills through direct involvement this event.

For further information on programme details and costs, please contact: admin@aquarius50.com.au

A limited number of places in the course will be offered as scholarships in return for participation in the Aquarius50 event.

Previous applicants will be contacted and advised of the new arrangements.

The course will be very valuable in gaining assistance from participants in supporting the festival production manager in delivering the program.

Landcare Grants

Websters Creek Landcare has been the successful recipient of riparian restoration funds from the NSW government (Local Land Services).

The Landcare group, in partnership with Nimbin Environment Centre, will be repairing a section of Calico Creek from the damage caused by the February floods, when a lot of vegetation loss, erosion and riverbank de-stabilisation occurred.

The works will include replanting, weeding, erosion control including pin weirs and log wheels.

These works will complement adjacent tree plantings that occurred in 2022 along the straight on Blue Knob Road after cemetery corner.

The Landcare group has also been continuing with the fire resilience works at Blue Knob and Stony Chute. Over 600 rainforest trees have been planted, with a focus on helping the Richmond Birdwing butterfly by

replanting Richmond Birdwing vines.

Tunable Creek Landcare are undertaking a second round of bush regeneration with an Environmental Trust grant provided by the NSW government.

This will complement works done in previous years along all the creeks in the Nimbin-Channon area with a focus on rainforest restoration, protection of koala habitat and mitigation of Bell Miner Associated Die-back (BMAD) at Blue Knob.

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In your neighbourhood...

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News

How are you going with your flood recovery journey?

If you are still struggling, you are not alone. Recovery Support Services are available to support you across the Northern Rivers region.

Applications for the NSW flood recovery Back Home grant close on 20th April 2023.

The Nimbin Recovery Support Service (Nimbin RSS) is delivered by NNIC and offers disaster recovery support for impacted people in the Northern parts of the Lismore LGA and nearby parts of the Tweed and Kyogle Shires.

Our RSS support workers can assist you through the complex journey of disaster recovery including help with developing a recovery plan; applying for grants and financial support; linking with key services, suppliers and expert advice; finding housing support/solutions and disaster-proofing your life and well-being.

You can contact our RSS staff by emailing: nimbinrss@nnic.org.au or call/text 0488-144-647 or drop by 7 Sibley Street, Monday-Fridays 9am-4pm.

Soup kitchen back on

The soup kitchen is recommencing in the first week of February, Fridays 12pm-2pm on the NNIC front verandah.

Art in the Park also back

Fridays from 11am to 2pm in Allsopp Park (weather permitting).

All ages and abilities welcome (kids under 15 years must be under parental supervision). Materials provided or bring along your own art/craft project.

New team members

We welcome to the NNIC team Kerry Negus, our new relief community worker and Brad Moulton our new relief



Nimbin CCT training at the Bush Theatre in 2022

front of house worker.

We also say farewell and many thanks to former Relief FOH Worker and volunteer, Roxy Graham-Smith, who has moved on to new pastures.

Nimbin Community Disaster Plan

Err...we are running a bit behind schedule... The final version will be up on our website (Disasters page) by the end of February.

We will also publish the results of the Plan Feedback Survey conducted in November-December 2022.

Community Care Team

Around half of the CCT volunteers required to cover the designated localities have been recruited. There will be free training and support provided. Come on down and get involved!

To register your interest, please complete the EOI form which can be downloaded from our website (Disasters tab) and send it back to us. Or you can pick up a hard copy from NNIC.

Save the date

18th March – for a fun community get together. More details soon.

7 Sibley Street update

The revised Draft Concept Plan for the site will

soon be ready to show to the community for your consideration and input.

We are anticipating this issue will be back before Council in April 2023.

Compost loo project

We are about to commence the hemp rendering and are looking for an experienced renderer to give us a bit of a how-to lesson. Or maybe even help us get it done.

Big ask, we know. But if you can help, contact us on: admin@nnic.org.au

Did you know?

NNIC is a registered DGR charity, which means that donations to our charitable activities, or bequests in your will, are tax deductible.

Your donations help us to help and support our local community.

www.nnic.org.au

Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services

We assist frail aged people, NDIS participants and carers to stay living at home and connect socially.



All NACRS support workers are qualified, certified, experienced, police checked, Covid-safe trained, insured and locally based.

SOCIAL CENTRE with Veranda – Monday-Friday 10am-2pm. Drop in for a cuppa, access support services, info and computers.

DEVICE ADVICE – Wednesdays 9.30am-1pm. Seniors can book for assistance with phone, tablet or laptop issues.

SENIORS SOCIAL GROUPS – booking and fees apply

- Nimbin Tuesday Morning Tea, 10.30am-1pm. Tea/coffee, conversation, music and snacks, weekly \$5
- The Outsiders Group 1st and 3rd Thursday, 11am-2pm at various rural cafes, self-funded plus donation to NACRS
- Wise Ones at Koonorigan Hall/Dunoon 4th Monday, 11.30am-1.30pm, bring a plate to share
- Bus outings – 2nd and 4th Tuesday. Scenic drives, cafes for morning tea & lunch (you pay), bookings essential, fees apply.

Phone **6689-1709** or visit NACRS at Bottlebrush Studio, the rainbow building at Nimbin Community Centre.

www.nacrs.com.au

Nimbin Hospital information



Child immunisation

By appointment, please phone 6630-0400.

Early childhood nurse

Every Tuesday. Baby checks, weighs, post-natal support. For appointments, phone 6630-0400.

Women's health nurse services

Confidential service, checks, advice, general health information. Phone 6688-1400 for appointment.

Wound clinic

Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am. For self-referral, phone 6688-1433. Referrals also from Nimbin Hospital and GP clinic.

Drug and alcohol counselling services available

For an appointment, please contact 6620-7600. A trained professional will ask you a few confidential questions and will provide you with an appointment time.

Nurse practitioner clinic

Diabetes clinics: third Thursday of the month, next is 16th February.

Community Registered Nurse

Monday to Friday, 8am-4.30pm. Assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy, provision of palliative care in the home, medication support. Phone 6688-1433 – leave a message, will return call swiftly.

Nimbin NSP

Needle and Syringe Program open Monday to Thursday. Arrangements can be made to see a Community Registered Nurse.

Health advice line

Phone 1800-022-222 if you have a health issue. 24-hour, seven days a week, free service. A Registered Nurse will assess whether you need to go to an Emergency Department.

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

Monthly meetings are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month, 9.30am in the CWA room. New members are most welcome.



by Scott Sledge, president

This is a good time to review 2022 – a historic year: the first time opinion polls showed that a majority of people in a majority of countries care deeply about the environment.

Previous polling indicated that economic issues rated higher than the environment, but now climate change disturbs us into a realisation that first and foremost we need a healthy environment: it is, above all, where we live.

I still wonder how we can forget to count such things as war as devastating to the world's ecology. How many fumes are emitted in the Ukraine war? We mourn the loss of life and limb and look with horror at the shattered buildings and infrastructure but do we count the cost to the earth's atmosphere of the wasted fossil fuel and the smoking ruins?

2022 was eventful with two environmental COPs, record floods in the Northern Rivers, inland regions of eastern Australia, the Kimberley, plus Pakistan and New Zealand. We voted a change in our national government, from Coalition to Labor.

We've seen continuing disputation over government responses to Covid and a recognised shift away from fossil fuels. Northern Rivers Guardians has been part of the movement to curtail damage due to industrial logging in our forests and to protect ecosystems for future generations.

The new Federal Parliament

The prospects for nature conservation improved when the ALP took a majority of seats in the new House while Greens and Independents won a balance of power position in the Senate. Gas mining opponent David Pocock won a ACT Senate seat. New Minister for the Environment MP Tanya Plibersek is a high-profile advocate for wildlife protection.

In December, I represented the Nimbin Environment Centre at a round-table discussion with the Federal Assistant Minister for Climate Change matters Senator Jenny McAllister, organised by Janelle Saffin in Lismore. Jenny is married to John Graham MLC and was raised on the North Coast.

Senator McAllister attended COP 27 and is very keen to see emission reductions for Australia to achieve our goals and preserve the biosphere for future generations. She listened and took notes of the concerns of 12 reps from different community organisations: I counted six others who were close colleagues during the gas mining blockades which culminated at Bentley in 2014.

NEC joined with others to oppose a gravel

quarry proposed for the land across the road from the Bentley protest site. It was approved despite various and manifold objections. I suppose the Bentley neighbours will appeal if they can.

Environmental activists arrested

Rising concerns pushed some climate advocates to raise public awareness. Blocking roadways and industrial coal loading led the NSW government to suddenly pass laws that restrict peaceful protest and threaten large fines and up to 12 year's jail for obstruction. These laws are being challenged by the Environment Defenders Office.

In our region we confront the continuing use of forest "waste" to generate electricity at Broadwater and Condong Sugar mill sites owned by Quinbrook, a multi-national corporation branding itself as Cape Byron Power.

Protests at the Condong site supported candidates who oppose the burning of biomass for electricity. Efforts to provide sustainable electricity go on, and we hope to shut down the proposal from CBP to import "builders' waste" from Queensland to burn at Condong.

Redbank power station

Despite some headway in cutting off government subsidies to burn biomass, the Redbank/ Verdant proposal for a wood-burning power plant at Singleton still looms as a threat. It would be five times bigger than the Condong and Broadwater power stations and would burn wood all year, not half the time as these do.

The total emissions from cutting trees and trucking the "waste" 200 kms or more is greater than that created by burning coal. It may not be economic or viable without Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) now that the Federal government has changed its classification.

"Electricity generated by burning native forest wood waste will no longer be allowed to be classified as renewable energy under a regulatory change adopted by the Albanese government." (*The Guardian* 15/12/22)

This decision, which Labor had promised to consider after it was recommended by a Senate committee in September 2022, reverses a 2015 Abbott government move which allowed burning native forest timber to be counted alongside solar and wind energy towards the national renewable energy target.

Toxic waste incinerator

After Sydney-siders said they didn't want pollution from toxic-waste burning, the current NSW Coalition government decided to move it to rural locations such as Casino, where it has



become an issue. If the Coalition is defeated in March 2023, we are likely to gain significant improvement for environmental issues.

Murwillumbah mega campus

NEC called on members to protest the NSW government decision to cut down 48 student-planted trees at the Wollumbin HS campus to make room for a temporary car park while they merge public schools in Murwillumbah.

About 80 people turned out for a rally which gained significant media attention. This resulted in local MP Janelle Saffin arranging for the ALP shadow premier Chris Minns and their Upper House advocate for the North Coast MLC John Graham coming to town for a public meeting.

More than 100 community members protested against the plan to merge the schools into a conglomerate K-12 campus. It seems no public consultation was undertaken by arrogant government officials who said the community had no say in the matter—and neither did Tweed Council—as it was proclaimed an "exempt development."

The ALP politicians promised the merger would not go ahead if they are elected in March and we will have their support for consultation. The NSW education department called off the tree removals, but is progressing its plans for merging two primary and two high schools.

Forest protection

NEC provided political and financial support for Fridays4Forests to control forest destruction in the Northern Rivers, especially in public native forests where there is a high level of wildlife diversity. Australia has become the world's number one in species extinction: not an enviable distinction!

We will continue to lobby for reform of land-clearing laws and forest protection to include removing subsidies currently paid to logging. Most people don't seem to know that the taxpayer subsidises this small loss-making industry: that money could be used to retrain loggers to manage public forests sustainably for carbon sequestration, flood control and public amenity. A major public campaign is currently trying to save the Bulga forest at Elands near Taree/Port Macquarie.

A legal challenge involves Cherry Tree State Forest near Mallanganee west of Casino. Acting for the First Nations original custodians, Al

Oshlack said that logging the remnant forest would harm the wildlife corridor between the coastal areas and the Border Ranges causing irreversible damage to the biota of the region. NSW state-owned corporation Forestry Corp pulled out of Cherry Tree, but could come back if it wins the Court case later in 2023.

Withdrawn: *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Private Native Forestry) Bill 2022*, which would have ended local government involvement in regulating NSW land used for logging and extended private native forestry plans from 15 to 30 years. Wildlife campaigner Sue Arnold said NSW Premier Perrottet has shown complete ignorance of the plight of endangered koalas and has diminished his chances of re-election next year by reigniting the koala wars.

North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) spokesperson Dailan Pugh joins me in thanking Tweed MP Geoff Provest for following Catherine Cusack's example threatening to cross the floor to vote no. With no prospect of passage, the retrograde legislation was withdrawn.

Nightcap madness

A DA for 800 houses on rural land west of Uki was refused by Tweed Shire Council and the Regional Planning Panel, but the proponents are challenging that decision. A conciliation conference is scheduled for 9th February. TSC is firmly against the development and says they have good reasons to support their refusal.

World Environment Day

The Caldera Environment Centre lost its street-front shop due to a large rent increase but still continues as an organisation and staged its usual festival at Murwillumbah last June. NEC operated an info stall together with Northern Rivers Guardians.

Vale activists

Actor Tony Barry has died after a long struggle with cancer. Ditto Deb Whitley. She gained attention as a local landowner who chained herself to the axle of a truck trying to access land near hers at Glenugie, south of Grafton.

Her courage and eloquent refusal to allow coal seam gas mining was an inspiration to environmental defenders who ultimately saved the Northern Rivers from the scourge of CSG mining. These brave souls will be missed.

Pesticides – have your say

by Sue Page, secretary
Kyogle Environment Group

The 2017 document *Developing a Pesticide Use Notification Plan for outdoor places, a guide for public authorities*, published by the NSW Environment Protection Authority, clearly states:

"Pesticides notification is based on the principle that the community has a basic 'right to know' about pesticide use in public places.

"Giving people notice about pesticide use lets them reduce their contact with pesticides."

Best practice provides advice about how and when notice of pesticide use will be provided. This is generally a combination of signs,




advertisements, posting on council websites and letters.

As well, information is provided of the pesticide to be used, the proposed dates or date range, who to contact, any warnings and what pests are being treated.

The revised Kyogle Council Pesticide Use Notification Plan currently on display shifts the onus of responsibility onto the public. Kyogle Council states: "No notice will be provided unless specifically requested."

Residents and landowners may request Council to enter them onto a register to be advised when the use of pesticides is to be undertaken. This is not in the spirit of the EPA guidelines.

Submissions close 28th February. Have your say at: www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au/council-engagement/jobs-news-community-feedback/lodge-a-submission or email the general manager at: council@kyogle.nsw.gov.au



NIMBIN'S SUSTAINABLE LIVING HUB

7 Sibley Street

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\$15 unless otherwise noted
Bookings: text 0475-135-764
or email: sibley@nnic.org.au

Workshops: 10.30am – 1.30pm

- Sat 11th: Build a simple Archimedes Spiral Pump** – Ancient technology for pumping water.
- Thurs 16th: Knitting with Sue** – \$10 donation
- Sat 18th: Make your own felt hat** – Presented by Courtney Creations. Full day workshop, includes lunch & all materials, \$100 bookings essential.
- Sat 25th: Introduction to Mosaics** – Learn

by decorating the wishing well at 7 Sibley Street. Bring any broken ceramics, tiles, glass beads etc.

- Wednesdays: Weaving circle** – Bring a project and join like-minded crafters.
- Community Tools Library:** Every Saturday, 10.30am – 2pm. For home repairs, garden tools, food and craft equipment. Join at NNIC Monday-Friday. Basketballs & pumps available, \$5 deposit.



Shop 1, 66 Cullen Street
Happy Year of the Rabbit

Lismore U3A

Have you retired from the workforce, or are just about to? Are you looking to exercise your mind and body and keep both well-oiled? Well, Lismore U3A (University of the Third Age) could be just the place for you.

This worldwide organisation has been running in Lismore for the past 30 years and thousands of local people have benefited from its programmes. It's a great place to meet like-minded people and make new friends.

The last three years have been difficult for us as they have for everyone, and we are on a recruitment drive to meet and greet you!

We start 2023 with a choice of at least 30 classes, which include languages, photography, science, history, Qigong, genealogy, and many others.

We also have a social calendar each term.

All our courses are listed on our website: www.lismoreu3a.com.au

U3A is run entirely by volunteers, with the committee and tutors coming from our membership.

The joining fee is \$50 for a year and entitles you to attend any course you choose throughout the year. You can attend every day if you wish. Why not peruse our site to see if there is a course that would be of interest to you.

There is an online enrolment form that you can complete and any queries you have can be directed to our secretary, Pat McLaren-Smith, phone 6622-7408.

We look forward to meeting you.

Margaret Bruce
Clunes

A game of chicken

In November 2022, the CSIRO and the BoM released their *Biennial State of the Climate Report*.

Although news of the report's publication was reported, its contents were not. It contained this piece of information:

"The combined impact of all greenhouse gases can be converted to a CO₂-e

NGT welcomes letters and other contributions received by email or post prior to deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length, and articles for accuracy. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of Nimbin Good Times.

atmospheric concentration, by considering the global warming potential (ability to trap heat in the atmosphere) of each gas and its concentration. The annual average CO₂-e measured at Kennaook/Cape Grim reached 511 ppm in 2021, and 516 ppm globally. This is approaching twice the pre-industrial level of 278 ppm CO₂-e in 1750."

516 ppm? Nearly double pre-industrial levels?

The CSIRO/BoM information is corroborated by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). In yet another ominous climate change warning, atmospheric levels of the three main greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide all reached new record highs in 2021, according to a new report from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

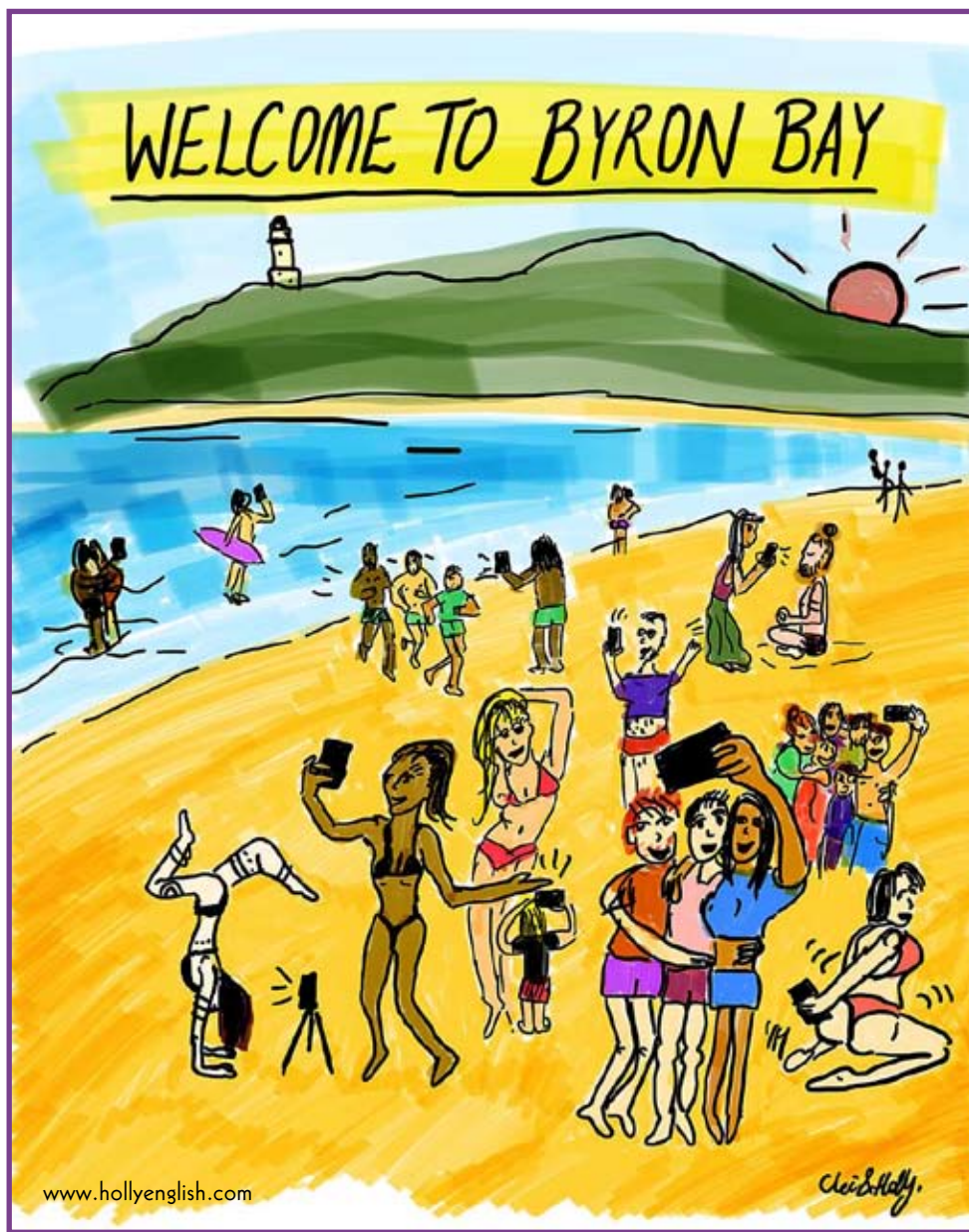
Wow! What does that equate to in terms of degrees of planetary global heating?

According to *An Assessment Of Earth's Climate Sensitivity Using Multiple Lines Of Evidence*, a doubling of CO₂ levels will lead to a temperature rise of between 2.6 and 4.1 degrees Celsius.

This is where we are now. Forget 1.5 degrees, forget 2 degrees we are looking at 3+ degrees and have not yet begun to lower our emissions.

We are playing a deadly game of chicken with ourselves.

The report does help explain the sudden upsurge in catastrophic weather events world-wide over the past three to four years, but it does not explain the lack of urgency in responding to the



climate crisis by our own and the world's governments.

I urge you to contact your political representatives and demand that they (a) read the science, and (b) act with the urgency it demands.

Simon Chance
Richmond Hill

Referendums

I'm participating in the debate about proposed changes to our constitution. The first will be a referendum to give our First Nations people a Voice to Parliament. The second will be a referendum to change the Constitution to inaugurate an Australian head of State.

Getting acceptance for these changes will be hard. Australians are sticklers for tradition when it comes to our Constitution. In past times 44 changes have been proposed, but only eight have been successful.

There's a reasonable argument that we should make it easier to change our

Constitution. "Change the Constitution to make change easier..." I say no.

There's a stability to our constitution, most of the time it works well, it is almost fairly representative of the majority of voters, it defies change unless that proposed change has been thoroughly publicly debated, and best of all it is a constitution that is as easy to understand as the theory of evolution.

The Australian constitution is not perfect. It should 'not' be perfect. Imperfection is fundamental to any and every form of life. Within each imperfection there is manoeuvrable space – this is how evolution works, by modifications to life-forms and their behaviours.

Change in nature is ferociously fought for, hard to win, and always tenuous.

Despite its faults, I admire Australia's democracy.

Some aspects of it I don't like, but I live with them,

accept them as part of the deal, and I blarney and jump through hoops arguing my points of view; but always, finally, like it or lump it, I accept the political judgement of the majority. The harder the argument about that judgement, the better the outcome will be... this I believe.

First Nations voice to parliament? An Australian head of state? I'm voting 'Yes' to both. I'm fairly sure that straight-as-a-snake Dutton and those of his ilk will vote

'No' to both. The debate will be ferocious. Bring it on.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle

Lies

It's a pity that deception is politically advantageous. I learnt at an early age that lying was a way of surviving.

My father was a professional soldier. A child in poverty during the First World War, and then he fought in the Second World War. Violence was bred in him. He bred it in me.

I lied to appease his violent temper. His fist was hard and his temperament explosive. Lying was my survival strategy, just as it is with most mammals. I played the truth game as a way of self-protection.

In one way or another all creatures are liars: the moth camouflaged against the bark of a tree pretending invisibility, the antelope feigning fitness to fool the lion, the chimpanzee notoriously will cheat and steal and bluff with a skill that puts the best human criminal to shame.

Yes indeed, I'm an advocate of lying, I'm a realist.

The discipline for me is that the lies I tell are not predatory; they must cause no suffering. Disguising the truth is often the way creatures avoid suffering. There's more to lying than morality.

Our holiest book, the Bible of our morality, is rotten with lies and distortions of the truth, and it's read to us by the priest with the bluff of a clear conscience.

Like most creatures, like most politicians, like most others I am haunted, constantly threatened by the interchange between what's true and what's not.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle

Services NSW info session in Nimbin

Services NSW will be holding an information session for pensioners with a disability, and people over 60 years old, to find out what NSW Government support, services and monies you may be eligible for.

These might include things such as travel allowances, electricity subsidies and support money for a new fridge.

The information session will be held on Thursday 23rd February from 10am at the Birth and Beyond room which is located at 54 Cullen Street between the Environment Centre and the Apothecary. Please be on time.

The estimated length of the session is 65-80 minutes.

About us

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Bookkeeper Martha Paitson

Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com
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NEXT DEADLINE:
Friday 24th February

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



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Saving the Bulga Forest

by Susie Russell
NEFA spokesperson

Here I am again, writing about the values of Bulga Forest, which are the same as the values of all our forests.

Thirty years ago, I was arrested trying to stop the logging of a different part of Bulga Forest, west of Port Macquarie. Back then we wanted to save some old growth forest. We lost.

Then we lost again, and again, until eventually several years later the community concern about old growth logging had reached fever pitch, and Bob Carr and the Labor Party rode the wave of concern to electoral victory in 1995.

That victory led to a process that saw many significant areas of forest protected in reserves and many of the larger remaining patches of old growth were put in informal reserves.

What wasn't reserved was meant to be managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management.

Thirty years on it's clear that is not happening. The requirement for pre-logging surveys has been dropped, the protection on gullies and creeks has been lessened, there is not even a requirement to identify where the koala colonies are and protect them. There is no requirement to protect the next largest trees, that will hopefully one day be big enough and old enough to form tree hollows and provide dens, and nesting places for the more than 170 different types of animals that use tree hollows as shelter to breed.

Thirty years later, animals that were common back then are now endangered, like the greater glider. I remember spotlighting seeing greater gliders in every tree, and now they are rare. That means the powerful owls are going hungry. And so the links of



the web of life are broken.

Koala populations on the North Coast, already in trouble before the 2019/20 fires, were smashed by the fires. How many died? A third? Half? The Government promises to double the number of koalas by 2050, but they do nothing to estimate how many survivors there are. And then they remove the trees that those survivors call home. It's empty promises. They won't be around in 2050. What about promising to protect all the living koalas as best we can by protecting their homes now?

I hold decades of frustration. Trying to convince decision-makers that protecting our forests makes sense at every level, and destroying them is batshit crazy. But they aren't listening. Labor isn't listening either, they blah on about sustainable forestry as if that is even a thing. It could have been, but it's not, and it's too late now.

After the fires and in climate and biodiversity crises, we need to protect that super-thin strip of the remaining tall forests that

cling to the Great Dividing Range. That's all that's left on the entire continent, except for a tiny bit in SW WA that the government over there has agreed to stop logging.

So when in December the Forestry Corporation started logging an area of Bulga Forest, taking the largest remaining trees – all merchantable stems it says on their 'harvest' plan – it was the last straw. How can it be okay to remove the largest trees from the very top of the catchment, in an area that was only lightly burnt and serves as a refuge when much of the surrounding forest had more intense fire?

It's not okay. It's not okay to diminish our water security, the quality of our water, our

carbon capture and storage capacity, our biggest nectar and pollen producers, our special relatively pristine places. In 2023 it's not ok to subsidise this destruction.

Our action has temporarily seen them retreat from the forest in question. But we know they'll be back as soon as we turn our backs. And we know that Bulga Forest won't be safe until all the public land forests in NSW are safe.

Another four years of Coalition Government, where the Nationals rule over regional NSW and hand out licences for coal, water, minerals and wood to their mates, will see the guts of the forests gone.

It's not fellers with chainsaws any more, it's half a dozen massive machines. Bulldozers and graders pushing in roads and machines that grab the tree, cut it, strip the bark and then lay the trunks in piles where a giant grabber loads them on to trucks. They can clear a hillside in a morning.

There is no more time to wait for a process. If we don't stand up and stop the destruction in its tracks, if we don't put our bodies in front of the machines, we will lose what made our region special.

I was arrested last week. I'm prepared to do it again. Will you stand up for the future? Will you #StandUp4Forests? Where is your line in the sand where you say, "enough destruction"?

Visit: www.nefa.org.au/email_updates Also visit: savebulgaforest.org or come in person.



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Applications close: 3rd March, 2023