

# The Nimbin Wayfinding Project is well on track

I hope everyone had the chance to have a relaxing break over the Christmas New Year. We certainly all needed it after last year.

The year ended with some good news with the lifting of Level 3 Water Restrictions for the Nimbin village. Unfortunately, the Boil Water Alert is still current for rural water users.

Council is currently working with State agencies and other stakeholders to develop a plan to resolve the rural water issue and we hope to finally have a solution within the first three months of this year.

Over this month you will see speed humps appearing in high pedestrian areas along Cullen Street. They are a trial and mark the beginning of a shared zone

between pedestrians and vehicle, as part of the Nimbin Wayfinding Project.

The project is well on track to being completed early this year, and will enhance road and footpath networks, provide additional seating and shaded areas, and address safety concerns around the pedestrian crossing on Cullen Street.

Last month, Council participated in a community session at the Nimbin Community Centre to discuss the Nimbin Rainbow Walking Track. About 100 people turned up, which was great, and included a guided walk along the proposed track to get community feedback.

I was also privileged to attend the historic Federal Court of Australia sitting at

the Goonellabah Sports & Aquatic Centre last month when it handed down its Native Title determination in favour of the Widjabul Wia-bal people. The claim relates to Crown Land in Lismore, Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Tweed and the Richmond Valley Local Government Areas.

The claim was first lodged in 2013, and I would like to congratulate all those involved for their perseverance and determination in getting this done.

Later this month, Council will be holding its annual Australia Day Awards to recognise those in our community who have shown outstanding community spirit, made a significant contribution to the community or made a

major achievement in their respective field.

I encourage everyone to attend the ceremony at the Goonellabah Sports & Aquatic Centre at 9am on Australia Day.

### Road repairs

Following last year's natural disaster, Council is still working on repairing our large road network.

Cawongla Road will be closed at two sites from the 3rd of January for about six weeks to allow our Road Crews to replace four culverts that were damaged during the February natural disaster.

The road will be closed at 169 Cawongla Road, about 1.25km south of the intersection with Quilty Road, and at 1224 Cawongla

Road about 500metres south of Larnook Public School. Access for road users will be maintained throughout the works via a constructed side track.

After the closure, the road will open to single lane traffic while final stages of the works are completed. Council will complete the works under extended working hours to ensure the works are finalised as soon as possible.

These works are the start of flood remediation works for Cawongla Road. Funding is being reviewed for further pavement repairs.

Temporary patching is being carried out for sections of Cawongla Road until further funding is approved by Resilience NSW.

Additional works are also



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

being reviewed for Martin Road, with updates to be shared shortly.

I thank the community for their patience and understanding as we undertake this important work.

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## A shift to the conservative side of politics



by Cr Jeff Johnson  
Ballina Council

What a year it has been! I wish everyone all the best for festive season and the coming year.

The December Council meeting marked 12 months since the new Council was sworn in. This is my fourth term on Ballina Council and it feels like we have taken a step back in terms of implementing a progressive agenda.

With Mayor Sharon Cadwallader and her three Councillors dominating the Council (the 'Team Cadwallader Group' have four out of ten Councillors) there has definitely been a shift to the conservative side of politics.

A classic example of this ideology in action was the decision to reverse Council's long held position to favour investments (bank term deposits) that were aligned with institutions that didn't support new fossil fuel developments. An interest margin of 0.05% was supported to encourage a shift away from those institutions.

The fossil fuel divestment initiative is a global movement that is another tool to speed up the transition to 100% renewables. I personally advocated for zero investments in those institutions that supported projects like the expansion of the Newcastle coal port or Coal Seam Gas



developments.

Ballina Council was making headway with only 17% of Council's \$100 million plus term deposit portfolio invested in those institutions at the start of 2022. Unfortunately, one of the first decisions of this new Council, initiated by a team Cadwallader Councillor was to remove this small margin.

As a result, as of December 2022 Council's investments in fossil fuel aligned institutions had risen to 58%. I will try to reverse this trend during the coming year but with our Council dominated by conservative leaning Councillors I don't hold out much hope of changing this policy during this term of Council.

The December Council meeting is traditionally a shorter meeting as it is brought forward a week due to the Xmas break. A key debate during this meeting was the issue of 4-wheel drives (4WD) on Seven Mile Beach at Lennox.

Ballina Council currently offers a permit system which provides for 1 day, 1 month or 12 month permits. There is currently no boom gate (just a camera) and as a result there were approximately 1000 vehicles on the beach during the last year that didn't have any permit.

With the growing population of Lennox and the Ballina Shire as a whole, Seven Mile beach is becoming increasingly crowded with beach walkers, dogs (there is an off-leash section), 4WD's and even horse riders.

In an attempt to address the conflict that overcrowding can

lead to as well as the negative environmental impact that can occur with a largely unregulated 4WD access point, I moved a motion that would have removed the short term permits and had a boom gate installed.

This would have reduced the overall vehicle numbers by over 50%, largely reduced the 4WD tourism aspect and ensured that all vehicles had a permit and committed to a strict code of conduct ie no driving on the dunes.

A boom gate would have also enabled the access to the beach to be closed during king tides and after erosion events.

After a long debate and a 5 all vote, Mayor Cadwallader used her casting vote to vote against these restrictions (when a vote is even the Mayor has an extra vote to break the deadlock) and instead supported a motion that kept the short-term permits (the 1 day was changed to a 3-day permit) and no boom gate will be installed.

The logic was that all forms of tourism were important and restrictions went against this philosophy. I personally don't think this is the type of tourism activity that the Ballina Shire should be aiming for or promoting.

This new draft policy will go on public exhibition before coming back to Council to either endorse or amend.

As our Council meeting falls on Australia Day, unless there are any urgent matters that require the convening of an extraordinary meeting our next monthly meeting will be held on the fourth Thursday in February.

## Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights!



by Cr Adam Guise  
Lismore City Council

Let's make 2023 the year to take back our right to protest without being threatened with imprisonment.

The news of Violet Coco's sentence to 15 months in prison for her protest with others on the Sydney Harbour Bridge sent shockwaves through the bedrock of our democracy.

We have a long and proud history of protesting against unjust laws. We have protested to protect our ancient Gondwana rainforests, to give First Nations people and women the right to vote, uphold workplace rights, and change harsh drug prohibition laws. Thousands of us engaged in non-violent civil disobedience in the Bentley Blockade and Gasfield-Free campaign to stop the toxic coal seam gas invasion of our beautiful region. We know too well the important part disruption plays when engaging in civil disobedience. That is how social change is created.

To jail Violet for sounding the alarm on the climate crisis and for exposing the close ties the fossil fuel barons have with the major parties is a lurch towards fascism. For both the Liberal and Labor leaders to say the sentence was pleasing, is offensive to those of us who are fighting to protect our life

support systems and ensure we have a live-able planet. We should be celebrating those who have the courage to speak truth to power, not jailing them.

The fact that the Liberals, Labor and National parties accept millions in donations from fossil fuel companies each year, to fund greenwashed election campaigns to convince you to vote for them shows you where their loyalties lie.

The corrupting influence of political donations on our democracy was starkly apparent, when both Labor and the Liberals-Nationals voted together to impose these anti-democratic protest laws which are aimed to intimidate and silence anyone who threatens the profits of the climate wrecking fossil fuel industries.

Our politicians are so captured by the fossil fuel industry that they refuse to acknowledge that the world is on fire. They most certainly do not hold the hose to put it out.

They say they do not want their way of life to be disrupted by being stuck in traffic for 28 minutes. But what about the disruption that continues to be inflicted on our region by a supercharged climate? What about the 'inconvenience' being experienced by over thirty million flood-impacted people in Pakistan, or the devastation that wildfires and

heatwaves across Europe have caused, or the drought and starvation millions are facing in the Horn of Africa?

Like us, Violet has seen the impact of fossil-fueled climate catastrophes on our communities, from the bushfires across NSW to the floods in our region. When Violet stood on the Sydney Harbour Bridge with a red flare, she knew, as Martin Luther King Jr knew, that despite the risk to her own freedom, she had a moral responsibility to disobey the unjust laws in order to raise the alarm that so urgently needs raising.

Our right to engage in civil disobedience is the bedrock of a healthy democracy and a bulwark against a police state. In similar words to Martin Niemöller: "First they came for the protestors but I wasn't a protester so I did not speak up..."

But now is the time to speak up. Make your voice heard this election. There is a Greens groundswell across Australia with more Greens voices than ever being elected to our Parliaments. The Green wave is hitting our region on March 25. Jump on it with me. It's time to clean up our democracy, repeal these awful laws and take the urgent action needed to avoid catastrophic climate collapse.

As always, get in touch at:  
[adamguise@gmail.com](mailto:adamguise@gmail.com) or  
phone 0478-684-497.



# Happy New Year – A new path going forward

by Kevin Hogan, Federal Member for Page

I hope everyone has had a good Christmas and New Year.

Thank you all for your support in ensuring our community continues to recover following the challenges of 2022.

Our community truly came together to help those in need during the flooding natural disaster.

It is this community spirit and tenacity that makes me exceptionally optimistic for our region's recovery and future.

Building a new path forward where we can feel safe is one of the most important goals of 2023, such as flood mitigation which is essential for us to feel safe in our homes and businesses.

This year we will start to get an insight in to the CSIRO flood mitigation findings both engineering and environmental. I will support the recommendation the CSIRO concludes, with the final report due in May 2024. I will fight to ensure they are implemented.

Speaking of a new path going forward, I am excited to see work commence soon on the Nimbin Walking Trail.

Just last month, the consultation period with the community concluded with some great feedback. The updated completion date for the track is September 2023.



Kevin Hogan MP and Diana Roberts from Nimbin Chamber of Commerce

I secured funding for the 1.1km track which will link Nimbin's main street, which features heritage murals and colourful street life. This is an important addition to the Nimbin tourist experience. Great for locals as well. This project is estimated to create over \$3 million in extra economic activity.

## Two Legalise Cannabis MPs elected in Victoria

by Michael Balderstone, President, Legalise Cannabis Australia Party and Nimbin HEMP Embassy

Two Legalise Cannabis candidates, Rachel Payne and David Ettershank (pictured) were elected to the Upper House in the Victorian elections last month. This is following two getting elected in WA last year.

But this time it's different: the two Victorians are part of a block with four Greens and a couple of others that can bend Premier Dan's arm because he needs their support for any new legislation. The Balance of Power!

Hopefully it will be enough to start some real reform of the driving laws and allow us to grow some weed in our gardens. Legally!

I doubt if many people realise how hard it is to get a Legalise Cannabis political party registered. The stigma, the fear, the absolute paranoia. Who wants to sign up to a party of criminals? Isn't it giving the police a list of pot smokers? We can already see the police target the areas where we get the most votes, testing our saliva.

There's a whole process where the Party members' list and their addresses we submit, must match exactly the Australian Electoral Commission details, to a comma. Computer stuff, no common sense involved. Then they contact you to check you really did sign up to Legalise Cannabis and we didn't just get your name from a phonebook.

Hippies in the bush not getting mail regularly are an issue of course, but nothing like the paranoia that's understandably rife throughout the weed world. Imagine a phone call from the Gubberment asking you to confirm you're a member of the Legalise Cannabis Party. Some people go to water. "Ahh, he's not here." Or, "He doesn't live here anymore." Or they simply hang up!

Legalise Cannabis Victoria got in by the skin of its teeth, gaining rego just days before the cut off, which was only a few weeks before the election. In NSW we had to be registered 12 months prior to the election. A million thanks to those of you who helped make that happen. Your reward will be seeing us on the ballot next March.

The next step was finding candidates suitable for the job, because it's no longer just getting the issue on the agenda, there's a real chance you can get elected, as just happened in Victoria. We spent hours



Courtesy The Age

on Zoom in the last month interviewing prospective candidates for the Victoria and NSW elections. Furious cannabis users who cannot stand the injustice a moment longer, but also people eyeing off the job, prestige and pay packet. It used to be just "Nimbin types" who put their hand up as candidates, but not anymore.

It's a bit tragic we have to get elected to be taken seriously. How on earth did they manage to convince most of the population that any drug use other than their recommended pills or grog should be pursued by police? How did big business get so powerful?

The drug war is all about Big Pharma's profit as we know, but this in turn has created other businesses like the jails, courts, lawyers, rehab, etc, etc. Yet we all agree drug use is a health issue, don't we?

We just visited Canberra for a Hemp Expo and heard how no-one has their saliva tested unless they are pulled over and look out of it. No roadblocks at music festivals. Residents in the ACT can grow two plants and carry 50 grams of pot, and next October, after the police have been re-trained, small amounts of all illegal drugs will be decriminalised. And no sign of the sky falling in.

NSW Labor is promising to hold "a far-ranging drug summit" if they are elected next year, but why doesn't Albo do one in Canberra? So we don't end up with an interstate mess like in America where you can smoke weed in one state but a hundred yards across the border you can go to jail. Tasmania now recognises medical cannabis patients can drive, but here we lose our licence for three months! Canberra is like another planet.

Best wishes to Rachel Payne and David Ettershank, (6'10"!), our new cannabis-using MPs in Victoria, who I'm confident will be here for you to meet at MardiGrass next May.



Janelle Saffin speaks at a press conference on flood recovery in Lismore in October.

## An energy plan is essential

by Janelle Saffin MP  
State Member for Lismore

Parliament was recalled for one more sitting day (Wednesday, 21st December) throwing my 2022 diary into a new level of chaos, so I apologise for missing some end-of-year engagements.

Both Houses sat to pass the *Energy and Utilities Administration Amendment Bill 2022*, essential for households and businesses here in the Northern Rivers and Northern Tablelands regions to get some relief with prices.

In the Legislative Assembly, there were two speakers: NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet and NSW Opposition Leader Chris Minns, who said:

*NSW Labor supports the bill. We join the Premier in supporting the Albanese Federal Government's energy plan, which will deliver price relief to families and businesses.*

*We support a bipartisan and Federation-wide response to the energy crisis gripping our State and the entire country. We support the Premier's decision to recall the Parliament to deal with this legislation as a matter of urgency.*

*Intervention in the energy market is desperately needed for families whose ambitions and budgets have been shattered by unsustainable energy price rises. It is needed for thousands of businesses whose energy input costs are sending them to the wall.*

*It is needed by hundreds of thousands of employees whose businesses and jobs will be at risk if the bill does not pass.*

*Further, we reiterate our opposition to the privatisation of essential utilities and infrastructure in New South Wales. The reason this Parliament needs to sit at all is because the current Government privatised our electricity assets ... We have said repeatedly that we offer bipartisan support for this*

*important legislation.*

*It would be a wonderful opportunity for the Premier to publicly announce the end of asset recycling, privatisation, the golden key – whatever he wants to call it – that has undoubtedly put upward pressure on energy prices for businesses, communities and families across New South Wales.*

I wholeheartedly endorse no more privatisation of public assets, services and infrastructure. It does not work, we get lesser service and it costs more.

**NRRC needs to better communicate its work**

While the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) is doing some good and solid work with our flood recovery I am pushing them to improve communications with local communities in 2023.

It is a key failing right across the NSW State Government, so they are just following suit, but can be better.

Before Christmas I sent a list of questions to the NRRC Chief Executive David Witherdin, someone I do respect. All questions are ones that locals ask me.

I of course respond, but our NSW state government agencies that are charged with flood recovery need to communicate effectively. Detail matters when lives are in limbo.

David agreed to provide me with a briefing before Christmas but then said in the New Year. (See his interview on the Lismore App 27th December 2022).

I also encouraged David to let some people know before Christmas where they stood with their applications to the Resilient Homes Fund. This has a huge impact on their well-being, and others waiting as they see that it is really going to happen.

Here are a few of the questions (truncated) that I put forward:

- Immediate release of

the coloured zone maps that should be in the public domain and the benchmark used to base this mapping.

- A potential date for the first approvals.
- Total number of registrations for expressions of interests, and the number of case managers. (Over 6,000, I am told, and very few case managers.)
- An average value of a buy-back offer, given the commitment that these will be pre-flood market values. What is the marker for this?
- Progress with land acquisition, land swaps, relocatables.
- For the NRRC, number of staff, staff profiles, how many live here locally.
- The NRRC's programme, jobs undertaken, its annual budget.
- A summary of the NRRC's Community Consultations and Conversations.
- The Memorandum of Understanding with Landcom, what does it mean?
- Findings and recommendations from the road damage survey.
- Report on remediation of public road landslips...
- Report on progress with or expansion of riparian restoration program (\$64 million).
- For the Advisory Board, its terms of reference and their programme of Community Consultations and Conversations.
- For Working Groups, their subject areas, terms of reference and implementation plans.

NSW government agencies must communicate well, it is after all our recovery, not theirs. Community-led means we inform the recovery and they back us in.

We have a right to know who is doing what, when and how, and for things to be done with us not to us.

We cannot be just bystanders.



# Lismore rally for protest rights



Photos: Omega Breakspear and Param Berg

by Param Berg

A rally for the right to protest was held in Lismore's Peace Park on Saturday 10th December, the International Day of Human Rights, recognised and honoured wherever possible, world-wide.

Locally, the emphasis was on the draconian new legislation introduced by NSW government recently, which allowed and encouraged the outrageous sentencing of Violet Coco for blocking one lane of the five-lane approach to Sydney Harbour bridge for 35 minutes.

Coco had been living in Lismore since being banned from Sydney as one of many conditions on her sentence for a previous conviction, and has since returned under similar bail conditions for the more recent "offence".

The rally also focused on the continued ferocious and vindictive incarceration of journalist and publisher Julian Assange in the UK who shares some history in Lismore and is an Australian citizen.

Speakers included Assange's father John



Mali Cooper

Shipton, local constitutional law specialist Aidan Ricketts, parliamentarian Sue Higginson, Greens candidate Adam Guise, lawyer Eddie Lloyd, and Mali Cooper who had also recently been arrested for non-violent protest.

Violet Coco herself was heard via a recording made specifically for release if she was imprisoned, as indeed she was,



Eddie Lloyd

having been denied bail pending appeal of the unprecedented 15-month sentence handed down with an 8-month non-parole period.

Organisers of the event were well pleased with a turn-out of around 150 concerned citizens, considering the showery weather and the very rushed preparations after a late decision to go ahead.

# Native title granted

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Ashley Moran, a Wija-bal Wia-bal claimant, told the Federal Court in Goonellabah, "Native title recognition is a long process that started from the efforts of a number of elders way back in 2002."

Native Title Service Provider for Aboriginal Traditional Owners (NTSCORP) chief executive and Bundjalung woman, Natalie Rotumba said, "The native title process takes a toll on our elders and our communities." She paid tribute to all who aren't here today, but helped along the way.

Mikey Ryan, lead applicant of this first Wia-bal native title claim, expressed his respect for his old people and elders past and living. "They were the ones who made the sacrifices. They were the ones who faced the brunt of the invasion."

"They suffered the slaughter and theft, the stolen children, the displacement, the discrimination, injustice and the disrespect of our ancient cultures." Some people were crying in the audience, from the power of truth-telling.



Federal Court Justice Steven Rares was presented with a painting and a mug.

Wasn't it Australia's Prime Minister Paul Keating who said on 10th December 1992, International Human Rights Day, in Redfern, that it was us who did the dispossessing, we took the traditional land, took the children away, we committed the murders...

That statement was made over 30 years ago, and it must be time to face the truth of our dark colonial history, still dividing the nation.

How dare we still have no understanding or compassion, still celebrating Australia Day on the day of the invasion of the oldest living culture on this planet, the 26th of January.

# What does the right to protest mean to you?

The current NSW Liberal-National Government, in lock-step with Labor, introduced harsh and draconian anti-protest laws early last year following a run of direct action in Sydney to raise the alarm about climate change.

We are now seeing the impact of those laws and it's not looking good for our democracy.

In December, Deanna "Violet" Coco pleaded guilty in the Local Court to offences arising out of blocking one lane on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Under the new anti-protest laws, she was given a 15-month jail sentence, with a non-parole period of eight months.

At 8.25am on 13th April 2022, Violet had driven a hire truck onto the bridge, and stopped traffic in one of five lanes. The police arrived, and she remained limp, was arrested, and the obstruction removed. By 9am, the lane was clear.

For those 35 minutes of peaceful protest, this individual was given a staggering jail term.

Here in the Northern Rivers, many of us know the importance of protest, in fact we celebrate it. It is part of our identity and our living culture. Protest saved the rainforests that are now valuable world heritage property, attract



by Sue Higginson MLC

visitors from across the globe and define the place we live and love.

Protest saved the old growth forests that are now part of our precious National Park estate and protest saved the region's farmlands and waters from invasive coal seam gas fields. Protest is part of the democratic process to correct bad policy, or positively, to create good policy.

Protest takes many forms, assemblies, strikes, marches, blockades, lock ons, direct action and can involve an act of civil disobedience – a public, nonviolent and conscientious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in laws or

government policies.

As a lawyer, I have represented hundreds of protestors who have engaged in acts of civil disobedience across Australia. People who have locked on to bulldozers in forests, stopped coal and gas mine operations and obstructed trains, traffic and ports.

Every person I have ever represented has been a good person who cares about the environment, nature and our collective future. They have engaged in good faith with a belief in democracy and at their own cost and inconvenience. Being arrested and subjected to the criminal justice system, even at its best, is not simple or pleasant.

I can say in no uncertain terms, no-one should ever be sentenced to imprisonment for engaging in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, no matter how many times they do it or how inconvenient it may be to the state or the public.

Violet's lawyer lodged an appeal to her 15-month jail sentence immediately, as you do, and made an application for Violet to be released on bail pending the hearing of her appeal, as you do. Violet had been on bail up until her very severe sentence of imprisonment.

Her lawyer submitted that

Violet was no immediate risk to the community, she had complied with her very restrictive bail conditions prior to sentence and her mother would provide \$10,000 as surety. The cases say, in such circumstances, bail ought to be granted.

Shockingly, she was denied bail: Violet went to prison.

Compounding this shock, the Premier said that it was "pleasing" that Violet had been sent to prison and the leader of the Labor opposition said he had no regrets helping the Government to pass these laws.

Violet is a kind, creative and gentle person who is very concerned about the harmful impacts of climate change and the lack of action by governments to protect the planet and people. Whether you agree with what she did or not, she engaged in good faith, she played by the rules of non-violent direct action and the Liberal National Coalition, Labor and the Magistrate, following their direction, sent her to jail.

These are the flashing lights and screeching alarm bells warning that our system is sick and is very quickly going in the wrong direction. The Greens opposed the anti-protest laws in the NSW

Parliament. Once they passed we continued to oppose them and moved disallowance motion after disallowance motion, hoping that Labor would join us as we warned how harmful these anti-protest laws are, but they didn't.

Fortunately, a further bail appeal was lodged, and after spending 11 days in Sydney's Silverwater prison, a District Court Judge released Violet on bail. She is now free to return home to Lismore, on very strict bail conditions, until her sentence is appealed in March.

Protest is vital to a responsible democracy and the way a democracy responds to protest and dissent is a measure of its maturity. I think the actions of the Liberal National Party and the Labor Party have placed our democracy under serious threat. With the Greens, I will continue to work around the clock to repeal these harsh and draconian anti-protest laws.

However, it is clear we now need to go further, we need to enshrine non-violent direct action defence into our sentencing laws that removes imprisonment as a penalty. No protester who engages in non-violent direct action, no matter how inconvenient it may be, should ever be sent to prison.



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# Shipwreck or climate wreckage?

by Violet Coco

As the dawn breaks on the year 2023, now more than ever we need strong action on the climate and ecological emergency facing planet earth and the future of humanity as we know it.

Byron Bay Lighthouse cries out 'Don't Wreck Planet Earth' as the new dawn breaks on the most easterly point of Australia; 'Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies'.

On New Year's Eve at 9am, members of the climate activist group Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies hung a banner from Byron Bay Lighthouse, with its location and purpose making it 'ground zero' for this emergency warning.

This action shines a light not only on government inaction but also on their close ties to the fossil fuel industry.

Dan is a 77-year old pensioner who until recently was leading a very ordinary life listening to music, reading, gardening, doing some exercise, enjoying cooking and contributing to the local community. So what brings someone like Dan to undertake climate activism?

"This lighthouse is a real warning signal to stop ships at sea from running aground," said Dan, "and right now planet earth is being run into the ground."



Our government is failing dismally to respond to the climate emergency with the urgency needed – as if we were at war."

All eyes are on Australia as extreme weather records were broken on every continent in 2022, and Australia recorded its equal-hottest day on record and its costliest flood disaster. Lismore and the Northern River region experienced their third deadly and extreme flood event in two years.

People locally described the floods as "like a war zone," and they were. There have been dozens of floods, heatwaves, droughts and wildfires worldwide through 2022, and the deep-freezing now of most of the USA.

These are not normal.

Is this supposed to be just coincidental, with scientists screaming from the rooftops that climate chaos is here now and due to worsen rapidly without massive changes?

Our governments are actually subsidising further fossil fuel development at the rate of \$22,000 per minute according to the Australia Institute. But nothing is more urgent than getting out of fossil fuel use both across the country and internationally.

Just months ago at the opening of the COP27 talks in Egypt, Antonio Guterres said, "We are on the highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator... Co-

operate or perish.

"It is either a climate solidarity pact or it's a collective suicide pact. Let's fight together and win."

Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies is part of a Global Civil Resistance Network, called the A22 Network. This group has been using art disruption tactics over the past few weeks (for example here and here) and blocking busy highways across the UK and Europe.

We recognise Australia's complicity in contributing towards global emissions as the largest exporter of coal in the world and are proud to be contributing to the A22 Network.

Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies. Find us at: [stopffs.org](http://stopffs.org)



## Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

Happy New Year to all residents of Nimbin and surrounds.

It is refreshing to enter January, first month of 2023, full of optimism for a year free of any of the major issues that have impacted on our community recently.

For many, Christmas and New Year are a time to rest and recuperate and perhaps over-indulge a little, while those in the business community are enjoying the inflow of tourists coming to experience all that Nimbin has to offer the holiday makers: a lively main street with excellent cafés, gift shops, art galleries, farmers and community markets as well as services such as banking, post office, groceries, fuel and much more.

The deeper you dig, the more you find that we certainly do have a diverse offering for our visitors – massage, tarot, drum circles, past life regression,

osteopathy, kinesiology, art classes, tai chi, yoga classes, astrology workshops and more all make the Nimbin experience truly memorable and possibly life-changing.

When experiencing our village, visitors get the feeling that they are entering a different world, a place where people have time and inclination to connect and engage.

Often, I am told by visitors during their stay that it is really lovely to meet people from both local business and the wider community who are happy and willing to take time to engage in friendly chat – apparently this is something that is not experienced in daily life elsewhere.

Apart from the main street retail area there are many hidden gems for the visitors to enjoy.

Nimbin Candles is a family business, keeping the age-old skill of candle making alive. Located at the historic Nimbin Butter Factory on the banks of Mulgum Creek, the candle factory and showroom are only a short walk from the town centre and adjoined by Nimbin Bush Theatre Cafe which features a delicatessen and gift shop, as well as providing tourist information.

The skate park is ideal for visitors with children, as well as swimming in the Nimbin pool. The more adventurous enjoy the many waterholes as a refreshing way to cool off and relax.

The local scenery includes rural pastures, sub-tropical rainforest, important historical sites, and volcanic formations such as Nimbin Rocks, Blue Knob, Lillian and Sphinx Rocks, all visible and within a short drive from the village, showcasing stunning world-class views.

Venturing a little further out reveals the world heritage listed Border Ranges

National Park and its breathtaking lookouts, the stunning Nightcap National Park, the foundation of historic protests to stop logging in Australia's rainforests.

As you can see, it is no mistake that Nimbin has become one of the top tourist destinations in New South Wales and in fact Australia.

A visit to Nimbin is definitely worthy of a place on the bucket list. A New Year's resolution to visit our quirky town would be definitely a better choice than giving up something that you really enjoy!

If a visit to Nimbin during the holiday doesn't fit with your plans, consider coming to one of the following major events held in and around the village during the upcoming year.

- Autumn and Spring arts exhibitions
- Poetry World Cup
- Nimbin Fashion Show
- MardiGrass
- Aquarius50 Celebrations.

### New committee

Following the Chamber of Commerce's 2022 AGM, I would like to thank the outgoing members of the chamber for their friendship, support and efforts during their years of service: Tash Fuller, Kylie Kane, Teresa Biscoe and Jodie Tichbourne.

Also I would like to thank the remaining members: Diana Roberts, David Spain, Peter Hughes, Samantha Allen; and welcome the newly-elected members Liam Breme, Nicole Lindner and Aline Binetruy.

With our members' support we are working towards building a better, stronger and more vibrant future for our children and the community as a whole. Happy New Year 2023!

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# New Year, a time to embrace the uncertainty of it all



by Aidan Ricketts

So, New Year was traditionally a time to reflect on the year that passed and look forward to the opportunities of another year.

Would it be too pessimistic of me to suggest that it has become a time to pat ourselves on the back for surviving another year, and to take a deep breath to prepare for whatever weird-ass alien shit gets thrown at us in the year ahead?

Late-stage capitalism and the descent into a social media crazed, AI-appropriated, climate catastrophe really does seem to have exacerbated the uncertainties that were always with us.

Hot on the heels of the catastrophic fires of 2019-20, the interregnum of pandemic, followed by record-smashing floods, we have predictions (from the BOM) of a season

of larger, more intense more south-reaching cyclones followed by a return to El Nino conditions, probably resulting in a return to wildfires.

Well, what better for government to do than ramp up the anti-protest laws and start jailing young people who take actions highlighting the climate emergency. I mean we wouldn't want anyone inconvenienced now, would we?

Whilst we see police raiding climate activist camps as though they are actually posing some kind of realistic threat to the fabric of society, we have gun-toting, god-bothering, conspiracy-drivelling cop killers rampaging on the fringes of the Chinchilla gasfields.

Uncertainty. Let's have a talk about uncertainty. It's something that the vast majority of humans find a very uncomfortable subject.

Having physical bodies that evolved during the unusually stable planetary conditions of the Holocene (the Goldilocks zone that human survival and existing biodiversity depends upon) we are right to be concerned about uncertainty, particularly climate and ecological uncertainty. But strangely our responses to the fact of uncertainty seem to be mostly maladaptive.

Individually and collectively we display a very strong psychological trait of having a morbid attachment to

certainty, so deep that it amounts to a dangerous addiction. Like most addictions, it's a neurotic strategy, which means that that it drives us to adopt practices (and beliefs) that are designed to avoid it, that actually make it worse.

Where do we seek certainty? Well it's almost everywhere you look. Religion is an obvious one, one big sky daddy who has a plan for us. Very comforting. But we are more sophisticated in our addiction than that. We also seek certainty in fanatical political beliefs (fascism, patriotism, Marxism).

We may seek certainty in simplistic dichotomies or in magical thinking, such as market economics for example, or in any number of opiating belief systems such as new age spiritual bypasses that affirm the ascendancy of the good, including even seemingly benign ideas like that everything happens for a reason.

Don't get me wrong, things do happen for a reason, it's called the past and it has led to this point but that doesn't mean there's a plan, it's more like a path-dependent lurch into the ever-present unpredictability that is called the future.

If we can't quite believe in the benign nature of everything we could always opt for conspiracy theories and find certainty in believing



that everything is instead part of an incredibly well-orchestrated malign scheme controlled by a small group of people with a plan. It may be uncomfortable but it still serves the primary need for certainty.

For the less severely affected we may just seek certainty in wealth, property, health practices, psychology, spirituality or maths. Ok, have I covered nearly all of us, hopefully.

What if the universe is incredibly large, continually unfolding, unpredictable and worse still, ambivalent? What if everything within and beyond our bodies is uncertain, emerging, and constantly changing?

That would mean that trying to achieve certainty would be a very exhausting endeavour fraught with constant frustration.

It would also mean that the future is full of potential and capable of being influenced by our actions in small and at times surprisingly large ways. It would mean that what we

been driven by an addiction to certainty, it has been driven by curiosity, open questioning, preparedness to challenge assumptions and the humility to allow emerging evidence and empiricism to change our minds.

Instead of retreating from the universe of uncertainty by clinging to truisms, tropes and simplifications, our best response has always been curious learning.

It is interesting even to speculate, how much of the craziness that humans manifest in the world is actually caused by our maladaptive pursuit of certainties.

The wars over religion, ideology, culture, the echo chambers in social media on the left and right sniping at each other, how much of this could be dismantled with a courageous curiosity.

The world isn't going to stop being uncertain, but we could individually and collectively set ourselves the task of rising to it rather than retreating from it. Instead of being right, we could be curious and enquiring.

This new year, instead of resolutions, we could all decide to dismantle something that we have made ourselves certain about.

I wonder what 2023 has in store for us and I wonder how we could best respond for our individual collective and ecological well-being?

## John Shipton channels Julian Assange

by Warwick Fry

The Bush Theatre presented John Shipton the Friday before Christmas. Modest and humble, but like his son Julian, he spoke of truth and power with the strength of honesty.

The desire to rescue his son glowed through his presentation, but essentially he provided an inside view of the Machievellian wriggle-room authorities afford themselves to invent scapegoats to excuse hypocrisy.

He spoke specifically of the invention of the war against Iraq. The travesty of a blatantly illegitimate intervention (one of the reasons for which the UN was established to prevent) spun off a series of atrocities and war crimes which were exposed by Wikileaks, the creation of Julian Asssange.

As a corrective to the 'dark side' of Australia's justice system and our black history, John opened his presentation by invoking the legacy of Australians who have set historic benchmarks globally for human rights and social justice.

Australia was a founding member of the UN and 'Doc' Evatt, its third president who oversaw the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Labor government of Gough Whitlam endorsed the inclusion of 'the right to asylum' within the Universal Declaration in 1973. That

was the year of the fascist coup in Chile which generated the diaspora of Chilean political refugees, many of whom ended up in Australia. He mentioned Moss Cass who engineered our Medicare system of (almost) free health care, the envy of much of the world, and how the Whitlam government established our (now somewhat) free education system, with the benefits of a system of social justice which successive conservative governments have not yet succeeded in clawing back.

Ironic that the nation which produced Evatt who presided over the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the cornerstone of human rights protection throughout the modern world, has also produced governments that have consistently violated these rights over the last decades.

This theme was the backstory if you like, to John's Q&A after a showing of the documentary *Ithaca*. The film draws on the story of Odysseus who was prevented from returning to his Island Home (Ithaca) for 20 years by some spiteful God he had offended. He comes back to find his home taken over by a bunch of Bogan yobbos.

The documentary *Ithaca* serves as a 'a light on the hill' for Julian, that his family have kept his place in the home despite the trials and tribulations.



John Shipton speaking in Lismore on Human Rights Day. Photo: Omega Breakspear

For Julian, trials and tribulations are legion. John Shipton described legal violence perpetrated against Julian that violated basic principles of a justice system going back to Magna Carta.

The most telling was his analogy of the Law being a shield between the Individual and the State. In the case of Julian, it amounted to him being conveyed to the court in a glass cage.

It was an exercise in humiliation, having to crouch down to consult with his lawyer, who had to have a step brought in to be able to communicate through a mouthpiece without being overheard by the prosecution.

Complaints about this to the Judge resulted in shuffling and reshuffling responsibility and Julian being reshuffled back to prison until it was sorted.

Another telling analogy was his explanation of how his efforts to bring Julian home attracted so much solidarity; from journalists, human rights activists, artists, public intellectuals – the credits rolled on an on. Hundreds of names of famous individuals in the global community.

John compared this to a building under construction, that it could accommodate everyone. Perhaps it also represents Julian's Wikileaks project.

As for 'light on the hill' – John has had conversations with PM Albanese, which he says leads him to feel some optimism. Albanese did not have a closed mind, perhaps he was even sympathetic.

But US hegemony means that Albanese has to be diplomatic. He cannot afford to offend the US and its supporters here in Australia.

And if we do succeed in bringing Julian back home, he will probably be keeping a low profile.



Another Medican in February

Nimbin hub takes shape

by Michael Balderstone

Nimbin’s HEMP Embassy is happy to announce another Medican Workshop to be held at the Bush Theatre beside Mulgum Creek at the north end of the village, on Saturday 25th February, starting at 10.30am NSW time.

And it’s full of new speakers you likely haven’t seen before, apart from our favourite ex-magistrate and now Dean of Law at Southern Cross University, David Heilpern. He will fill us in on the latest hopes to change the roadside saliva testing rules.

Debbie Ranson is a Cannabis Nurse, linking advocacy with her role as a nursing professional. She’s spent years campaigning for us to have access to cannabis as a first line medicine. She now works in a cannabis clinic in Brisbane and brings a wealth of experience to the Medican.

“Medicinal Cannabis has well emerged as a treatment for patients and clinicians across various clinical areas. But how does it work and what do patients and clinicians need to know about it for their personal use and professional practice? Legalities, access, conditions,



treatments,” she says. As does Dr Ben Jansen, the founder of Burleigh Heads Cannabis, Cannabis Doctors Australia and Canview. Ben has a keen interest in cannabis product development and research, with a focus on neuroprotective qualities of cannabinoids. Ben and his wife founded the Vivienne Jansen Brains Trust with this in mind. Des Harp is a member of the Professional Compounding Chemists of Australia and he is a market leader in supplying customised medicine. His business is My Life My Health and he specialises in medication modification to suit your personal requirements. Then we have something different spilling over from

the very successful recent Victorian election for Legalise Cannabis, where two candidates were elected to the Upper House. One of them, Rachel Payne, we hope will be at the Medican to tell us her hopes for changing the laws with Premier Dan. And another candidate who didn’t win, Marc Selan, will tell us about his last eight years running a Cannabis Club in Barcelona. His is quite a story. After running his dental laboratory in Murrumbidgee for ten years, he had a sudden career change after becoming extremely unwell with ulcerative colitis. He suffered numerous adverse reactions to pharma medications before he discovered that cannabis put his symptoms into remission. This led to him growing his own plants but also to him getting busted, which in turn led him to leaving Australia for a place where his choice of medicine was accepted. Running a Cannabis Club, a virtual dispensary, over the last decade has given him a unique insight into how a legal market for cannabis can work so effectively and easily. Terrific food will be available at the venue and entry is by donation.

by Jonathon Spain

The eastern side of Nimbin has been a hive of activity lately. Homes have been popping up and the new facility for Nimbin Building Materials is rapidly taking shape opposite to the Servo. A little further down Sibley Street, the first stage of Nimbin Hub has achieved an occupation certificate and is now open for business, with another major stage expected to come online in the first half of 2023. The “Stage 1A” building comprises various self-storage units with seven, single-car garage size units (6m x 3m) with whirlybirds, insulation, electricity and internet available. These units are designed and intended for the wholesale sale and display of goods for ABN holders. Electricity and NBN internet are available as an optional extra to these premium units. Nimbin abounds with creative artisans and talented home industries. This front row of units provide secure, functional, affordable, commercially appealing spaces, intended to support and showcase local creativity. You will need to have an ABN to hire one of the seven units. The remainder of the stage 1A buildings comprises a fully automated self-storage facility, immediately available for hire to whoever gets in first. A good number of these have already been rented out by people on our waiting list. With a crippling shortage of self-storage all over the Northern Rivers and little else available within cooee of Nimbin, these units are likely to continue to book out quickly, but for now some availability remains. Stage 1B consists of three buildings comprising seven self-contained units. These



are much larger and more sophisticated than the stage 1A units. Some are designed for light industrial applications including food processing, packing, brewing, engineering, steel fabrication, numerous specialised automotive and mechanical repair and servicing operations. We have poured the Stage 1B building slabs, specially engineered to include thickening strips for internal mezzanine levels, vehicle hoists and graded fall to facilitate trade-waste capture. These industrial units have small kitchens and bathrooms and will range in size from 96 sqm up to 192 sqm. The great flood of 2022 certainly put the site to the test, but the work put into preparing an elevated construction area was effective. That said, we did not want to take any chances when it comes to flooding, so, prior to commencing construction, we invested in a modern flood study using the latest computer technology, and significant flood mitigation work has been carried out over time. What is worth doing is worth doing properly. All three of our light industrial buildings are presently being fabricated, with delivery expected early 2023, and Stage 1B construction expected to be completed around mid-2023. You can now book self-storage units and learn more about future developments at: <https://nimbinhub.au/self-storage-in-nimbin>

What next? A journey to the centre of the earth?

by Bernardine Schwartz

More often than not we reach a stage in life when we question and search for a deeper meaning but time is always needed for contemplation, something the pandemic offered the entire world. A rare opportunity for us all to take stock of our lives. A silver lining to the crisis, if we’d looked hard enough. It could have brought a renewed appreciation for the simpler things in life, things that don’t cost the Earth. I was naively wishing for an epiphany to strike, but the translation of life more often than not is a reflection of the world we’re surrounded by, a worldwide regime where money screams! There’s no visible improvement in society’s behaviour, instead they’re busy gallivanting around the world, making up for lost time, knowing full well that global warming and flying go hand-in-hand. Today it’s like catching a train! Data from the International Civil Aviation Organisation shows that every day of the year and at any given time of the day there are roughly 500,000 people travelling in jets that burn a litre of jet fuel every four seconds. In 2019 there were 4.5 billion scheduled

passengers, an appalling figure, but this year we really did outdo ourselves, hitting 6.64 billion. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world, raking in \$1.6 trillion annually and growing. A huge revenue raiser for many countries, including poorer nations, like Bali, Thailand and Fiji where Australians are guaranteed a cheap holiday at the expense of the environment and local communities. Tourism is responsible for 8% of all global emissions, including travel, accommodation, food consumption, and all those cheap and nasty souvenirs. Poorly made keyrings, t-shirts and coffee mugs that have an environmental impact that goes way beyond just manufacturing, having more than likely travelled further than the tourist purchasing them. In Venice, tourists have become a curse for those who live there, a hot spot of the world burdened with overcrowding on a daily basis, where in the last 30 years half of its fixed population has been lost to a continuous upsurge in tourists. Rings a bell? I can clearly remember a quaint, sleepy little seaside village, and so picturesque. Easy parking, free of constant traffic and needy tourists. I didn’t even feel the need to lock my car. Today it’s unrecognizable - Byron Bay, an exclusive playground for the rich and famous, bringing with it more development up and down the coast. Holiday resorts, housing developments, retirement villages and the compulsory shopping centres. Global warming is tourism’s number one enemy, threatening to bring the entire industry to a halt and the effects are already being felt, as many popular locations struggle with prolonged drought conditions. On the island of Maui, locals have lived with mandatory water restrictions since June last year and they face hefty fines if they don’t comply, but the tourist dollar is more important than communities so, holiday resorts are exempt. The tourist dollar is alluring; the Indian government has big plans for the islands in the Bay of Bengal, recognised as global diversity hotspots and home to species found nowhere else on the planet. A region that has been home to the Jarawa people for 55,000 years and thought to be the last descendants of modern humans, but soon there will be 220 holiday resorts and dozens of camping grounds scattered across the islands

surrounding the Great Andamanese, the Onge and the Sentinelese tribes, who will become a tourist attraction - a human safari to see these people up close. Our own species a sideshow attraction. Take a trip on a cruise ship and they’ll take you on a trip of a lifetime. Massive ships with some accommodating up to 9,000 passengers. According to Friends of the Earth, they’re an absolute catastrophe, fuelled by the filthiest diesel fuel, pumping toxic waste – oil, sewage, food waste and plastics directly into the ocean filling and killing marine life. You can take a cruise to Antarctica, where passengers get to experience it all firsthand. They’re pirate ships wreaking havoc on the high seas, disrupting the peace and invading what was once home to peaceful communities of the natural world. A study published in Nature Communications highlights the need to investigate and monitor the environmental impacts of tourism in Antarctica, an estimated 53,000 tourists annually between November and March, corresponding with the peak breeding season for several endemic wildlife populations. Antarctic Tourism has the potential to cause significant



Venice bans cruise ships from historic centre  
Courtesy BBC News

and adverse effects on terrestrial biodiversity in ice free coastal regions, where tourist activity is concentrated. Tourism, as well as research activities are to blame for a steady rise in black carbon, making the snow and ice darker, increasing heat absorption and shrinking the snow packs. Snow is melting faster every year during the summer months from tourism alone - about 2.83 tonnes per visitor, despite international protocol designating Antarctica as a “natural reserve, devoted to peace and science.” Have a few million to spare? You can go anywhere! Pioneers of space tourism, Elon Musk and Richard Branson, can take you on a sub-orbital joyride. Yet two solid rocket boosters burn off nearly 5,000 kg of rocket fuel per second, choking up the atmosphere even more. The planet is paying a high price for our insatiable curiosity, so it was no surprise that the Fodor travel company recommends 25 destinations that you don’t visit. From the Galápagos Islands to Antarctica, destinations are suffering from tourism fatigue. What you can take home from this is these aren’t the actions of a caring and responsible society. From here on every thoughtless action has an exponential impact on the planet, pushing nature deeper into the red. Where we’ll be by the end of 2023 is anyone’s guess. Where’s the respect and love for nature? All these experiences of a lifetime! And all our children ever wanted was a lifetime lived.



# Dharmananda community celebrates 50 years

by Jen Ireland

Dharmananda (meaning ‘the bliss of following your own true path’) is a 106 ha intentional community at The Channon. In November 2022 the community celebrated 50 years of successful existence.

I have lived on the community for 30 years, and have compiled and edited a book full of reminiscence, celebration, moments of success, growing up, challenge and fun, with nearly 40 contributors – members, residents and Wwoofers, present and past.

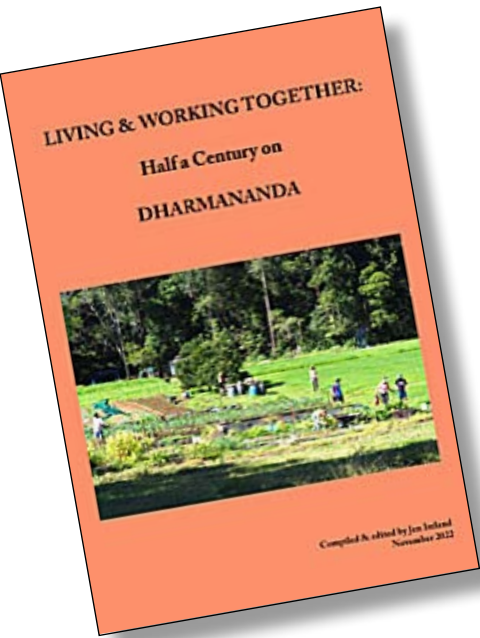
Many stories in the book come from gathering around the dinner table together – a ritual shared by those living on Dharmananda from the beginning to this day.

There are stories of the hardships of early times, living in ex-Army tents, building, carting water, raising the kids, clearing lantana, bareback riding, learning how to look after animals, make cheese, practise bio-dynamic farming, grow food in the communal gardens, resolve problems and share joy.

Also, of colourful people, floods, the Forest Meditation Centre, Wwoofers, neighbours, and friends. Carol Perry’s early letters to her Mum are a treasure trove of the stories of early communal life – a way of dedication and hard work.

Now there is a wide range of food production, internal infrastructure systems, Council-approved homes, on-going bush regeneration, pasture improvement and social actions outside the community that have had far reaching effects. There are fabulous photos with the stories.

Dharmananda came into being through the vision and perseverance of the founding members, Dudley Leggett and Carol Perry. Together they decided to reject living in a nuclear family situation, with a white picket



fence, and find land on which to live with other people and work towards self-sufficiency.

Carol reflects: “Finding a suitable parcel of land took time, as did attracting like-minded people, along with learning skills for living sustainably, communicating well and being caretakers of the land.

“It took a long time for people to join us. A lot of uncertainty led to discussion between Dudley and me about whether we had made a good decision, whether it was going to work, whether people would come.

“Eventually Ray came and then Dudley set aside the land for the Forest Meditation Centre and a community formed up there too, which eventually became Bodhi Farm. This was when it started to feel like the community was happening.

“Community is complicated interpersonally,

and when things went wrong we had no skill base to resolve it. Things went wrong frequently. The Aquarius Festival happened when we were in Laos. There were lots of people coming and going – people treated communal land as the Commons and took what they wanted.

That was difficult. Anarchy was a common theme. However, if there are no rules and no one in charge, then there needs to be a level of personal responsibility. Gradually people started to come and stay who had a sense of responsibility, who wanted to grow food and build harmonious community.

“There were varying forms of community and the Pan Community work days that arose out of the Homebuilders’ Association activities added to the sense of broader community. We worked on each other’s projects. Lots got done and it was great fun. The sand, sawdust and cement walls of the Terania Learning Centre were built that way, as well as the lower tracks opposite the Learning Centre. There would be a fire, a huge cooking pot, lots of kids, music and fun. Community felt much more knitted together across the region at that time.

“We had Healing Festivals where we set up a kitchen and tents in the river paddocks. Fires, sweat lodge, massages, swimming, healing circles, yoga, acupuncture happened over five days. Fifty or more used to come.

“One day at the end of one of the healing festivals, a few of us were cleaning up, all naked down in the river paddock. We had one of those games where everyone lies down and one rolls across the other, naked, about 10 of us playing.

“An electrician came to fix something in the old machinery shed and he stood there absolutely gob-smacked. Because our clothes weren’t down in the paddock, we had to walk up naked in front of the electrician. There was

lots of laughter and embarrassment.”

Leigh Davison’s impression is summed up as Together Everyone Achieves More: TEAM. “Most of what has been achieved on Dharmananda is the result of group effort. One plus one equals more than two. We are a relatively well aligned, cohesive group and we hold weekly work mornings (Fridays) and garden mornings (Saturdays).

“All food produced on the property is shared communally. It is more efficient for a person to grow a lot of a few things to be shared communally than for each individual to grow a little bit of a lot of things just for themselves. Economies of scale, the capacity for specialisation of roles and the existence of backup are just three advantages of communalism. Group meals in the community house up to six nights per week help to enhance cohesiveness and alignment of goals.”

Ray Flanagan says he appreciates the value of community as “it has helped me realise this is the perfect lifestyle for me.”

David Chelsea from the USA was a Wwoofer on Dharmananda in May 2000. He said, “I have Wwoofed it up here at Dharmananda for little over three weeks. I am eternally grateful for this experience here. I wondered, what makes this community work? All of you answered this, every day. It works because of the people. So all I can say is ‘thank you’ from the bottom of my toes to the tip of my nose. You have made me feel welcome and nurtured on many levels.”

May all beings live in peace  
May all beings live in harmony  
May all beings live in peace and harmony

*Living & Working Together, Half a Century on Dharmananda*, \$25. To order a copy, contact Jen Ireland: [cycad5@iprimus.com.au](mailto:cycad5@iprimus.com.au) or call 0457-804-997.

# Sport: Gladiatorial, business, or a trivial pursuit?

by Warwick Fry

I don’t mind watching the cricket on TV. I don’t mind watching most sports. But I don’t do sport. Perhaps it was because I was never any good at it; especially team sports.

I gave up on Rugby the day my team mates condescended to pass the ball to me after six months of playing with them. I did a few dodges and one tricky sidestep too many, and lacking my glasses and a sense of direction scored for the opposing team. I imagined at the time that the yelling and screaming was cheering me on. God help me, I was only 14.

I moved on to soccer, where at least I could keep my glasses on. But no-one ever again passed me the ball. Maybe my reputation had followed me around. I could do swimming where you only had to worry about who was in the next lane, and chess, if that counts as a sport. But team sports were out of my league. It soured my attitude for decades.

However, I can now watch World Cup Soccer and the League Finals, State of Origin etc. appreciatively if I think of it as a chess game. Cricket, tennis and even rugby have me glued to the screen. Just to study their habits and skill sets, you understand.

It is good to start questioning ‘The Meaning of Sport’. Some watch it to follow their favourite team or hero/ine. Others watch because they know the game and appreciate the art and craft of the

players.

Many are probably former sportsters who can recall the ‘days of their youth’ when they were in the game. Others just ‘watch to forget’ last year’s Christmas. But all are just watching as vicarious participants in their sport of choice. They don’t do it (unless the footy pool counts). The difference between audience and actor.

Sport supposedly sublimates aggression and renders it as harmless competition. Hence it is a safe topic of conversation like the weather in order to avoid talking about politics and religion (although to some sport has the weight of a religion).

The ancient Greek origins of the Olympic Games were designed as a pursuit of excellence in a peacemaking exercise between warring Greek City States in the 4th Century BC.

Corporate media and sponsorship has changed that. As I have argued every Christmas with my ex-footballer brother-in-law; it’s not Sport any more, it’s Business (which also has religious weight to many). Like sport, business is supposed to be competitive. Is the media (ie: Fox) sport monopoly therefore harmless? It owes its competitive edge to a captive audience. ‘Sporting’ competition has nothing to do with it. Like pornography it becomes cold blooded exploitation of a passion.

Several centuries after the Greek Olympic Games, Roman Emperors turned ‘competition’ into a spectator blood sport with



gladiatorial contests in the Arena (in Rome, the Colosseum) to entertain and distract a population who might be accumulating resentments. The gladiatorial winners were inevitably losers.

Several millenia later, we see athletes committing themselves to a lifetime career in sports. They get locked in during their teens or earlier. Most of them are burnt out by their thirties, so they have to accumulate a competitive edge quickly to live out the rest of their lives. They are victims of a myth that competition is the only key to development, personal or social. Instead, as athletes, they are reduced to a component in a spectacle, chosen by a media empire to provide bread and circuses buying off an audience that gets on-sold to the marketing machine.

The 15th century origin of the modern meanings of the word ‘sport’ was the Norman French/Middle English ‘desport’ from a Latin root that conveyed the sense

of ‘diversion’ or ‘distraction’ (both of which words also come from the same root).

So, I started off this article watching cricket. I was amused; entertained, diverted and distracted from my mundane worries and concerns. But with that, came recognition that the cricket I was watching was not sport as I understood it.

No average human being could ever hope to have such trained reflexes honed over years from early youth or childhood. Nor the experience and tactical skills of a good captaincy – matching bowler to batter, the placement of fielders, the optimisation of different talents. One can only admire. No normal human being could attain to such levels of skill and competence. But, it is theatre in the service of a media machine. Which belongs to the business world.

Sport today is Business. Big business. Sublimation of aggression is inverted to distract attention

from the travesties of the corporate world by turning it into theatre or mere entertainment, posing as loyalty, recycled as brand and tribalism that as often as not translates back into violence.

For me ‘sport’ is simply a game, where I can feel that “I scored a hundred in the backyard at mum’s”. It is about personal potential. It is about participation and shared skills and experience. Individualistic healthy play and competition, not yet sucked into the tribal rioting and violence and the billions of dollars and monopolistic media control we see in contemporary sporting ‘events’.

Maybe a footy match between schools, maybe barracking for the Nimbin Headers; but when it becomes a professional career choice, it ceases to be sport. It becomes a pursuit of money in the bank (for the athletes) and statistics on the stock exchange (for the media monopolies).

Sport is John Landy, the first Australian to run the four-minute mile, stopping to pick up a rival runner whose heel he accidentally clipped, not fussed about losing a race. Business is Chappel bowling underhand to obtain the critical run in an international match. The difference between Landy and Chappel is the difference between sport and business.

Cricket was once a synonym for fairness: “That’s not cricket!” No longer. Do we want humanity to evolve into a race with the superhuman skills of ethically crippled cricketers?



# Witches come to Lismore

A New Year is here! It's a time for women all over the region to pick up their brooms and set their witchy intentions for 2023.

There is no finer place to do it than with your Country Witches: comedian Mandy Nolan and singer/songwriter Aine Tyrrell.

This genre-blending duo that is the Country Witches Association was born out of a desire to tumble conversation, community and outrage together in one big creative cauldron.

It was a desire to harness the mood of the moment with both tenderness and contempt. To say hard things, and outrageous things, and kind things, and stupid things, all in one show.

It's the grassroots feminist yowl... it's the witches' howl.

The CWA is the satirical and inspired work of Nolan and Tyrrell who call in a super-charged gathering: from the rabble rousers to the tree hugging activists, the wild women, the wise women, the boundary breakers and the menopausal



cranky pants. Mandy Nolan is a stand-up comedian who took her passion for change to the polls this year when she stepped into the political arena to push for change.

Aine Tyrrell is a singer/songwriter who uses her craft to give voice to the uncomfortable. An

Irishwoman who stands strong against the mindset of the colony, she is a passionate ally for First Nations justice, with her own lived experience at the forefront of her truth-telling.

On their own, Nolan and Tyrrell are a force to be reckoned with; together, they are formidable.

Together they are The Country Witches, an unlikely collaboration that speaks deeply to their shared values and the tribe of women who find comfort in their call.

This is a show for women who feel unheard, who are angry, who want to see change. This is a show for women who are going to make trouble. This is the perfect show for Lismore!

With a nod of respect for the actual CWA, the satirical spiritual revival of the Country Witches draws down on telling the stories of our Queens, the women and people who have moved and inspired us.

Times they are a changing, and the witches... well, they're rising!

Join The Country Witches Association when they bring their brightest and boldest meeting to the Starcourt Theatre in Lismore on Saturday 11th February at 8pm.

Tickets are \$41.10 from [starcourttheatre.com.au](http://starcourttheatre.com.au) or [ainetyrrell.com/tour](http://ainetyrrell.com/tour)



# Grand masquerade dance



Following the success of the *Beyond Venice* dance parties in 2016 and 2017, hosted by the Lismore Friendship Festival, that paid homage to the annual Venetian carnival festivities, the masquerade dance party is ready to go again on Saturday 18th February.

The event will take place at the elegant new entertainment venue at Lismore SCU deck and lounge. Guests are invited to dress up, wear dazzling masks and take to the dance floor for a

night of traditional Italian toe-tapping dance moves led by popular Brisbane entertainer Domenico and the Latin Mafia Band.

A profoundly Italian spin of a good time will be in play and is dependent on everyone participating to the full. It is our time to party! There are prizes to be won for those dressed in elaborate costumes and dancing the night away until midnight.

Doors open at 6pm for the Italian

flavours in food, music and atmosphere. Guests are invited to purchase tickets at \$75 per person. Tables of 10 will be decorated and laden with familiar Italian dinner taste sensations in a three-course meal.

*Beyond Venice* serves as a bonus for those attending 2023 LisAmore! on Sunday, 18th June. This outstanding event (formerly *Piazza in the Park*) attracted thousands of people to celebrate the city's long-standing friendship relationship between the northern Italian city of Conegliano and Lismore.

The *Beyond Venice* evening of mystery and mayhem will be a fundraiser for the Friendship Festival's LisAmore! festivities. Both events aim to attract locals and visitors to an array of indoor/outdoor entertainments showcasing the talents of local creative practitioners in the city.

Book now and join the Italian celebrations with sparkle and panache! Book a table with Julie, phone 0493-631-611.

# Italian classes starting in Kyogle

by Luca Barbieri

I have been part of this amazing community for one year now, and I have met so many beautiful people since we moved to this place that I now call home.

But I never properly introduced myself. My name is Luca (Luke) and for six years I have been teaching Italian to adults in Melbourne.

When Covid hit, all my colleagues and I transitioned to remote teaching, which I am still doing from my home office in Kyogle. (Oh, if I think about all those hours spent in traffic, moving from school to school!)

But what I miss the most is a proper face-to-face class in town! Definitely more fun, in a relaxed atmosphere.



My message here is to see if anyone is interested in a first beginner/intermediate/travel course class for the Italian Language! I am in contact with some local spots in Kyogle town that are so happy to give space for our class.

Have you ever wanted to study a new language to keep your mind fresh?

Whether you want to prepare for the next trip to Italy, freshen up your existing Italian language skills or work on details such as pronunciation and communication flow, we are happy to help you to get there!

The classes are confirmed in town in Kyogle for the following dates:

• Wednesdays at 5:30pm from 25th January.

• Fridays at 10am from 27th January.

Classes will be for 1.5 hours; Term 1 is 8 weeks long. No textbooks are required, just bring a pen and notebook and enthusiasm for learning a new language.

Need more info? Visit the website: [www.ilcibidi.bigcartel.com](http://www.ilcibidi.bigcartel.com) or send me an email: [ilcibidi@gmail.com](mailto:ilcibidi@gmail.com)

