

After the flood

Naomi Moran, General Manager of the Koori Mail

Interviewed by Nic Margan

The *Koori Mail* has been here for over 20 years, so we've seen some floods, but the level of water this time was something we'd never seen before.

On the Sunday of the flood, I was on the Gold Coast spending some time with a good friend of mine. My husband was messaging me saying, "It's getting worse, I think you should come back down," so I rushed down.

I came into the office at about 5 o'clock that afternoon with my husband, our kids and some friends of his from Fiji, and together with some of our staff we elevated things to the top of tables. Printers, computers, documents – things that were important to stay operational. When we left we thought it would be okay. The information we were receiving at the time was around 12 metres.

A few hours later the predictions were that this is going to be the biggest flood we've ever seen. Around about midnight we went back into the CBD. We had about an hour to consider what we could do. What could we save?

We got all our computers and our hard drives, but just like everyone else, we were in panic mode. At that point I kind of waved a white flag and said, "Anything else that goes under, so be it," because we didn't have the time or the manpower to elevate anything else.

Then there was this really dark time where we were at home in the early hours of that morning looking constantly on social media to see what the updates were. I felt like I was holding my breath to see what was happening, how much water had come in, when the levee would break.

When I saw footage of our end of the building I had that sinking feeling. I knew whatever we had downstairs was gone. 30 years of archived print editions of the *Koori Mail* completely inundated, important documents, really important and special artworks that the *Koori Mail* had collected over the years. There was an original Albert Namatjira floating around, we had no idea where it was.

I think the hardest thing was waving that white flag and going, there's nothing we can do here.

I started at the *Koori Mail* when I was 14 years old, so I took it really personally. When you're in a position of leadership it hits hard because the reality of it is, hang on a minute, I'm responsible now.

Also, as a Bundjalung person, there is the responsibility for an entire community of people that will look to your organisation for help. So all of this was going through my mind when I saw footage on TV and in the days that followed.

On the morning the waters hit, I sent a text message to every single person in my contact books, everyone from prominent Aboriginal leaders to Indigenous football players. I sent the same message saying, "We need your help."

Just like the other flood hubs, this was something we hadn't done before. I still can't explain how it happened. I remember saying, "We just need to do this: we set up one marquee, one table, a few signs." I look back at the photos now, we had a sign saying: 'Drop food here'. You know? It snowballed into something bigger than what we could have imagined.

I strongly feel that how the *Koori Mail* has contributed to the Australian and Indigenous media landscape over 30 years bolstered the support that we needed for this community. Drove of volunteers started coming in. The key volunteer group that we had were Bundjalung mob. They were the driving force of the flood hub. People followed because they respected them and they valued them and they trusted the *Koori Mail*.

Sending that text message out was a risk. Maybe only one person would reply. Asking

people for help is never an easy thing.

What we did was form relationships with philanthropic groups and retailers in our region to provide much-needed flood relief essentials. We set up what we fondly called the Koori Coles. We had signs that showed you where your pasta and your rice and your dog food were. People could come in and do a grocery shop.

The Koori Kitchen was a space where people could come and get hot meals, fresh produce. Everything was donated, everything was for the community.

We had a makeshift medical tent as well. GPs in the area were donating their time so people could come in and get triaged on the spot. They could get their prescriptions refilled if their chemist was flood affected.

We had people donating their time as counsellors and psychologists. We even had people who were donating their time so people could come in and get a massage. This was all free and donated time that we had coordinated.

When it comes to caring for people in the most traumatic time of their lives it's important to take a holistic approach. It's not just about getting food, water, clothing and a hot meal to take away. It's making sure that emotionally and mentally you're being supported as well.

We had some special space for our elders to come along so that our local mob could get that nan and pop kind of love that is so invaluable in a cultural context for us. Some of our elders would just come in and sit there with a cup of tea all day, every day. They weren't flood affected but they knew that this was where they had to be.

Then of course the fundraising. We originally set out to generate \$100,000. We raised over 1.3 million dollars. It was a big responsibility and absolutely something that we'd never done before.

What we decided to do was make sure that we did it the right way. We made sure that people who were flood-affected received that money because this was money that was generated by the support of the *Koori Mail*. Local major businesses jumped on board. If you registered for your flood relief you could then go to those retailers. They would send their invoices to us and we would pay with that fundraising money.

We reached out to our Indigenous organisations that were affected by the flood as well. Everyone from our local foster care agencies to the Cabbage Tree Island school received a portion of those funds.

The *Koori Mail* had to stop printing for the first time in 30 years. We had to support the community first. The fact that we've only just started rebuilding downstairs, 12 months later, is a testament to that.

My day job has well and truly returned now, but we're also coming through with some really exciting times for the space downstairs. How do we take all of the good stuff from last year that connected our communities, how do we continue that? So downstairs we're building a coffee shop and an event space where people can come in for workshops, yarnning sessions, the local footy presentation, whatever it is. A space for people to feel strong and connected in who they are.

People would ask me, "How do you do it, are you okay?" I joke that for the past 12 months I was running on coffee and adrenaline and the odd margarita.

But honestly, it's important to me that the work that we're doing honours the work of those that have come before us. That's the difference in how genuine your approach is to serving your community. As an Aboriginal organisation, we never stop serving our community. It's not something we hang up and put on the next day like a raincoat, depending on the weather.



Koori Mail Hub Photo courtesy Charlotte Wighton, Patagonia Australia

I'm very passionate about the foundations of who I am as a First Nations person, as a Bundjalung person, and a Nyanganbal Dungutti person. There's a lot of responsibility that comes with that.

Yes, it was exhausting and tiring and I had my moments where I was like, "How am I going to do this?" There were times I would go home and when nobody could see me I would have my moments.

But part of the leadership that a lot of us as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are gifted to by those who came before us, is reliant on us making time for our emotions after the work is done. We draw on the strength of, well, we've only been doing it for 60 thousand years, right? We've only been doing it for the past 235 years since colonisation.

So I reflected on those that had come before us and the history of this nation. I reflected on people like my grandfather who was taken from Cabbage Tree Island at age 9 and sent to the Kinchela Boys Home. He no longer had his name, Edward Moran, but he was given a number, 701.

These are the things that I start to think about when I'm facing a challenge. When I'm going, "Holy shit, how am I going to keep my staff in a job? Who am I going to ask for help?" During those times, you might feel like you don't have the answers, but you'll find them if you really think about what it was like for the people who came before us.

They had no choice but to find an answer. "How am I going to survive ten whole years away from my mother and father before I can return to Cabbage Tree Island?" He was taken at nine and returned as a 19-year old. So, me getting up at five o'clock in the morning and not going to sleep until 1am after a day's work, and trying to be a mum and a wife and everything in between, I kinda go, "That's nothing."

I'm a big believer that everything that I've been able to do and achieve is only possible because of those old fullas. Now we have a group of people that can say, "We wouldn't have been able to rebuild if it wasn't for the *Koori Mail*." That's what I mean by cultural responsibility.

Our response was a really good example of breaking down the mentality that Aboriginal people cannot self-determine their own affairs. To be labelled the rebellious one or the trouble-maker because we decided to pitch a big old tent in the carpark... well, I'm sorry but I'm not being disrespectful by not lodging a council application to pitch a tent, what I'm actually doing is acknowledging that people come first.

The labels that mean more to me are the ones that come from my community, my elders, my family and my staff members. They're the ones that go, "Right, she was able to co-ordinate this operation, she was able to lean on key volunteers and people to support her, she was able to reach out to people for donations and financial assistance and all of that." They're the labels that I care about.

Those other labels almost affected me to the point where I may not have gotten up one day. Unfortunately, it's a real reflection of individuals in the community who don't know a world where blackfullas control their own affairs. It scares them. They're more comfortable with white Australia controlling blackfullas and our affairs.

There's no deep soul searching around the people that told them all the bad, filthy shit about blackfullas. For me, I go: well, you've got a lot of healing to do, don't you?

What we did was for everybody. I remember there being talk, "Why are you segregating flood hubs?" Hang on a minute. We were an additional resource and source of help for people. This was about everybody.

We made sure that we provided a culturally safe space, not just for our own mob to come and get help but for non-Indigenous people in this community. For them to come to an Aboriginal owned and occupied space and feel comfortable was a special thing.

I feel like everything that I do every day is healing me. I'm learning and listening and understanding every day. So I'll take that, thank you, and I'll keep doing what I need to do to support my community. Whether it's a flood, whether it's a story, whatever it is.

The Koori Mail is and always has been a 100% Aboriginal-owned newspaper. Published fortnightly, it is available at various news outlets locally and around the nation.



Aquarius50 Opening Ceremony
Photo: Peter Derrett

AQ50 in pictures



Zany Bubbles and friends
Photo: Beverley Callow



Philippe Petit at The Channon
Photo: Beverley Callow



Tuntabale Falls Community Open Day
Photo: Beverley Callow



AQ50 Co-ordinator Jeni Kendell
Photo: Peter Derrett



Jenny Cornish at the Aquarian Church
Photo: Peter Derrett



Mira Stannard speaking at the Opening
Photo: Paul Tait



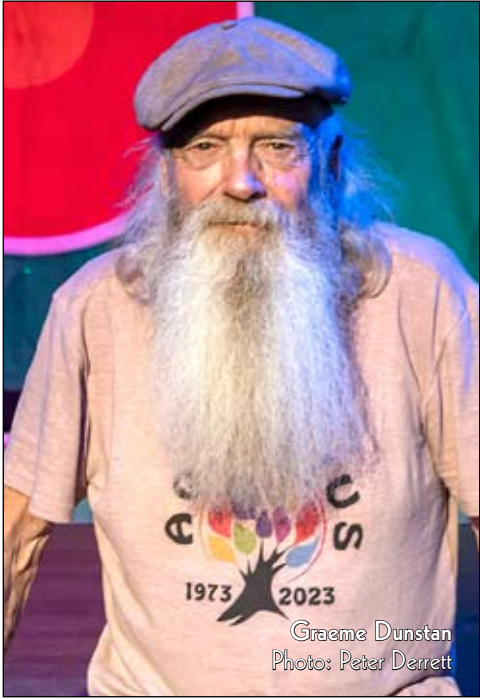
Terry McGee
Photo: Peter Derrett



Johnny Allen
Photo: Peter Derrett



Judy Atkinson
Photo: Peter Derrett



Graeme Dunstan
Photo: Peter Derrett



Original 1973 Aquarians
Photo: Peter Derrett

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OPEN DAILY

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49 Cullen St, Nimbin

CONTACT: PH 02 6689 1444

www.nimbinartistsgallery.org

nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com

Inaugural Art Prize

by Melissa Hume

Zow – what a busy and creative couple of months!

The 2023 Nimbin Art Fair was one of our best ever, with Opening Night a fabulous success – good music, food, little bit of vino, great company and artworks. All topped off with the inaugural \$5,000 Margaret McLaren Art Awards.

Congratulations to Paul Roguszka (pictured), for his magnificent ‘Rapunzel’ that took out the major prize of \$3,000.

Martin de Weerd was awarded ‘Emerging Artist’ with \$2,000 for his ‘Nightcap’, and Tuntable Creek Community School received \$500 as an ‘Award of Recognition’ for their creative ‘Birds of a Feather’ entry.

Thank you to the Margaret McLaren Art Foundation for establishing these Awards. MardiGrass gave us a brief two-day respite to renew our energies for the Aquarius50 celebrations. Our visitors appreciated and loved the works of our local artists.

Sales have been well and truly ‘up’ – a lovely boost to our local artists.

The Nimbin Artists Gallery prides itself on being totally volunteer-run for the benefit of our Community – for the artists, the browsers and the buyer.

Please come visit as we provide an ever-changing platform for our Artists.

The Gallery is open seven days a week, from 10am-ish to 4pm-ish, at 49 Cullen Street. See us also on Facebook.



Photo: Sue Stock

Interconnected

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Serpentine Community Gallery is proud to present *Interconnected*, an exhibition exploring the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world.

Artworks include ceramic, fibre art, paintings, drawings, photography and sculpture.

This is shaping up to be a very engaging exhibition, an interplay of influences and co-creation. For better or worse we are inseparable.

Gallery Director, Rin commented that this Member Show is not to be missed. There has been a strong response from our Artist Community.

Artist Dallas Rae said that she was inspired by the theme ‘Interconnected’ as it’s important for our communities to connect to and understand the impact we have had on the world around us, in the hope that we can move forward and work together to protect our native plants and animals.

The exhibition, *Interconnected*, will be running through to 16th June.

Ceramics

In an exhibition titled *Made It*, 14 Ceramics Diploma graduating students

TAFE final work by Luke Atkinson

from Lismore TAFE are exhibiting their final works at Serpentine Community Gallery, opening on Friday 23rd June at 5.30pm.

These students maintained their ceramics practices and developed exceptional bodies of creative work through adversity and relocation.

They have been through two Covid lockdowns followed by the region’s worst flood which destroyed their work, tools and equipment and necessitated relocation to Southern Cross University.

Please come and celebrate the exciting achievements of this graduating cohort and revel in the diverse creative expressions and technical and conceptual possibilities offered by clay.

Serpentine Community Gallery is located at 3/104 Conway Street Lismore and is open Monday to Friday 10am-4pm, and Saturday 10am-2pm.

The Gallery is an inclusive space that welcomes everyone, members, volunteers and guests.

For more information, or to become



TAFE final work by Jennifer Muller



‘Approaching Fire’ by Michelle Gilroy

involved with the Gallery, please contact: gallery@serpentinearts.org or phone 0492-964-819.

Bentley Art Prize

The 36th Annual Bentley Art Prize will be held between Friday 4th and Sunday 6th August, at the Bentley Hall.

Over \$11,000 in prize money is available for artwork entries in 14 sections.

Entry forms are available now at libraries and art galleries in Casino, Kyogle, Lismore and Ballina, and can also be downloaded from the Bentley Facebook page.

Enquiries: Helen Trustum, phone 6663-5283 or 0407-431-725.

Entries close on Wednesday, 26th July.



Liz Slater’s entry ‘Second Chance’ (detail pictured), winner of the Richmond Dairies 2019 Bentley Art Prize.

Because of Covid and floods there has been no Art Prize since 2019.

Fabric of Life – The Fibre Show



‘Totoro’ by Milly de Zwart

Every year fibre artists and artisans in the area showcase their work in the endless variety of materials we call fibre.

With everything from man-made to natural fibres, we make art, sculpt, embroider, sew, felt and weave the fibre into everyday items we use.

We transform fibre into the practical and take it into the creative realms of art and each of us are an interwoven part of that old adage “the fabric of life”.

Milly de Zwart’s hand-made “Totoro” is a great example of what can be accomplished with a crochet hook, wool and the desire to bring to life a well loved character.

Each year, the quality and variety of work on display continually excites.

This exhibition will run until Saturday 22nd July.

The Young Ones – Rivers & Rainbows

This exhibition was held as part of the Aquarius50 Anniversary celebrations to show the work of young artists who have grown up, or live in this rich and diverse community.

With three age categories there



‘Guinea Pig in the Desert’ by Ester Amelia, 5 yrs

were prizes to the value of \$150 for each age group (under eights, 9-12 yo, 13-18 yo), and a People’s Choice award valued at \$125.

The winners in each category were ‘Guinea Pig in the Desert’ by Ester Amelia aged five, Rainbow Skies by Maddy Chandler aged 12, and Untitled by Amelie Sledge aged 13.

The People’s Choice prize was awarded to Milly de Zwart for ‘Bear with Colourful Mushrooms’.

The Opening was well attended and enjoyed by adults and children alike. The Blue Knob Choir performed and catering was by Blue Knob Cafe.

Blue Knob Café

The cafe has an all-day breakfast menu, meals, specials, cake and coffee. Monthly Sunday morning music is on-going. For information about dates and who’s playing, check our Facebook page.



Untitled by Amelie Sledge, 13yrs (above)
‘Rainbow Skies’ by Maddy Chandler, 12



Back Yarders at Blue Knob

The Back Yarders tables at Blue Knob markets are continuing to add that extra bit of local interest on a Saturday mornings, from 9am to 12.30pm, with local produce and crafts.

For more information or enquiries on what’s happening at Blue Knob: bkhgallery@iinet.net.au phone 02-6689-7449; or Blue Knob Gallery, Cafe & Ceramic Studio Facebook page. Web: www.blueknobgallery.com

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Artist’s Talk with Jason Farrow

Over a year ago, Jason Farrow wandered onto a dairy farm in Bentley looking for a job.

The farm was basically submerged in flood-water and Jason found himself living in a caravan on site, milking cows.

As Jason pondered his new work situation thinking about the once thriving dairies of this region becoming fewer and working closely with nature, it occurred to him how little control one really has over anything.

This is the point where a craftsman whose practice incorporates elements of sculpture, painting and installation began his journey to create an exhibition encapsulating where he is at in this point in time.

Jason has connected his thoughts and work life to a noun that would become the title of this exhibition. ‘Ruminations’: deep or considered thought about something, the action of chewing the cud.

Through the process of mark making, Jason attempts to negotiate the way in which form is informed by material, and vice versa. His work is tactile, incorporating various elements, such as plastic, stone and bronze.

Experimenting with the creative processes he works with and pursuing an interest in working with resin, Jason’s work explores the nature of surface tension, colour and shadow.

His sculptures and paintings are constructed around themes relating to daily observations, memories and unusual encounters that have left a mark.

‘Ruminations’ is an exhibition that investigates day-to-day observations and experiences that fluctuate between the serious and the absurd, and will be exhibited at the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle from Thursday 22nd June until Sunday 23rd July. The official launch is on Friday 23rd June, between 6 and 8pm.

The Roxy Gallery is hosting an Artist’s Talk with Jason Farrow on Saturday July 1st, commencing at 11am. Jason will discuss his creative approach and sculptural practices employed in creating works for his ‘Ruminations’ exhibition.

This Free event is a fantastic opportunity to meet the artist while hearing more on is creative practices and how he has incorporated digestive technics to chewing the cud.



‘Seated figure 2’ by Jason Farrow



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Northern Rivers Rail Trail walk



by Peter Moyle
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

The wet appears to have finished and so far this year our walks have been unaffected.

Restricted access is an ongoing issue as National Parks are still struggling to reopen some of our favourites. We see dates set to reopen and then close to the date an update extends the closure.

Parts of the Border Ranges, Terrania Creek and around Minyon Falls are still out of action. Hopefully not too long before we can re-enter and enjoy these favourite spots.

We scheduled the Northern Rivers Rail Trail as a walk to check out this new attraction that is promoted for bikers and walkers.

We started at Burringbar and walked the 10km to Stokers Siding. The track is flat and well surfaced making walking a treat and the variety of the scenery made for an interesting walk.

Checking out the old railway bridges and track degradation gives an insight into how difficult and expensive it would have been to reopen for trains, a

real shame.

In its reincarnation, the numbers using it show how popular it has become. We saw several hundred bikes and dozens of other walkers in our three hours on the trail.

The highlight of the walk was going through the hand dug, 500 metre tunnel, a great experience on its own, and in the middle with lights off the glow worms on the ceiling. Highly recommended for a relaxing stroll or longer for the fitter.

Walks programme

Thursday 15th to Monday 19th June – Mulligans Campground in the Gibraltar Range National Park

Leader: Mark Osberg 0408-113-125
Grade: 3-4. Another of our great camp weekends. Camp for as many nights as you like - some going for two; others four. Cost \$6 per person per night, day walks will start at 9.00am. This is a lovely camp area with sites well apart with fireplaces and flushing toilets, west of Grafton about three hours from Ballina and Kyogle. We came here last year and loved it. So many interesting walks, many we didn't do, so back this year. National Park vehicle pass required – \$8 a day, or buy an annual one. You can book your own site or Mark has a couple of sites to share, give him a ring to register and for more details.



Sunday 2nd July – The Big Scrub, Rocky Creek Dam and Nightcap National Park

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498
Grade: 3. About 9km on tracks but as usual, some can be uneven and slippery. We will be walking over a causeway that will have water, so a small towel to dry feet before re-booting is recommended.
Meet: 9am at Rocky Creek Dam picnic area at The Big Scrub in the Nightcap National Park, with some wonderful remnants of the area before most was cleared. A nice after walk get together at the picnic area.
Bring: Good walking shoes/boots needed as well as water and lunch.

What is animal communication?

by Donna Connolly

Animal communication is telepathic communication. It can also be described as deepened intuition, or interspecies communication.

We are all animals and all connected by energy, frequency and vibration. In fact I would prefer to call it 'Animal Listening'.

It has also been described as an exchange of energy over distance. It is information that is sent and received non-verbally between two souls.

All of us have intuitive capabilities, which we are aware of in day-to-day life; these can be developed and expanded to become telepathic communication. At one time many people were able to communicate telepathically with other species.

Although many humans in Western culture have lost touch with this ability, most animals have not and are adept at communicating with each other, over distances as well as in each other's presence.

Telepathic communication can manifest in many ways. Animals can send visual images, feelings, thoughts, ideas and sensations as communications. Sometimes these communications have words; sometimes they are just accompanied by a strong sense of how they fit together to form the communication.

Animals are capable of communicating very complicated and deep ideas and feelings, and many communicate with great elegance.

Animal communication takes place without conscious reasoning and by means other than the normal sensory channels; it involves feeling at a distance and can involve transference of thought. In order for animal communication to take place one has to bypass the rational, linear mind.

This is done by quieting the mind, allowing it to become as still and empty of thought and everyday "mind chatter" as possible. Meditation is an excellent way to quiet the mind and access the still, inner state in which animal communication can take place.

Telepathic communication is a natural ability for all beings. Although many humans have lost touch with this ability, there are some words in our language that relate to animal communication, such as "intuition" and "telepathy". We can use these as a starting point in describing what animal communication is and how it works.

The dictionary definition of intuition is "the ability to perceive or learn things without conscious reasoning." At some time all of us have had experiences of intuition; we "just know" something without knowing how we know; but we feel confident that what we know is true, and results or circumstances later confirm this perception.

Dictionary definitions of telepathy include "feeling at a distance," "communication by means other than the normal sensory channels," and "transference of thought." When our thoughts are quiet and our minds are still, we can become aware of these subtle phenomena, such as a peaceful, centred, or even ecstatic, inner state as well as communications from non-human beings.

These communications go on around us all the time, but most people are not in a state to receive them. While the ability to access this state is natural and in-born for all beings, non-human beings generally find it easier to access this state because they have done so continuously and have not lost track of this ability. To them it is a natural way of being.

When the mind is still and empty, a field of receptivity is created, in which the animal's 'voices' can be heard. Then all that is needed is to invite the animals to make use of that field. When the animals "speak," it is usually a subtle process; it is rarely a voice speaking clearly in full sentences in one's head, although that can happen. More often it is a combination of subtle impressions.

Releasing expectations is the key to receiving communications from an animal. Many people have expectations about what animal communication is. Becoming truly empty of expectation and thought is the key.

There are immense rewards and excitement in communing intimately with the other species that share our planet. Their insights show a beauty, depth, and generosity to their natures far beyond what most humans are conditioned to believe is possible.

When an animal's difficulties relate to past traumatic events, it can be very helpful to some animals to tell their story, thereby revisiting the scenario in a safe environment and releasing its hold on their state of being, like humans do in therapy.

For other animals this will be too intense, but they may benefit from voicing other concerns or seeking reassurances about their present situation. Behavioural problems often have roots in emotional issues and resolve quickly when these issues are addressed.

In addition, many animals take a strong interest in the spiritual and emotional growth of those they love and assume as part of their purpose in life, the job of assisting beloved humans with the challenges they face.

Sometimes the distress an animal is showing, whether expressed physically, emotionally or behaviourally, is related to his concern about the welfare of a human loved one. When this concern can be expressed and understood, the person and animal can move on in their lives in greater health and with a deeper bond and understanding.



Donna with a resident curlew

Nimbin Garden Club notes

by Kerry Hagan

This month, Garden Club is making a visit to the property of Jake and Lani at Barkers Vale.

Jake and Lani are the people responsible for beautiful array of veggies and herbs that are sold each Wednesday at Nimbin Farmers Market.

This promises to be a very inspirational and exciting experience.

As we had to miss out on a Garden Club visit in May, this one should make up for that with a vengeance.

It's on Saturday 17th June, 2 - 4pm at 237 McClellands Road, Barkers Vale.

Please bring a cup, a chair and a plate to share.

We always look forward to

interested guests joining us at our garden visits and we welcome you.

It costs \$2 to come along and we also have a swap table where you can help yourself to excess produce for a gold coin donation.

There is also a small raffle with some great prizes.

The money we raise goes to support our local schools.

We'd love to see you there.



View from the loo
by Stuart McConville

The wooden toilet seat looks warm, it is NOT!

Disadvantages of outside loos extend to an extra dose of vitality first thing in the morning as the unavoidable ass kissing cold timber permeates the soul.

Thankfully it is a short-lived experience that is quickly followed by the enlightenment that comes with release and the soaking up of nature's morning sounds that resonates with the afterglow.

The Call of the Bile

Knowing that my spoor will soon be at one with the earth and my DNA will flow freely through nature's courses is a distant afterthought to the compost toilet aficionado.

My loo was built as a direct result of my Mother's needs and my Grandma's advice.

Mum wouldn't visit me until I had a decent toilet (not the maggot-infested pit loo I started with), and my Grandma was wise enough to repeat "waste not, want not" just enough times to drive it into my subconscious for life.

Ironically, it is Mother Earth that now benefits from their diverse wisdoms.

Consequently, my path to convert waste to resource has been a driving force in my career and approach to life.

One area that remains a challenge is the recovery of nutrients from waste water.

Over the years I have designed many septic and greywater systems that have

the same objective, to remove nitrogen and phosphorus so they do not act as pollutants in the environment.

This objective is largely achieved through the use of wetland cells and sand filters, however, the bio-chemical pathways that reduce the pollutants often mean that they are lost to the air or captured in soil that cannot be used for production of crops.

It is time we started to explore ways to keep these important resources for future use, both from human by-products and animals.

Phosphorus in particular is a non-renewable resource that is essential for food production and life in general. If we are to spare the earth ever-more invasive mining operations to get to this resource, we will need to recycle it from urine.

One simple pathway for this is to have urine separating toilets or separate toilets for pee.

My experience with urine diverting pedestals and children with diarrhea suggests that this is NOT the way to go. I recommend either a bidet that is exclusively used for peeing in (this can be connected to its own storage tank for re-use) or simply a 20-litre bucket with a lid two-thirds full with sawdust.

The sawdust ensures that there is no smell until the level reaches the top, and acts as a source of carbon for the nitrogen to react with. I have one of these in my bedroom and cannot smell it at all.

Urine is sterile, so don't be a germ-a-phobe, let it stew. When it's full, simply throw the lot under a fruit tree and it will break down into a nice layer of humus.

Stuart McConville runs Pooh Solutions, compost toilets and waste water services:
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Bitless bridles and pressure

by Suzy Maloney

I've heard critics of bitless bridles say they apply too much pressure to the horse. I find this an interesting statement. When riding in a bitless bridle there is no difference in how much rein pressure you use, it's the same as riding in a bit. So, if people say bit-free riders are applying too much pressure, they must be too!

When someone is riding in a bitless bridle, if their rein aids get too strong, they'll see it immediately as the bridle is visible. Not the same for bitted bridles. With traditional bridles the bit is invisible, nicely hidden in the mouth, so it's very easy to apply too much pressure and not realise (bit blindness).

I think bitted riders are not registering the pressure in the horse's mouth because of its invisibility. I find riding bit-free is the best way of helping riders learn to ride with a light touch, precisely because there is nothing hidden, it's all up front.

I also find that as the horse gets used to being ridden without a bit, they stop fighting the rider. Once they realise that riding no longer involves pain in their mouth, they relax and listen more

closely to the rider.

The old paradigm of the rider getting stronger to 'control' the horse, resulting in the horse getting stronger, so the rider must get stronger etc, etc totally disappears. There is no escalation happening, a new harsher bit is not required, or a noseband or a martingale.

When the horse no longer finds the need to fight the rider, or even worse, internalise and shut down as a way of dealing with the pain, they change. It's like their brains have been somewhere else, they were only offering a percentage of who they really are. Then the whole horse arrives and everything changes.

Rein aids are then used for subtle communication. Without the distraction of pain, horses are more open to listen to all the messages coming from the rider's body. This means less and less rein is needed, which should be the goal of all riders. The entire relationship between horse and rider completely shifts.

The pressure then becomes far less than what is required when riding with a bit. I am not saying this theoretically, but from my own personal experience and from numerous students I have worked with over the years.



Bob and Buddy

I see the same thing again and again.

When I first transitioned to bit-free riding I was getting weekly dressage lessons. I'd gone the path of many and followed my instructor's advice to get a stronger bit, a pelham. This was to bring my horse's head under control and get him to collect in the canter. He was a fiery type of horse, and I did struggle at times to maintain control when his blood was up.

When we started using the pelham I was over the moon, he was instantly way more obedient. My instructor said this was because he liked the bit, and I believed her. I was the same as most people and went along with the superior expertise of the instructor. He was still stiff through the neck though, especially at canter, and nothing we did seemed to fix this.

Then at some point bitless bridles came into my world. I started riding my dressage horse at home in the bitless bridle. After a few weeks I was riding him bitless at home and popped him into a canter circle. He did

the softest collected canter I'd ever experienced, no stiffness in his neck at all!

Suddenly I realised what the bit was doing. It was causing so much pain that he became instantly more obedient, not because he liked it, but because he was worried I would hurt him if he didn't. But his body showed the truth. He could never let go and soften with that much pain.

It was like a sudden bolt of realisation that changed the course of my life forever. Once I knew this I couldn't un-know it. From then on I rode this full-on horse anywhere with minimum pressure. It was a total game-changer.

My hope for the horses in this world is that more and more people look for a way of riding that seeks to consider the horse. The benefits for both the horse and rider are huge.

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Empathy as a teaching aid

by Les Rees

I love to watch the progress of young horses as they develop their personalities and have been very lucky to witness some incredible changes in the ways they learn to handle different situations that they encompass during their journey to adulthood.

If I can help them to understand the importance of caring for each other and see them applying it to their social group then I know that they will be safe and happy.

This helps them to bond with other members, earns trust and assists them to achieve a comfortable position within the group.

The males go through a stage where they play-fight and constantly bicker with one another, each one trying to out-compete the other in speed and agility, biting, kicking and rearing in combat. All are examples of being a male in the wild where they would be preparing for leadership roles.

It's interesting to predict those who will make the best leaders by the way they engage with other members of the herd.

I like to think that I can help them to establish their roles by helping them discover that the best leaders in life are those who have empathy as well as strength.

You don't have to look too far to see the effects that despots have on a herd ruled by fear. The suffering that occurs in the rest of the group can be extreme



and cause a lifetime of anguish to both humans and others within the animal kingdom.

I like to think that all my horses have sunny dispositions, being flexible and caring to others both in the herd and to any humans and other animals they happen to meet.

Two of our male horses play-fight a lot but are always happy and look after each other when the other is unwell or hurt. The other day they were playing and getting a bit over the top when the smaller one accidentally backed onto the electric fence. I was so happy to see the other horse run over to stand with

him, gently licking his neck to calm him down. This special boy stayed with his playmate until he was sure that he had recovered from the shock.

I firmly believe that leading by example is where horses get their direction from and to achieve positive results it's important to be in control of your emotions. Horses are extremely quick to pick up on energy changes and can easily go into fight or flight mode.

Therefore, it makes sense to treat my horses gently. If I move too quickly my intentions may be misinterpreted as a danger signal, so I see it as my job to remain calm and considerate in order to allay any negative responses.

It really does pay to be present with your horses at all times as it allows the opportunities to engage on a much deeper level of engagement and understanding. They can read us far better than we can read them because our brains are cluttered with internal conversations. Once we can learn to be totally present, the magic happens!

If events seem to be getting out of hand, it's important to lower your energy levels and take a step back. People often move in too close before the horse has invited them into their space. Just imagine how you'd react to someone suddenly stepped into your space. "too close for comfort comes to mind" and you'd feel threatened!

Les Rees is an equine naturopath and sports therapist. Phone 0437-586-705.
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