



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

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and New Year and got the opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

As everyone knows, Nimbin Road suffered two significant road slips during the February 2022 natural disaster.

Late last month, I was joined by State Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin to officially re-open one section of Nimbin Road

Milestone for roadslip repairs

to two-way traffic near the village.

Ensuring access to Nimbin was one of Council's priority projects following the natural disaster, as it is essential that our communities are not cut off.

The completion of the works is great news for the Nimbin community in particular, and the wider community and visitors to the tourist town.

Council engaged Civil Mining and Construction to carry out the work to the damaged road, which demanded thorough geotechnical assessments and a precisely engineered solution.

Work on the \$14.9 million project kicked off in June, starting with extensive earthworks to stabilise the site. This required 239 piles

strategically driven into the soil to provide support for the new road, before building a 4.5-metre-high retaining wall.

The contractors also carried out pavement reconstruction, road reinstatement, installation of guardrail barriers, signage, guideposts and line marking.

These works were designed to stabilise the embankment with minimal environmental impact while allowing the road to be re-established to full width.

The project took about nine months to complete and was delivered on time and on budget.

Work on the second landslip is still on-going and is expected to be completed by March.

I would like to thank Civil Mining and

Construction, and in particular the Nimbin community who embraced them and hosted a 'completion party' to thank them.

These extensive works were funded under the Australian and NSW Governments' Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA).

Water restrictions

Water security for Nimbin is an on-going issue for the village, and for Council trying to resolve it.

Level 2 Water Restrictions are still in place for Nimbin, and I would like to thank the community for saving as much water as they can.

The need for water security was also highlighted by the New Year storm that damaged



The mayor with the local member admiring the new retaining wall.

the Rural Water line servicing our rural customers in Nimbin.

Access to the weir was difficult due to storm damage, so Council immediately implemented its Bottled Water program

to ensure those residents affected had access to safe drinking water.

I look forward to working with the community again this year to deliver the services that Nimbin needs.

Let's celebrate our local seniors in 2024



by Janelle Saffin MP
State Member for Lismore

My Electorate Office reopens on Monday, 8th January and one of the first items of business will be launching the 2024 NSW Seniors Festival Local Achievement Awards.

The awards will be announced during the NSW Seniors Festival, which runs from Monday 11th to Sunday 24th March 2024, to recognise the many and varied contributions and achievements of seniors.

There are five categories: Business; Environment, Science, Agriculture; Health and Wellbeing; Lifelong Learning; Community Service. If you know a senior who stands out in any of these fields and who resides within the Lismore Electorate boundaries, please nominate them.

Senior Ted receives a free 2024 Legal Aid Diary from Janelle Saffin.

Nomination forms are available by emailing my office at: lismore@parliament.nsw.gov.au with Seniors Festival in the subject line. A form will be emailed to you which can be filled in electronically and returned by email.

Printed nomination forms are also available at the Electorate Office's front counter, 55 Carrington Street, Lismore NSW 2480, or call my office on 6621-3624 and we will post one to you.

Nominations open from 9am on Monday, 8th January, and close at 5pm on Friday, 23rd February, to allow time for nominations to be assessed.

I will host a morning tea for our award winners during the NSW Seniors Festival in March, which

happens to be the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

'Reach Beyond!' is the festival's theme for 2024, encouraging seniors to seek out new experiences and make new friendships by participating in hundreds of free or discounted events.

Festival events cover the arts, sports, music, technology and entertainment with some held in regional and rural New South Wales.

For more information about the festival, visit: www.seniorsfestival.nsw.gov.au

Free diary helps seniors know their rights

Seniors can still pick up the Free 2024 Legal Aid Diary from my Electorate Office at 55 Carrington Street Lismore and from libraries across the electorate.

This is a very popular diary, full of tips for seniors about navigating the law from managing financial hardship to avoiding scams and resolving neighbour disputes.

The diary is a trustworthy source of legal information about consumer rights as well as information about how to seek help if you have a complaint about a service. It also includes health and well-being tips and money-saving advice.

The NSW Government is pleased to be able to provide the free seniors diary because it is a handy one-stop shop for legal information.

Memorial Baths re-open



Lismore's popular Memorial Baths have reopened earlier than expected, following months of extensive repairs due to damage caused by the February 2022 natural disaster.

Member for Lismore, Janelle Saffin, welcomed the opening, saying she was happy to help secure the resources to allow the rebuild, and also to support Council in ironing out red tape.

"What a wonderful sign of Lismore's revival, and a great introduction to summer. The State Government funding for this recognises that recreation facilities are vital to the life of our community," she said.

"Being able to swim laps, hang out with friends, take the family to the pool, it's all part of a regular Aussie summer and this helps us feel that life is getting back to normal."

Lismore City Mayor Steve Krieg said Council had been able to achieve an earlier than anticipated opening of the facility by adopting reduced opening hours and patron capacity, while the facility worked toward becoming fully staffed and operational by January.

"It has been a significant project to bring the facility back online, albeit with an initial period of reduced operating capability," he said.

"We know how important the facility is for the overall health and well-being of our community. It also marks a major milestone in Council's determination to rebuild our city," Mayor Krieg said.

Federal Member for Page, Kevin Hogan said he was pleased to see the Memorial Baths officially re-open, saying, "I thank all parties who have helped deliver this project in time for Christmas."

The Baths are open 7 days a week from 11am to 5pm, from early January, with a maximum of 150 people at any one time to ensure the safety of swimmers.

The re-opening of the Memorial Baths will be celebrated with a free Community Day in late January.



NSW Seniors Festival
11-24 March 2024 • Reach beyond

Seniors Festival Local Achievement Awards Nominations open January 8

email my office for a nomination form lismore@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Janelle Saffin MP MEMBER FOR LISMORE

Lismore@parliament.nsw.gov.au ph: 02 6621 3624

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Knitting Nannas are unravelling NSW's draconian anti-protest laws



by Sue Higginson,
NSW Greens MLC

In the final hours of last year, our beloved Knitting Nannas pulled off an incredible act that has seen a significant unravelling of the NSW draconian anti-protest laws introduced by the former Coalition Government that were fully supported by the now Labor Government.

Two brave Nannas, Dom and Helen, went to the Supreme Court of NSW and challenged those laws and won. The Court held that some of the NSW

anti-protest laws are unconstitutional.

Starting in our fight against Coal Seam Gas in the Northern Rivers, for years the Knitting Nannas have taken to the frontlines to fight corporate misconduct, government inaction, and riot police with warmth and friendliness.

It's a simple manifesto: sit, knit, plot, have a yarn and a cuppa. It is extremely civil disobedience. Now the manifesto includes constitutional court challenges to draconian state laws!

I deliberately belong to the one established political party that prides itself on the continuing and unfettered right to engage in peaceful protest and non-violent civil disobedience. I've chained myself to bulldozers to defend old growth forests and as a lawyer I've stood in courts across the Country to defend peers who have engaged in civil disobedience.

As someone who's spent years on both sides of protest laws, I celebrate the Nannas' victory in the Supreme Court as a genuine and huge win for the right to protest in NSW.

We often look at the right to protest for a better world backwards. We discuss what protest has achieved, which is more than a lot. In fact, the most important rights, and freedoms in our lives, that many now take for granted, came through protest. However, it is the present and future of protest that we now need to discuss more than ever because we now need to protest more than ever.

We protest in the face of injustice and for a better world and 2024 will continue to be wrecked by injustice, the brutal attacks on Gaza and Ukraine, the climate crisis, the destruction of our natural environment and the continued economic and cost of living crisis.

Now, thanks to the Nannas, significant pieces of NSW's draconian anti-protest laws have been ruled unconstitutional, because they imposed an impermissible burden on your freedom of political communication. And this was no accident.

At the time, the then government promised to "disrupt" protests by



Knitting Nannas at Bentley CSG protest.

Photo courtesy knitting-nannas.com

introducing new fines in the order of tens of thousands of dollars and jail sentences for people who dared to obstruct.

It would be enforced, they promised, with a new, dedicated police strike force, which has imposed grievous harms to people in the enforcement of these laws.

Let's not forget that Labor backed these laws every step of the way!

At the time, legal experts and civil society called the laws undemocratic overreach. Now, Nannas Helen and Dom have proven it in a court of law. The ruling bucks an insidious, nationwide trend towards legislation that

defines protest broadly and vaguely and punishes it with increasingly severe fines and jail sentences.

Let's not forget what the state did to Violet CoCo. Nobody should be threatened with a \$22,000 fine or two years in prison for wanting to fight injustice.

Helen, Dom and their amazing legal team caught out blinkered State lawmakers in an embarrassing moral cringe. Rather than rising to the threat of catastrophic climate change, or protecting our wild places, or decrying Australia's complicity in genocide, both the Coalition

and Labor choose to push unconstitutional penalties for those willing to take a stand.

It's a failure of imagination that only makes the civil disobedience of the Knitting Nannas, and countless other Australians, that much more likely. It is anti-protest legislation worth protesting!

We must now back in the Nannas victory. There are still draconian anti-protest laws on our law books and they need to go. Please join my campaign now calling on the NSW Premier and the Attorney General to repeal the rest of the anti-protest laws: www.suehigginson.org/invalid_antiprotest_laws



Michael Jone (left) with his lawyer Eddie Lloyd and supporters in Grafton

Justice for forest protectors delayed

On 19th December, a small but determined group of supporters from Lismore4Forests showed up at the Grafton Courthouse to support forest ecologist Michael Jones.

He was charged for locking on to a harvester in Ellis State Forest on the Dorrigo Plateau on 30th August 2022, in an area of high conservation value.

His first court appearance was on 31st October 2023, where he pleaded not guilty and his case was adjourned.

As Michael's lawyer, Eddie Lloyd said outside court, "The court had overruled today, so again Michael's matter has been adjourned into mid next year."

That is 13th August 2024.



Protestors in Ellis State Forest.
Photo: Bellingen Activist Network

Lloyd continued, "It's not acceptable that someone has to wait two years for justice."

North-East Forest Alliance member Sean O'Shannessy commented, "Community outrage is growing against the injustice of peaceful protestors having their freedoms of

movement, assembly, speech and trade severely restricted, while NSW-subsidised vandals commit malicious damage in our forests."

Eddie Lloyd is calling on all forest protectors to be there next time to support Michael Jones' courageous efforts.

TAMARA SMITH MP
MEMBER FOR BALLINA

Authorised by Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina. Funded using parliamentary entitlements

Scan the QR to have your say, or visit tamarasmith.org.au/2024

6686 7522 ballina@parliament.nsw.gov.au tamarasmith.org.au

WHAT SHOULD I FOCUS ON IN 2024?

As your local Member, it's my job to advocate for you in parliament. And I refuse donations from big corporations, which means my work is informed by the community, not by dirty donations.

I want to know what issues you care about before I head back down to parliament for the 2024 year. Is it health? Cost-of-living? Climate change? Take the 2-minute survey and tell me what you think!



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The politics of division

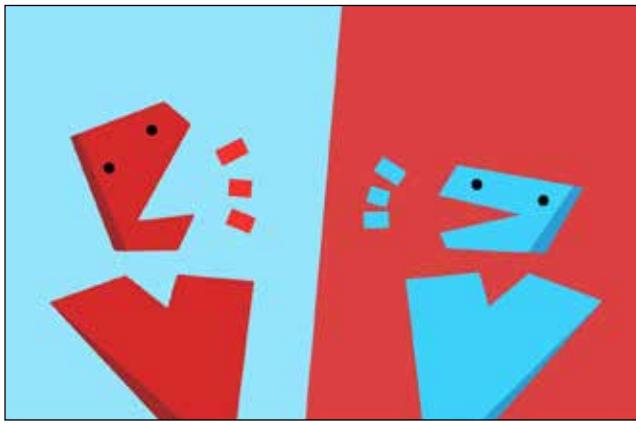
by Germaine Daly

The Togetherness Index (started in 2020) shows that since last year, more Australians feel the country is divided, less people feel listened to, and *more* people have *less* trust in government and media communications.

The Social Cohesion Index has plummeted to its lowest point since it began 16 years ago. The reasons for this are many, and complex. The rising cost of living is one. Another, though, is the rise of political intolerance of differing views.

This was seen during the pandemic, when families, friendships, and couples broke up or became estranged due to difference of opinion on whether or not to vaccinate. Rather than a calm understanding of differing views and choices, we had hyperbole. "If you don't do it, you're basically a murderer!"

More recently, the Voice referendum tore the country apart. Rather than sensitivity and nuance, we had one side saying the only possible reason for a No vote was racism, while Indigenous and left-leaning, progressive No voters either tried to defend a more nuanced argument, or



jumped into saying that a Yes vote was necessarily a vote for paternalism and colonialism.

On 21st November, women's rights groups gathered outside the Parliament of NSW to speak out about Alex Greenwich's so-called 'Equality Bill' being discussed inside.

The bill, if passed, will introduce Sex Self-ID to NSW. This means anyone can self-declare a gender identity (OK, so far no problem), then have that gender identity recognised *in place* of their sex, for all purposes, on pain of litigation.

This includes sports, prisons, psychiatric and hospital wards, sleeping facilities in homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and rape crisis shelters,

school toilets, change rooms, and sleeping arrangements on school camps and scouts/girl guides, etc. All these spaces would effectively be made unisex.

This is also the case for all-women awards, shortlists, scholarships and affirmative action quotas; things designed to address sex inequality, not identity inequality.

Happily, the women's rights groups were able to gather free from violent attacks and intimidation, unlike what happened to similar groups at Let Women Speak events earlier this year in Auckland and Hobart, and mere weeks ago in Portland, USA.

But this topic, like Covid vaccinations and the Voice, is characterised by the same hyperbole and intolerance of

differing views.

Those with views opposing the women standing up for single-sex spaces say they are necessarily transphobic, hateful, genocidal, aligned with Nazis, and that their words equal violence, and so must be met with violence.

This view is common on the activist left, never mind that many of the women speaking out are die-hard leftists.

The Togetherness Index shows that after the lockdowns, people were much more likely to trust their friends and families than government and media, and that strong connections to neighbourhoods were forged. But the politics of division could see an end to that. The tactic of divide and rule is effective.

And while there is plenty of support within the women's movement for those who have the courage to speak out about sexism instead of identity-ism, our thoughts should be with those who feel they must remain silent out of fear of losing their friends and families to the latest intolerance.

Please everyone, the next time you hear a point of view you disagree with, take a deep breath and make an effort to understand.

Julian Assange's final appeal date in UK Court

by Jodie Sard, Assange Campaign Australia Team

The UK High Court has confirmed that a public hearing will take place on 20th and 21st February to determine Julian's right to appeal his extradition to the US.

Julian's two-day hearing will be held before a panel of two judges who will review an earlier UK High Court decision taken by a single judge on 6th June 2023 which refused Julian permission to appeal.

The hearing will determine whether Julian will have further opportunities to argue his case before the UK courts, or whether he will be extradited to the United

States to face charges under the 1917 US Espionage Act.

This may be the final chance to prevent Julian's extradition to the United States. If extradited, Julian faces a sentence of 175 years for exposing war crimes committed by the United States in the Afghan and Iraq wars.

In Australia more than 70 Federal politicians have publicly called on the US to drop the extradition, and in the United States, H.Res.934 sponsored by Paul Gosar is growing steadily, gathering signatures from all sides of the House calling for Julian's case to be dropped.

Actions are planned around Australia; for information see: action.assangecampaign.org.au

Neoliberalism's sunset

by Rusty Miller

The basic philosophy in Australia in the past half-century has slowly but persistently changed its tune into a strongly focused economic dynamic. And this current has affected our national political style.

One might call it the conversion into a way of market forces. In Byron we've seen many examples: the line-up on Jonson Street of our large corporations' franchises which are well subsidised flagships: the Big Fish swallowing the Little Fish, globalisation in motion and often strengthening monopoly or near monopolisation.

This is a dominant belief to many people who have embraced and supported 'neoliberalism', the principal economic doctrine of the American government... which Louis Manand said is "what has landed us in the mess we're in".

Some new residents into our Byron region also see this as almost a religion of 'Market Forces'. Our near-monopolistic press structures (not of course, the Byron

Echo) state repeatedly: get the planners and the policymakers out of the way and let the markets find solutions.

Thankfully here though, there is a massive and very brave populous of growing creative and progressive individuals who are aware and politically awake.

The very essence of Byron's special and unique Byron (amenity) magic magnetism has been vigilant and is constantly battling to stop, or affect what we feel is not development, but 'inappropriate development'.

For instance, look at the pressure to raise our height level of buildings. There's now constantly a swag of developers insistently pushing to have approvals to go for four storeys, which then have a swimming pool rooftop with an added bathhouse structure, making them virtually five storeys in height.

Equating economic freedom to political freedom is the basic tenant of neoliberalism, often called the euphemistic term 'Market Fundamentalism'. Many of the articles written in Byron are about the dreamers,

new ideas and creators... people who are composers and builders of Byron's Magic... an indescribable style and everlasting faith that individualism and democracy will prevail and vote economically with their wallets to shop and support local.

In these times of unbelievable suffering in many other places, we can't just sit and contently live so comfortably when the wars daily echo upon our media systems. Everyone can only in some even humble way be concerned and take action through what we support and how we constantly nudge our governments (all levels) and believe that through such efforts we can in some small way in our lives make contributions.

Strong interest groups change the 'top to bottom' dynamic into 'bottom to top' (grassroots). This manufactures resilience and strong social fabric. Louis Manand in his article 'The rise and fall of neoliberalism' in the *New Yorker* (July 23, 2023) said, "Maybe the biggest market failure of all: climate change."

Byron locals will hopefully and gladly maintain their voracious pack of anti-inappropriate development mobs and have doggedly pursued and maintained their resistance and will never swallow the placebo pill of neoliberalism.



NIMBIN CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Happy New Year to all our Chamber members and the wider Nimbin community! I hope everyone's Christmas and New Year's was filled with the Nimbin Spirit.

This Christmas was extra special for our family as we welcomed a baby girl, making our holiday season quiet and filled with love.

As we start unfolding the map of 2024, I feel energised for the opportunities and challenges this year holds.

In my new role as president, I'm committed to steering our business chamber towards a year

of meaningful growth and collaboration, bringing the passion I have for business operations to the forefront of our actions as a Chamber.

New faces and perspectives

Our final meeting of 2023 was one of welcoming new energy, with Ariescia Matheson, Ben Hartley, and Chris Ardill-Guinness joining our committee.

We also saw a reshuffle in our executive team, with David Hyett, Nicole Lindner, and Ariescia Matheson taking on new roles.



Chamber Chat

by Liam Brehme, president

These changes bring a fresh perspective to the committee, and with it an excitement to see what can be achieved this year.

Chamber foundations

In a significant move last year, the Chamber decided to transition to a not-for-profit status.

This important step opens new funding opportunities, allowing us to increase our investment in community

projects and offer more support to local initiatives.

We view this change as a key to deepen our engagement within the Nimbin community.

Our goal is to boost our involvement through organising community events, enhancing business networking opportunities and launching initiatives that provide tangible benefits to the people and businesses of Nimbin.

of 'Contained in Nimbin', whose gold at the NSW State Tourism Awards highlights the exceptional standard of our local businesses.

They will now represent Nimbin as the NSW State winner at the 2024 National Tourism Awards. Congratulations Nic and Nicole!

Nurturing the next generation

In 2024, the Nimbin Chamber will be collaborating with Nimbin Central School to offer work experience opportunities.

This fantastic initiative helps to bridge the gap between education and practical business skills.

This type of programme is key in underpinning a commitment to nurturing the future of Nimbin.

More information will be sent to Nimbin Chamber members in the coming weeks.

Women In Business
Don't forget, our first event of 2024 is just around the corner!

Join the Women in Business Lammas Gathering on 2nd February from 5.30 to 7.30pm at the Church of Aquarius, Nimbin.

This event is the perfect chance for both established and emerging businesswomen in our community to connect, celebrate the achievements of 2023 and share goals for the new year ahead.

It's set to be an enjoyable evening filled with networking opportunities, engaging activities, nibbles and bubbles (BYO welcome).

A call to get involved

There's never been a better time to get involved with the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce.

Visit: nimbinaustralia.com.au to join us and have your say in Nimbin's future.

Doing it for ourselves – Nimbin's future is in our hands

by Natalie Meyer

Governments and their various policy agendas may come and go, but we are all still here and history has clearly taught us Nimbinites that those things which we do for ourselves, working collectively, are the most successful and enduring.

What is the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan?

The SNCP was first developed by the Nimbin community in 2009, and has incorporated many of the goals and strategies from previous plans developed by Nimbinites since the 70s.

It has been revised and updated by the community twice since, with the current version expiring in 2021. Around 800 Nimbinites have been involved in the development and implementation of the SNCP to date.

Covid, then the 2022 floods and the many subsequent consultations by Council and others have prevented the community from



coming back together to revise the SNCP, until now.

Who owns the SNCP?

The SNCP is our community's own plan and the focus has always been on what we the community can do for ourselves to shape our community and bring our visions into fruition.

It has won Awards and has attracted funding and support to many community projects and activities.

You can view the SNCP on the NNIC website: www.nnic.org.au/sustainability/introduction

Most importantly, it builds on our proud DIY history and has enabled us to maintain focus and work together towards collective goals that we as a community identify as

being important.

What has been achieved under the SNCP?

The first community-owned solar farm in Australia; the Nimbin Farmers Markets; the Nimbin Food Co-op; 7 Sibley Street; the Rainbow Road Walking Track; the acclaimed Nimbin Community Disaster Plan and much, much more has been achieved under the SNCP.

What is the format of the SNCP?

The SNCP currently consists of nine Key Focus Areas: Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Energy, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Food and Farming Security, Health and Wellbeing, Housing and the Built Environment,

Social and Political, Transport, with sustainability and climate change mitigation underpinning the whole Plan.

Under each Focus Area the community has set down Goals and strategies for working towards those Goals.

What next for the SNCP?

In the process of revising and updating the existing Goals and strategies, the community can consider whether to add any new Focus Areas, (e.g. Water Security has been suggested), or to remove or combine any of the existing ones as well as anything else that needs to be included in, or deleted from the SNCP.

Also under consideration this time around, will be the addition of climate change adaptation strategies and how we can sustain what we already have in terms of community infrastructure and groups when all us oldies have fallen off our respective twigs.

We plan to break the SNCP

down into workable sections and run workshops and consultations on each, commencing from February, culminating in a whole-of-community get-together to consider the final revised Draft later in 2024.

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre, and Steph from 7 Sibley Street in particular, will be driving the process and we aim to include as many people in the community as possible along the way. We will try and find diverse ways to do this. The best way has always been face-to-face. The SNCP needs deep conversations and engagement, and not just a bunch of surveys.

The SNCP is only as good as the people who contribute to it. So this is your chance to help shape the future of your community and you can only do this if you Get Involved!

We will be publicising workshops and other opportunities to contribute here in the NGT, on social media and posters around town as we go, so watch this space and make sure your voice is included.

Vibrant January line-up at Flourish Sanctuary

by Jagad Samuel

As the year unfolds, Flourish Sanctuary, nestled ten minutes from Nimbin's town centre, is buzzing with energy and an abundance of enriching activities for the community.

Here's a glimpse into the exciting events lined up for January:

• New beginnings with meditation

January marks the commencement of a new term of meditation classes on Monday, January 8th, led by Jagad. It's an excellent opportunity to start the year by nurturing inner peace and mindfulness.

• Yoga to revitalise

Every Friday at 9am, residents and guests can engage in weekly yoga classes to invigorate the body, mind and spirit.

• Sound Healings

Immerse yourself in a transformative journey of sound and healing every Thursday from 10.30 to 11.30am with Michael Deanshaw's soul-soothing sound healings.

• Permaculture and gardening classes

Embracing sustainable living, Flourish Sanctuary continues to offer permaculture and gardening activities every Wednesday from 8.30am to noon. The classes, available by donation, promote a deeper connection with the environment and give practical experience, tips and techniques.

• Social Dharma with Julian

Julian extends his offering of Social Dharma to residents, providing a unique blend of social engagement and spiritual practices.

• Biodanza – Dance of Life

Embark on a journey of self-discovery through Biodanza, a holistic system of music and movement that fosters personal growth and social connection. Jazmin LJ will conduct a taster session on Saturday 27th January from 4 to 6pm.

• Men's Circles

Flourish Sanctuary hosts Men's Circles on the even Tuesdays of the month, from 7 to 9.30pm. These gatherings provide a supportive

space for men to share, connect, and explore personal growth.

• Satsang with Jagad

Join Jagad on Sunday 14th January from 1pm to 3pm, for an open Satsang – a spiritual discourse and dialogue that aims to deepen the understanding of one's true nature.

• Silent meditation retreat

From 19th to 21st January, immerse yourself in a silent meditation retreat led by Julian Robinson, a seasoned guide with over 40 Vipassana retreats under his belt. Co-facilitated by Jagad, this retreat promises to be a transformative experience. Earlybird tickets are available now.

• Taoist Day in January

Flourish Sanctuary is unaffiliated with any religion and embraces spiritual practices from around the world. January concludes with a Taoist day, offering a unique exploration of Taoist principles and will have a Taoist master visiting, offering to initiate people into this lineage.



The sanctuary continues to host retreats focusing on meditation, Biodanza, yoga, wellbeing and even retreats exploring themes like death.

Looking Ahead

In February, Flourish Sanctuary anticipates the return of the amazing Afro Moses (and his band), and from 9.30am to 4.30pm on 25th February, a Natural

Awareness 'Meditation as a way of being' day with Emma Pittaway.

The community invites WWOOFers and individuals eager to experience and contribute to Flourish Sanctuary's sustainable community.

For detailed information on all these events and more, visit: www.flourishsanctuary.com.au or visit us at 449a Gungas Road.

Cyclone Jasper: a close-up view



by Mary Kanary

Ho, ho, ho... another disaster we must go! (To misquote one of the seven dwarfs.)

This time the deluge didn't rock Northern NSW, but Northern Qld instead. The aftermath was same, same, but yeah, also different.

Whilst here in NSW the rains washed hills into rivers, with road accesses vanishing downhill into rubble, the tropics had different impacts. The tributary of the mighty Barron River impatiently burst through suburban seams, creating new courses to the sea, rendering streets into islands and islands into debris catchments.

Crocodiles floated by on new styled li-los, and the sun shone almost immediately after the intensity of the storms, bringing a brightness and assurance that the wet had dissipated.

The human impact is considerable, as for any who experience the shock of devastation, destruction, and the realisation that perceptions of permanence are illusory. The visuals, the smells, the heat, and the heaviness of the heaving heart.

Mud-covered possessions piled high on the nature strip. The

stench of rotting vegetation, mixed with sewage and the bloated bodies of horses, cows and barramundi litter the river mouth, stewing in the tropical humidity, cooking in the sun.

Initially, the shock has us all kicked into gear. Community help and kindness is in bucketloads. Then the despair, the pain and grief etch into faces, as the enormity of the event is realised.

The effort required to suppress the emotion is wearing. The loss is overwhelming. The smiles and cheer assumed, is testimony to the resilience of the human spirit. The government support at all three levels, along with the volunteer and charity groups were well prepared and support was prompt.

Tropical Cyclone Jasper arrived on Wednesday, in mid-December, 2023. Destined for Far North Queensland, it weakened from a Category 4 to a Category 1 in Cairns, and Category 2 in Bloomfield.

It was a lazy-arsed cyclone: took a week to come over from the Solomon Islands, then couldn't even get over the Great Dividing range and give the drought-stricken areas a drink. Nope, it hovered about, spiralling gigalitres of water about, surpassing all records of flooding formally recorded. The affected



Holloways Beach

areas were from Ingham north to Cooktown, between a 5 and 600 kilometre span.

There was a week of forewarning. Residents, businesses and community areas were well prepared with sandbags etc. Text messages and emails were sent regularly updating warnings of the imminent arrival of the cyclone, flooding, power drops and duration of available water.

Services arrived prior to the cyclone, with SES, Ergon electrical, police and medical teams flying in from around the state. They set up camp in various centres such as the local showground and got to work as soon as possible. (Note: showgrounds are vital community assets – definitely worth keeping.)

Back to the topic at hand, the day after the flood waters began to recede, the council was out filling in potholes. Photos above show Holloways Beach where the river burst to the sea through a suburban land mass. Within a week, the rock bridge was made.

All flooded areas had restricted access to only residents. This prevented looters and sightseers, whilst enabling the services crews to get water, electricity, road access



Holloways Beach damage and a temporary bridge being swiftly built

and safety precautions in place.

The 'mud army' and a host of those who were not flooded, got working together to provide hot meals, clean packs, bedding and clothing. The PM came providing recovery assistance, not just long term, but most importantly, for those of us affected, and cold beer was waiting.

Even the airlines were quick to compensate people's flights without penalty – and being a tourism area, there were many thousands accessing that.

Essentially, the floods in the north of two neighbouring states, were similar in the lived experience, but what did differ was the response by authorities and services. Is that because

systems have improved as an acknowledgement of learned protocols from the Lismore floods?

Was it that resources were stretched in the Lismore floods, as the two capital cities of Brisbane and Sydney experienced flooding at similar times?

Can I dare to consider the politics of the day? Where the current Prime Minister Albanese came up to the north, and 'rolled up his sleeves', the former PM, Scott Morrison, was not the same. In times of trouble, we need a genuine compassionate, indeed human response from all.

Food for thought: we live in Australia – "the land of droughts and flooding rains," (to quote Dorothea Mackellar).

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Ending the War on Weed

by Michael Balderstone

A few of us went down to the Big Smoke for Jeremy Buckingham's second reading of his Bill for stage one of the Legalise Cannabis Party's plan for legalising weed in NSW.

First step allows adults to grow six plants and carry and share up to 50 grams, buy seeds etcetera. No big deal, in fact no selling at all. It's partly modelled on the new rules in the ACT.

Doctors will still be needed to prescribe your legal cannabis, even CBD. Which is all grown indoors by people in white coats and hair nets with very special, very expensive licences on farms with massive security.

How ever did we survive decades of home grown weed from the bush? How many people died, did anyone even get sick from it?

A short recent history of cannabis in Oz. For decades it had no medical benefits and must be eradicated, and users jailed. Finally, stopping children's epileptic seizures forced them to accept there was some medical benefit.

In no time they start a medical cannabis program, but they are in control of who gets it and where

it comes from. No-one is allowed to grow their own. At about the same time they decide you cannot drive after using the medicine.

Sounds like sour grapes to me. And now legal weed is available at half the street price via a phone call with a doctor and Australia Post has it to you the next day. It's mostly coming from Canada which has a huge stockpile (because it grows like its name!)

An ounce of the second-grade legal smaller buds is around \$150 these days. Mightn't look so flash but same smoke as the big chunky ones. All the legal weed is irradiated.

Anyway, that's still 150 bucks a week for a lot of people who could be growing it themselves in their own garden. Or cupboard. And don't get me started on the extra benefits of growing your own plants. Just like growing your own vegetables, lettuce or tomatoes.

It's hard enough politically trying to be allowed to grow our own plants, but the real stumbling block is the saliva testing of drivers for the presence of THC. This is stopping thousands of Australians from trying cannabis as a medicine. Clearly someone's plan!

I realised even deeper down

in Sydney how most politicians have no idea about pot. What do you mean cannabis is uniquely fat soluble? No way we can support any drug driving. What about the drivers loaded up with pharma pills, no one is tested for opiates, why not treat cannabis the same? Yes OK, but cannabis is dangerous causing mental health problems.

I learnt you don't vote on a bill until you're sure you can win. That's what all the committees and inquiries and reports are about. Just trickling the ball along until you hopefully get a shot at goal.

It's another world in Parliament House and hard to get attention on your topic. I guess that is why Jeremy held that bud up in his speech. The corridors and dining rooms are lined with pharma and mining lobbyists I imagine. But also, because people have been misled by the never ending reefer madness lies and propaganda, it's good to see reality. It's just a herb! Never killed anyone in ten thousand years.

On the same day in Victorian Parliament, they were also debating the issue. The speeches were shocking for me to watch. MPs from both Labor and the Coalition speaking total nonsense someone has told them or they read somewhere. Fortunately, it was all theatre

really, because the Legislative Council MP's had already made some sort of deal with the new Premier. Hopefully better than the fob off with the RDT off-road driving trial, which is just a waste of time and money.

Meanwhile in Canberra Albo looks like he's got long Covid and Dutton only knows how to kick a dog when it's down. If they don't change the driving laws and let us grow our own, Legalise Cannabis senators might be in Canberra next.

The frustration in the weed community about the entirely unfair driving rules, and not being allowed to grow our own, is guaranteed to grow.

The big news for 2024 is both NSW and Queensland promising to introduce a cautioning program for personal amounts of all drugs, the same as in the ACT.

It's like they can no longer ignore the reality that drug use is a health issue. Hopefully this will stop a lot of people going to court, getting criminal records, or even going to jail, where they shamefully become a commodity for giant corporations to make a profit from.

A big thank you to everyone supporting the Legalise Cannabis Party last year. Every day we have to be closer to the end of the war on weed, imagine that.

How lifestyle decisions impact on the climate crisis



by Antoinette Ensby

Some thoughts on the New Year? Be a better person, live healthier, improve relationships...

What if we were to shift our focus to our planet? If we acknowledged the connection between a healthy mind and a healthy planet? At this point in time, we do not have a healthy planet. Perhaps a little effort invested in getting back what we've lost may improve our mental health. Dream a little... do a little, heal earth.

The restorative work on the earth's biosphere opens a pathway to becoming a better person. We can influence change. We can make it happen. The good, the new, the better is in our reach.

Start the New Year with active hope! No longer feel helpless or powerless and reverse your perspective: recognise the problem as a means of finding a solution. Not to focus too much on the threat but on the opportunity. Regarding the challenges ahead, active hope offers a positive reappraisal of the situation. So, here's a plan:

Resolution 1: Direct involvement in environmental projects. Experience active hope by planting trees, beach clean-up, saving wildlife,

regenerative farming, you name it.

Involvement activates positive feelings, looking at the bright side despite the negative emotions that are undeniably there. Active hope is environmental psychology. It alleviates the feeling of invalidation and that you're not alone in your distress over climate change.

Be solution-focused rather than look the other way out of fear. Worry does not motivate action, hope does. A deeper understanding and knowledge of the problem relieves fear and gives hope. The worries take over if you just look for the stressors. Instead, look for the solutions.

Resolution 2: Strengthen your bond with Mother Nature. Root the mind in clean environments and intact ecosystems that signify the soul of the earth. A healthy planet with thriving and alive nature is perhaps the essence of happiness. The human being denying nature the right to prosper and flourish may in turn suffer from depression and anxiety.

On the other hand, looking after the natural environment by making sure that nature is unencumbered and healthy will reap the reward of a happy and balanced existence. Keep

drawing on values of harmony, peace and fulfilment through the bond with Mother Nature.

Resolution 3: Your ultimate goal this year is to improve the situation. Improvement starts with adapting to the change we are facing to trim back eco-anxiety. I see adaptation as an organic process. The more we learn about the impacts of climate change the more we are alerted to the problem. With adaptation strategies we get the ball rolling which creates a real possibility for improvement.

We may have to overcome a few hurdles and mainly these hurdles are bound into our attitudes. How to adjust our behaviour and be able to personally adapt to a challenging task? Once we've overcome certain emotional barriers, we'll be more confident to take on the world's environmental problems.

Eco-anxiety is helped by knowing the facts, for sure, but never forget that we are creatures with the ability to use our instincts and to feel. Fear is a good teacher for using these instincts in the right direction if coupled with the kind of alertness that knowledge and intuition give us. The more we are involved in a matter the better all our senses function the better we are prepared.

The more we can keep fear in

check.

Resolution 4: Stop feeling powerless! Tame pessimism. 'Before we know it, we'll have another drought,' a friend said with a weary smile. Maybe it's time to review our climate cure resolutions. By choosing to live ethical and mindful we are able to turn around passivity and become the agents of the climate cure.

Any suggestions? I leave that up to you. Living sustainably and not polluting the earth has many facets and challenges. One area we all are involved in is the economic exploitation. We use, produce, buy and sell. Our consumer decision has weight, meaning our choice influences the type of produce on offer.

To Alastair McIntosh, author of *Riders on the Storm* (published by Birlinn, 2020), "climate change is systemic. Its drivers run through nearly every aspect of our lives."

This year as ever I want to make a planet saving lifestyle my priority. I am not powerless. I want to help saving what's left of our planet that we've milked nearly to the brink of extinction. Nearly.

Resolution 5: Don't give up.

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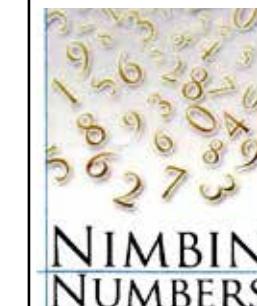
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The conundrum

The conundrum which is the home buy back scheme continues to perplex advocates and critics alike, with house offers for virtually identical cases varying by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

As an example, I have it on the best authority that one two-bedroom house was purchased for \$610k while I know of another six-bedroom house was offered just \$470k.

In some streets the offers have been denied to one neighbour and given to another on the same flood height.

The divide and conquer attitude that has besmirched this endeavour since its inception was cloaked in a "case by case" individually tailored lie; with people required to sign non-disclosure agreements, and they've proven as watertight as the very housing they've purchased.

Also, it appears that some of the agreements have extra clauses, and some don't. Some people have kept an option on moving the home they've already sold, and if you're in the process of selling up make sure you include that in your agreement.

The million dollar question is will affordable lands become available for these flood affected homes or will they be demolished, or – and this is actually happening – will the houses just be rented out as public housing.



Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

It could be just moving out one set of people and popping in another set of even lower economic level renters. Ones who don't own their own rescue boats?

Anyway, so some people have adored this scheme while others have their noses seriously out of joint. And some are at greater risk than before the scheme started.

And I don't see that it's rectifiable.

However, we should learn from it – we need to take charge of this if there is another catastrophic flood in the near future.

We need it to be dealt with in a class action style to insure a just outcome for all. No smoke, no mirrors.

laurieaxe@gmail.com

Camping on Minjerribah

Warm afternoon fades into evening,
a game of Chinese checkers as Curlews cry.
Dimple Scotch warms the cockles,
smokey haze smiles revel campfire string duets.

Whales breach, salty rainbows captured in their
blowhole breath.
Dolphin pods dart foam.

The gas top water boils.

Sandy tracks, kangaroo scat.
The White-bellied sea eagle waits.

Coffee pot pitch sings to the morning tide.
Sandpipers slurp flecks of gold.

We cook 'Hello Fresh' ...for the not so.
Card Rummy, ragù and red.

Primo amore.

Dappled darkness, specks of rain.
Our bodies broth simmers.
Wrapped tight, blanket burritos.

Prawn fingers, throw a line.
Little fish, tall man.
Boy Sun peeks the clouds.
Pelicans perch, open gullets, catch the rain.

Minjerribah, place of the many mosquitoes.

Dreamtime wings beat amber, a revenant hum.
We wade the cloudy waters, ankle deep.
Navigating the surface. We tip-toe.

It is an ancient Quandamooka song.
A caravan of crabs chase the outgoing tide.
We are but simply two mudlarks on a mission.

– Kate Parker

A moment

by S Sorrensen

For something that is so important in our lives, something that dominates our emotional and, often, physical wellbeing, we know bugger-all about love.

Well, maybe I shouldn't say 'we'. Maybe it's just me who finds love confusing but intriguing. Maybe there are people who have got love sorted. Good on ya.

But not me.

I'm sitting in an old metal chair sipping a Japanese vodka (love this vodka) and watching the sun set behind a trio of pine trees I planted more than 30 years ago. There is a Norfolk pine, a hoop pine and a bunya pine.

They're very tall now (time will do that with trees) and, in the buffeting southerly, they are dark silhouettes dancing as the sun yellows behind them.

The old metal chair, part of a garden setting of four chairs and a table, used to sit in my parents' garden in Brisbane for as long as I can remember. I don't recall the chairs ever being sat in, except once I sat there with my first girlfriend. We held hands across the table.

Last year, my mother died. I had a difficult and, at times, distant relationship



with her, but the brutal immediacy of her long dying dissolved the superficial barriers between us and I felt her love.

When all else had gone – her prejudices, her memories, and finally even her persona – there only remained love. And I loved her in return. I must have always loved her, because I don't think love can be one way; it takes two to love. Love is a reaction. Chemistry.

"No way," you say. "What about unrequited love?"

Once white, I have painted the four chairs four different colours. I'm sitting on the red one, which matches the red sarong I wear. (Yes,

I've always been stylish – "artistic" my mum would say.)

In reality, my sarong is no longer red, but splashed with purple and yellow paint. I've been painting the bathroom, which I built more than 30 years ago.

I love my shack under the cliffs. "Hmm," I hear you murmur. "Does it love you back?"

This is my work sarong. After three decades, I figured the bathroom needed a do-over. Okay, I'm not one for rushing maintenance. I mean, entropy is the natural way, right? The universe is exploding and paint peels and my mother died. Nothing lasts.

I left that girl with whom I held hands sitting in these chairs all those years ago. A new world, far different from the one I was in, beckoned to me from a northern jungle. I chucked my shoes and broke her heart.

My mum's love created love in me. I never really understood that until I had a child. I loved him unconditionally with the love my mother gave me. I still do. And if I love him, he must love me, right?

Last year, not long after my mum died, I tracked down that first girlfriend. It had been decades. I apologised to her for being hurtful and, well, ignorant. (I thought love could die.)

The love that was dormant in me, smothered by layers of... of... stuff, awoke. Love doesn't die. I never really understood that until my mother died.

The sun, poking its fingers between the pines to stroke the old metal chairs, kisses the western range. It's day's end. I love this moment. I love this place. I love this vodka. I love my mum, my son, my first girlfriend – and my bathroom.

And it's all the same love.

The arrow of time points you and me, the planet and the universe to a natural oblivion. Nothing lasts, except love.

Love is the only thing.

How to build a carbon negative house

by Mac McGauley

For six years now, and since selling Black Sheep Farm, I dreamt of building a sustainable house and spent a lot of time researching.

I finally came to the conclusion that hemp was one of the best suitable materials, if not the best.

Its ability to absorb carbon starts at the growing stage when it can absorb 22 tonnes of CO₂ per ha, and continues to do so as a building material, absorbing CO₂ for many decades to come.

By building with hemp, the carbon footprint is negative, locking in more carbon than used in the whole construction.

The design is solar-passive, facing north towards Mount Warning.

We chose to install UPVC double-glazed windows (2x6mm glass with argon gas in-between), which now will make our house super-insulated.

A typical house can lose 30-40% of its heating energy, and up to 87% of its heat is gained through windows.

The process of packing the hemp is labour-intensive, but the results are stunning, with some of the internal walls staying un-rendered as feature walls using natural oxides to create unique art.

We are more than half-way through the process of "hemping" and offer to show anyone how it is done in exchange for a day or two of participating in our labour of love.

Let's make this a community venture and create a more sustainable future for Nimbin and Australia, with great appreciation for our environment.

Phone Mac on 0424-228-902 for more information and to become involved in the build.



NYE gig at Hanging Rock Hall



A great crowd of mostly local people celebrated into the new year at the beautiful Hanging Rock Hall in Barkers Vale. They were entertained by seasoned performers Jimmy Willing and the Real Gone Hick-Ups, with special guests Miss Jodie and Mick Daley. A big thank you to the Hall Committee who made it a free event this year. Some people were unable to get home after midnight, flooded out due to the heavy rain and run-offs – slight inconveniences that didn't spoil a great night. Photo: Chibo Mertineit

Solidarity with Palestine

by Ellen Manika

We welcome you to our fundraiser for humanitarian aid in Gaza, on Thursday 11th January, from 6pm at the Nimbin Bush Theatre.

This will be a unique evening of cross-cultural musical collaboration and spoken word to express solidarity with Palestine and the need for peace for all people in the region.

Our dear Juman is our point of connection with the current, acute genocide being inflicted on the Palestinian people. We meet the urgency to do our part to call for a permanent ceasefire and liberation of the Palestinian people from the violent occupation they've been living under for 75 years.

A highlight of the evening will be the sonic weaving of Didgeridoo, played by Murrawarri man, Eshua Bolton, with the Arabic songs of Juman's ancestors.

From the desert to the coast on the lands we stand and from Central Europe to the heart of the Middle East we

come together. With Elders and mob from five different countries present, we will demonstrate a moment in time of intertribal unification.

By harmonising our voices with Juman together we create an intimate atmosphere of raw, real, truth talking and beautiful sonic alchemy.

Funds raised by this event will be donated to Olive Kids, an Australian Foundation dedicated to support the children of Palestine.

Olive Kids was founded in 2007 by Palestinian Australians who want to make a difference to the lives of children in Palestine. Their vision is a future where Palestinian kids can live free, full, and safe childhoods.

The organisation is run solely by a passionate board of volunteers from a range of professions and backgrounds, from lawyers to public servants to campaigners.

Olive Kids provides financial aid, healthcare, education, and other support to children living in Palestine. All their work is conducted in collaboration



with partner organisations on the ground, and based on the needs that these organisations identify, and their work is planned and delivered in a way that supports building local capacity, local businesses, and enables self-determination.

Tickets are available at: www.nimbinbushtheatre.com

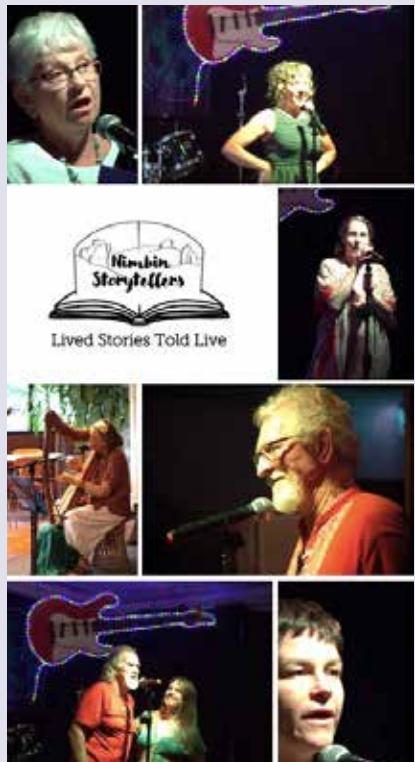
Here's to another year of stories!

by René Norwie

Nimbin Storytellers ended their first season of storytelling with a very special night chock-a-block full of remarkable stories.

We heard seven locals share their personal stories of discovering how returning can be the hardest thing you might ever have to do (Cindy Thummel); how someone can return to us in life's rare, sublime moments (René); finding how life has a way of bringing you back to where you need to be (Katinka Smit); how memories allow us to relive another time in another place (Warwick Fry); finding correlation in the meaning of their journeys back to the hills of Nimbin (Elijah and Amy Kate); and how returning to a dependable childhood friend over the years creates the kind of love that never leaves you (Emily Jett).

We also enjoyed something extra special with Raine West's beautiful, mystical harp music. Thank you to Marie Therese for capturing the night's photos. And a big thank you also to Nimbin Bowling Club and Sibley's Bistro for supporting and hosting us in 2023.



Nimbin Storytellers will kick off with a second season of storytelling on Saturday 3rd February with tales of Endurance. Do you have a story about a time you had to dig deep, persevere, and meet yourself in a challenge? We'd

love to hear you tell it.

Our events are open to everyone, and we extend an encouraging invitation to anyone who is keen on having a go.

Get in touch to participate, as we always like to have some local tellers lined up for the night. We also love spontaneous stories, so come along to listen to a few good yarns and perhaps tell one of your own if the inspiration grabs you.

2024 will also see a couple of fireside storytelling nights at Hanging Rock Hall in April and September. It will be quite an experience to sit under the stars around a fire to share our stories in this timeless way.

We're looking forward to bringing you another season of lived stories, told live by locals from your community.

Learn more about our bi-monthly storytelling nights, monthly story group, and listen back to story recordings at: www.nimbinstorytellers.com

Nimbin Storytellers is a volunteer run group. We often need help with photography and audio know-how for our storytelling nights. If you have skills that you'd like to contribute, please contact us at: nimbinstorytellers@gmail.com

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