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Santa made it into Nimbin

by Bob Dooley

Friday 22nd December was a red-letter day for Santa in Nimbin.

The Neighbourhood Centre's Christmas lunch was served at midday in the Town Hall; a delicious combination of chicken and salads followed by Christmas pudding and custard, accompanied by a refreshing punch, was served by volunteers to feed around 200 people.

The hall was a-buzz with chatter as old friends and new acquaintances ate together, sharing the spirit of a community Christmas as well as the home-made biscuits and slices.

There was an air of anticipation as the clock moved towards 1.30pm. Hordes of children appeared outside the hall, and the siren on Nimbin Brigade's fire truck started up in the distance, getting closer, and stopping at the doors.

On top of the truck were Santa and his Elf, Ellie, who threw a sack-full of wrapped lollies to the kids before dismounting and posing for photos as



they made their way inside and onto the big stage.

With Team Leader Natalie Meyer coordinating, children 12-years and under and their parents formed a line down the hall for family groups to receive presents from Santa, assisted by Heidi Glover, from the dozens of bags of presents behind him.

So many photos and videos were taken of the 70 or so kids that it was hard



not to spare a thought for those 21st birthday party slide-shows to come.

Eventually the line-up dwindled as additional presents were distributed, and Santa, still grinning broadly, and his helpers departed for some well-deserved refreshments.

And so, in glorious summer sunshine, the 15th annual Community Christmas Lunch went off without a hitch. Well done, everyone.

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Seniors knees-up

by Jenny Martin

The beautiful NACRS Seniors Christmas Lunch returned to the Nimbin Bowlo on Tuesday 19th December after an enforced break of four years, given natural disasters and Covid.

Sixty-five local seniors who regularly access our home and social support services enjoyed the cool air-con, the delicious Sibley's Bistro lunch, the gorgeous harmonies of the Vocal Minority Choir, some classic songs from Ross and a delightful 'Silent Night' from

Escher.

Our community raffle raised over \$1000 in just over a week to subsidise this lovely event, with Caroline winning the main prize, a portable pizza oven.

Local businesses supported the raffle with donations from

Nimbin Building Materials, the Apothecary, the Pharmacy, the Emporium, Nimbin Hotel, the Bush Theatre and Rainbow Power Company.

All-in-all it was a great success, and all of us at NACRS look forward to doing it all again next year.

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300 snags needed for Triple-O Community BBQ

by Eugenie Stephans

The Nimbin community gathered to thank first responders and participate in a delicious park luncheon.

On 9th December, residents came together in Allsopp Park for the Triple-O Community BBQ. The event was hosted by the Police & Community Consultation Committee.

There was a fire truck parked at the site, welcoming all to the celebration and it was a glorious day. Lots of people came by to taste the delicious salads and sample Sgt Steve's cooking (pictured).

Apart from the community, also in attendance were representatives from the



PCCC committee, the local police, fireys, hospital, Neighbourhood Centre, aged care and other locals who serve the community, respond and take action in the right

place and time.

All are working towards the same goal, and that is community peace and safety.

In addition to first responders, thank you to all

community members who ensure their communities are safe every day – public safety is a priority.

And a big thank you to popular local copper Steve who brought and manned the barbeque, cooking 300 snags perfectly, quite an effort.

The community chipped in, and a special thanks to Luke from the Hemp Embassy for his delicious salads.

Sincere thanks also to Summerland Credit Union for the generous contribution.

There were donations from the Emporium, Nimbin Bakery, Nimbin RFS, Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre, Nimbin Hospital and the volunteers who made the barbeque a success.

Mr BOBCAT

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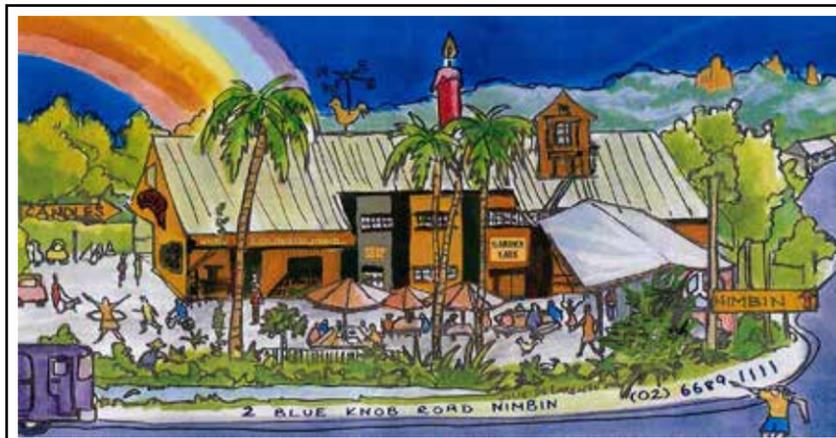
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Landslip road repairs completed

On 21st December, one of the more critical flood recovery landslip re-builds was officially opened by Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin and Mayor Steve Krieg.

The section of Nimbin Road close to Nimbin village ironically known as 'The Cutting' had half the road swept away down the side of a cliff during the February 2022 natural disaster.

Since then, a single lane has been open, with traffic control lights.

Work by Civil Mining and Construction (CMC) on the \$14.9 million project began in June last year, funded under the Australian and NSW Governments' Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA).

CMC Project Manager Adon Dinsmore told *The Lismore App*, "The first task was to get the site cleaned up, and then get in with a piling rig.

"There are 213 anchor poles in the ground here and they go up to 30 metres in depth. They're reinforced steel with grout casing.

"There was about 30,000 litres of grout flush a day to manage on site. That was probably one of the biggest challenges that we had here. Obviously, we



Mayor Steve Krieg and Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin open the repaired road, watched by CMC workers and Council staff. Inset: The cake decoration at the completion party.



don't want to be discharging dirty water or grout into the environment.

"And then on top of the piles we built an almost a half-metre thick slab that's got some pretty heavy-duty steel in it, and that gave us the foundation to build the retaining wall and the embankment and finally the road."

The 4.5-metre high retaining wall is made up of approximately 500 blocks of varying sizes from a supplier in Ballina, trucked in and placed with an excavator.

"It's like putting a big jigsaw puzzle together," Mr Dinsmore said.

The project took about

nine months to complete and was delivered on time and on budget.

Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin said, "I think there's over 130-odd landslips in the electorate of Lismore, and eight of them critical. This was one of them.

"I'm just delighted that it's open for Christmas. I mean, what a great Christmas present.

"I want to pay tribute to the residents here, for their absolute patience all the way through."

The Nimbin community hosted a completion party at Nimbin Bowlo to thank the workers, which included

a cake in the shape of the job site with roadwork figurines.

Mr Dinsmore said, "They got us up in front of everybody and made some speeches and congratulated us and gave three cheers to CMC, which was quite overwhelming at the time. It's something that I've never experienced before. It was just really good to see how much the community appreciate it."

The second single-land landslip site on Nimbin Road, four kilometres to the east, with similar work needed by CMC, is estimated to be completed in March.

Funding secured for promised toilets

Nimbin Community has been waiting for an amenities block at Peace Park for more than 15 years, that includes disabled access and services the pool, children's playground, skate park and tourist drop-off area.

Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin wants to see work get underway this year.

"It was one of my election commitments to secure the \$400,000 for Lismore City Council to construct and maintain the much-needed toilets, a project that has the overwhelming support of Nimbin residents and the peak community groups like the Nimbin Advisory Group and the Nimbin Community Centre," she said.

Government funding is now set aside and ready to go but Council needs to



Members of the Nimbin Action Group celebrating Janelle's announcement.

complete the detailed design and then apply for the funding to be released.

"People have been stopping me in the streets of Nimbin asking what's happening and if the funding is there. I

can assure residents that the funding is allocated and ready," Ms Saffin said.

"I will be closely following the progress of the Peace Park amenities block."

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We need a Nimbin Aquarius Research Collective

by Benny Zable

Before leaving Nimbin, there is one matter I wish to raise with the community again.

Since the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival, a whole lot of archives from then to now have been gathering dust in many places around the nation and overseas. Nimbin still does not have a home for display and research.

There has been a number of attempts to create such a place when Paul Joseph was alive. I also met with Johnny Allan, together with some students of deceased alternative architect Col James who suggested recycling the town of Nimbin in 1973.

We had our sights on the land next to the Rainbow Power Company. I drew up a plan based on the pyramid and the dome. Another was the site next to Nimbin Bush Theatre. Both these sites have now been made into housing estates.

Before leaving last year, I had a good look around. The site of the Catholic Church across from the Aquarius Church is an ideal spot for the Nimbin Aquarius Research Collective.

IMAGINE the Catholic Church willing to sponsor the idea of a Nimbin ARC! Only money stands in the way.

My feeling is that for the Age of Aquarius to be real, it needs some serious discussion now more than ever, for the future generations' sake.



ARCOSANTI Crafts III Cafe. This multi-function facility demonstrates one of the characteristics of Soleri's arcology concept, which integrates living, recreational and working conditions within a single structure. The Cafe is warmed in the winter through warm air collected under the skylight, blown down through a fabric tube into the atrium. Photo courtesy Arizona Memory Project

Building the ARC

I was lucky to meet, visit, play and build a section of architect Paolo Soleri's ARCOSANTI in 1979. It is going well three generations on.

Arcology is the foundation for a community in Arizona USA, see: www.arcosanti.org

"All matter is spirit," Paolo Soleri would tell us disciples, a quote from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Perhaps it should be noted that the response to Teilhard's writings by scientists and clerics has been divided. (See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Teilhard_de_Chardin).

Housing needs vital services and infrastructure

by Louise Doran

Most long-term locals have had enough of the traffic and lack of parking in their towns and little infrastructure and services to cope with the growing population and millions of tourists adding to the strain.

It's idiocy for the state government to be demanding we provide thousands of new homes, especially on flood plains, when we don't have the infrastructure to support the current population, let alone millions of tourists. Stuffing more monster gas guzzlers into our towns is also in the realms of idiocy and ruining the joint and locals' quality of life.

While we're tackling population growth and the associated traffic/parking problems in all our towns, the state government thinks it's ok to take essential infrastructure and income from us. They took over caravan parks and the income from those parks that councils (and ratepayers) relied on to fund and maintain infrastructure and services for millions of tourists.

In Byron Shire we once had three hospitals and three Community Health Centres. Now we're down to one hospital on Ewingsdale Road in Byron, and good luck getting there in an emergency when the traffic is banked up for kilometers on the highway.

We had a train service, but that was ceased in 2004 when the state government claimed it could not afford to keep it running, despite outrage in



Greens MP Tamara Smith and Abigail Boyd with a petition for train services with 10,000 names to present to NSW parliament.

the community.

While they were telling us it was too costly to maintain train services in the most visited region in NSW after Sydney, the wonderful Eddie Obeid MLC was stealing untold millions of taxpayers' money! And they wonder why people don't trust politicians.

Never mind. The state opposition jumped on the bandwagon and for many years promised a "16-trains-a-day train service" on the line, and plans to connect the line to the Queensland rail system and the airport at Coolangatta, as we would "need more trains and more tourist trains". Of course, that promise disappeared the minute they looked like being elected.

The Federal MP for Richmond, Justine Elliot promised \$150m for trains and thanked the community who "fought so hard to save the trains". Now they're ignoring the community's growing need for train services and the tens of thousands of locals who turned up to rallies and

over 30,000 who've signed petitions calling for such a train service.

Instead, state and federal governments are funding the destruction of a billion-dollar train line, built and paid for by the community, that could take millions of gas guzzlers off our roads and out of our towns, for a bike track for 'cycling tourism'.

When eight train carriages carry the same number of people as fifteen buses and produce less emissions, and trains are being developed that generate their own electricity, with no need for poles and wires, this stuff is straight out of Monty Python.

How dare they, and how dare our local MPs and councils go along with this hairbrained scheme and wicked waste of taxpayers' money? How dare they condemn us to more traffic chaos and climate disasters when there's absolutely no need for it when there's train stations in the centre, or close to the centre, of so many towns along the train line? Too many locals fought

so hard for decades to save rainforests, stop CSG mining and hideous tourist resorts, and to stop the joint from being destroyed, only to see it needlessly destroyed by traffic chaos. They deserve better than this.

People keep calling for more parking. Where are they going to put the car parks? How many millions, or billions, of taxpayers' money (a hell of a lot more than it would cost for sustainable train services) will be spent building and maintaining more roads to be filled with more gas guzzlers? Even if we're all driving electric cars, there'll still be traffic gridlock.

Trees and wildlife will have to be destroyed to accommodate new roads and carparks to put all the vehicles. When last year was the hottest on record and scientists are telling us it's one minute to midnight and we need to stop using fossil fuels now, that's something we can all look forward to!

There's not enough room, particularly in Byron Shire, for housing for all those who would choose to live here, or their gas guzzlers, especially without the necessary infrastructure, including train services, to support them.

It's time our well-paid local MPs and Councillors stood up for the community they're supposed to represent and told the state government what to do with their plan for more housing (and cycling tourism) and demand they provide the infrastructure and services needed, and promised, for those already living here, and millions of tourists.

Inaugural World Peace Festival



Festival-goers make peace



Biodanza dances for peace

by Jagad Samuel

Ten minutes from the centre of Nimbin, the first annual World Peace Festival unfolded on the 30 acres that make up Flourish Sanctuary, taking its inspiration from one of the ideals of the 1973 Aquarius festival.

Over two days, on 30th and 31st December, over 100 people were eager to embrace a spirit of tranquillity, unity, exhilaration, and a renewed sense of purpose for the year ahead.

The festival began with a sacred flute playing, calling in each of the four directions. This was followed by a warm welcome to Flourish by Jagad, a custodian of the sanctuary, setting the tone for the harmonious days that lay ahead.

Part of this was an acknowledgement to the Traditional Custodians of the land and a nod to Michael "Mac" McGauley and the many people who helped him over the 40 years he cared for the land and hand-built most of the unique and beautiful structures that reside at Flourish today. We proudly continue what Mac began.

Attendees were then gently guided into a state of serenity with a yoga class led by the warm-hearted instructor Sara Rath, allowing them to connect with their inner selves and the natural surroundings of Flourish.

The peaceful ambience deepened with a deep Peace Meditation led by Julian Robinson and Jagad, where participants collectively embraced the power of stillness. Following this, the Social Dharma workshop with Julian provided a thought-provoking exploration of the principles of social harmony through mindfulness.

The festival offered a diverse range of workshops to cater to varied interests. The Voice Workshop, joyfully conducted by Afro Moses, empowered participants to find their unique voice and express themselves authentically with a voice and drumming workshop. This workshop was inspiring, fun and enriching, both musically and for the soul.

Shivam Rath then took the reins with a Raga Workshop, introducing attendees to the enchanting world of classical Indian music with a contemporary slant.

Jazmin LJ added a touch of spontaneity and joy with a heart-filled Biodanza session, a form of expressive dance that celebrates life and human connection. Jagad calls Biodanza "a kids' party for adults."

The evening boomed with rhythmic beats by Afro Moses and his band, accompanied by Shivam Rath. Music echoed through the Flourish grounds, creating an atmosphere of unity and celebration.

The next day began with ice baths followed by yoga, meditation, and Social Dharma, ensuring everyone had the



Dancing life



Afro Moses and Shivam Rath



Macramé

opportunity to delve deeper into these transformative practices. Sarah Maree then led a Macramé workshop, offering a creative outlet for self-expression and mindful craftsmanship.

Macramé is a meditative and creative process involved in knotting the cords to create beautiful and often functional, pieces of art.

Ananda Clayton facilitated a workshop titled 'Solving Problems from the Heart', encouraging participants to plumb the depths of their hearts for compassionate solutions and fostering a sense of collective empathy. Michael Deanshaw then mesmerised the crowd with a soothing sound healing session, using vibrations to create a harmonious and healing environment.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the festival came alive as Jazmin LJ returned for a deeper second round of Biodanza, infusing the evening with boundless loving energy.

Kathryn Riding led a soulful kirtan, a devotional chanting practice, creating an atmosphere of spiritual connection. The night was elevated by Shivam Rath, offering a musical journey that resonated with the collective heartbeat of the festival. Shivam played traditional mantras in new ways as his beautiful partner Alana undulated about with mystical projections on her angel wings.

The night concluded as the clock struck midnight and Jagad led a New Year intention-setting session, allowing participants to reflect on their aspirations for the year ahead, fostering a sense of purpose and direction towards inner and outer peace.

During free time, festival-goers immersed themselves in the refreshing pool, indulged in the warmth of the



Chilling out

Finnish sauna, explored the nearby river, or wandered through the lush rainforest, connecting with nature and each other on a deeper level.

Catering to the holistic well-being of the attendees, the festival provided a nourishing environment with delicious vegetarian food, and maintained a drug and alcohol-free environment, ensuring a pure and positive atmosphere throughout.

The vision for the festival was brought to life by Jagad and co-coordinated by Jazmin and Julian. A dedicated team of volunteers, including Christiano, Kevin, Moira and Satya, worked tirelessly to ensure the delivery of the festival, contributing to the overall success and positive energy that permeated Flourish Sanctuary.

In the words of one festival-goer, "This is the best start to a new year in my life!"

The World Peace Festival at Flourish Sanctuary not only marked the beginning of a new year and a new festival for the Northern Rivers, but also served as a beacon of light, generating unity, mindfulness, and a collective commitment to peace that will resonate throughout the days and months to come.

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In your neighbourhood...

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News

Happy New Year Everyone!
A reminder that NNIC will be re-opening all services and activities as from Monday 8th January. The Centrelink Agency opened on Tuesday 2nd January.

Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan (SNCP)
Important! It is time to finally revise and update the SNCP. See the article in this edition of the NGT (p.13) for more info.

Watch this space and please get involved. The future is in our hands. Councils and Governments change all the time, but we will all still be here plugging away at our visions and goals, as we have been ever since the 1973 Aquarius Festival.

If you have any ideas about how best to get some young people (i.e. 40 years and under!) engaged in the SNCP, please let us know via: admin@nnic.org.au or let Steph know your thoughts sibley@nnic.org.au

Many thanks to the Northern Rivers Community Foundation for funding support to enable us to undertake the work, pay for venues, materials and catering etc.

Annual Community Xmas Lunch

Friday 22nd December at Nimbin Town Hall.

Thanks to everyone who made this event happen, especially Gail, Heidi, Vince, Paul, Rachel, Bev, Janene, Jane, Sue, Chris, Saskia and Darren.

Many thanks to Megan for the lovely harp music, and to the CWA for help with the cooking, to the Nimbin Bakery for the bread and to the Nimbin RFS for Santa's Sleigh. And to Santa of course, for fitting us into his very busy schedule.

Around 180 people came and enjoyed a Xmas lunch

and Santa gave out gifts to 73 kids.

Hampers galore!

This year we gave out 40 Xmas hampers to families and individuals in need of some support.

Many thanks to the CWA and Rain and our other generous donors and to our Xmas fairies who put the hampers together.

The 18th Annual Nimbin Women's Dinner

Thursday 7th March at Nimbin Town Hall.

Yes, we are finally back in 2024! We are looking for women to join the organising committee, and also for fresh and fun acts to perform on the night.

Contact: admin@nnic.org.au

Flood recovery

Need help? Still struggling? Need a bushfire plan?

NNIC's Recovery Support Service staff are here to help. Contact the service via email on: nimbinrss@nnic.org.au or call or text 0488-144-647.

Our Recovery Support Service team can also help you to prepare your Bushfire Plan if you haven't already done so.

For tips and templates on preparing a Bushfire Plan, see: www.myfireplan.com.au

Mental health support

The Nimbin Collaborative is a partnership between NNIC and a diverse range of mental health service providers who offer support Tuesdays to Thursdays, mostly based at NNIC.

For more info about what is available or to find out how to make an appointment, drop into NNIC or call us on 6689-1692 during our opening hours, or see our website: www.nnic.org.au < Our Services < Mental Health.

www.nnic.org.au
www.facebook.com/pages/Nimbin-Neighbourhood-and-Information-Centre



Everyone loves Santa
Photo: Chibo Mertineit

Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services

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



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

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

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

SENIORS SOCIAL GROUPS – booking and fees apply

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

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

Nimbin Hospital information



Child immunisation

By appointment, please phone 6630-0400.

Early childhood nurse

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

Women's health nurse services

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

Wound clinic

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

Drug and alcohol counselling services available

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

Nurse practitioner clinic

Diabetes clinics: third Thursday of the month, next is 18th January.

Community Registered Nurse

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

Nimbin NSP

Needle and syringe program open Monday to Thursday. Arrangements can be made to see a community Registered Nurse.

Health advice line

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

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

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



by Scott Sledge, president

War: what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!

Happy New Year. I believe that most humans start every year with hope for less conflict and more peace and goodwill. This year perhaps more than ever.

The world situation is edgy, so I have decided to concentrate on the big picture rather than more local environmental issues.

Getting right to it: "War: what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!" according to a late 1960s song by Edwin Starr. While I tend to agree, that's not quite accurate.

War is good for the profits of certain people, such as weapons manufacturers and related industries, and some people can't see beyond the profits they generate.

We start 2024 with genocide in the Middle East and Sudan, Ukrainian resistance to full-scale invasion by Russian forces, and many lesser conflicts. But we don't have unlimited time for that sort of selfish shit.

The planet is warming rapidly

under clouds of pollution emitted by people even during peacetime, and destruction increases dramatically during war.

There now seems at least to be a consensus that we humans are damaging the environment to the point of species extinction, which may include our own. The denials of the past just don't stand up to scrutiny. At the December 2023 global meeting on the environment, COP 28, the delegates accepted that climate change is indeed caused by human's use of fossil fuels – for the first time.

The development of the cerebral cortex in humans has made it possible for our species to go beyond the primitive fight-or-flight response to immediate threats. We can now apply reasoning, planning, and other higher functions to the problems we face, including issues of future concern.

I am sure that we could invent better systems for manufacture and distribution of goods and feed an even greater population with a suitable application of our intellect should we choose to do so.

However, I see little movement in that direction among our leaders,



whether they were elected or seized power in myriad undemocratic ways. I see instead a failure of leadership with a repetition of mistakes of the past, ineffective attention to the future, and an ongoing preoccupation with war.

The song lyrics of 1980s Nimbin singing quartet Silly Symphony are instructive: "If we want peace we have to learn to be peaceful, If we want love we have to learn to give. Be constructive, not destructive: give peace a chance to live," (*There's a War On* written by Cawongla's Liina Eve).

So, do we want peace? No doubt some people do, probably a majority worldwide, but many of those in charge don't want to stop the fighting because they will lose money and/or their power. Some people, of course, simply don't care.

If we care, then we need to propel society in general and our politics in particular into a peaceful frame

where the foremost consideration/ requirement of any issue is how will this affect our global environment/ ecology? Such a mindset would enlighten all decisions from the global to the most localised and would give us humans a chance to survive, even thrive, past this century.

I have grandchildren, so I care, and I think we need to dedicate ourselves to planetary survival. Now, not down the track. It sometimes seems as if we are inevitably doomed, but I refuse to believe it. I think we can, and will, learn to be peaceful and cooperative for the good of all.

To accomplish that goal, it's useful to focus on what we know. Few will continue to defend the destruction of our natural world when given the facts. For example I get little argument if I ask: "Is the clear-felling of native forests for woodchips worth the inevitable extinction of our natural wildlife?"

Even those who argue that we should subsidise logging native forests to get some small portion of timber will back off when I say we get most of our timber from plantations already. And no-one has an answer to a better form of carbon sequestration, apart from the ridiculous idea that we should somehow remove carbon from polluting emissions and store it 'safely' under the ground or in our

waterways.

We must continue to struggle to promote our better angels and speak out against what is damaging our environment. In 1985, British musician Sting sang, 'I Hope the Russians Love Their Children Too.'

But we can't wait for people in other parts to wake up. We need to turn away from the polluting stench of war and look to improve our systems to find ways compassion and greater intelligence can drive world politics. Then we can look forward to a happy new year.

Indeed, we could welcome a happy new era.

Local Environment News

NEC celebrated the end of 2023 with a picnic gathering at Nimbin's swimming pool. Our volunteers were thanked for their devotion to the cause and for keeping the shop open: all proceeds go to promoting environmental causes.

NEC is pleased to announce we were successful in obtaining a grant from WIRES to install nesting boxes for a range of species in the Nimbin Valley. Stand by for details about an information night to be held in February to find out when and how you can get involved.

Or please come to the next monthly NEC meeting at the Green Room in the Community Centre at 5pm on Wednesday 10th January. All welcome.

How the world's oceans are being destroyed by Chinese fishing fleets

by Mark Pestell

Chinese fishing fleets, like those of many other countries, engage in various practices to maintain their presence and continue fishing in international waters.

In short, it is over-fishing, emptying the oceans of life, illegally fishing, and environmentally unsustainable. Chinese fishing fleets are known for their long-distance operations. They can travel tens of thousands of kilometres far from their home ports to access rich fishing grounds in international waters.

These fishing vessels are decimating sea life in places as far as the Galapagos Islands, the Southern Ocean and the West African coastline. They can travel anywhere for as long as they want. These distant voyages can last for up to three years, allowing them to catch significant quantities of fish.

China is not alone but is the main culprit, and has invested heavily in building a large fleet of modern and technologically advanced fishing vessels. These vessels are equipped with advanced navigation and fish-finding technology, enabling them to locate and catch fish more efficiently.

The Chinese government provides subsidies to its fishing industry, including fuel subsidies, which reduce the operating costs of fishing vessels. This makes it more economically viable for Chinese fishing fleets to operate in distant waters.

Chinese fishing vessels often engage in transshipment, where they transfer their catch to refrigerated cargo ships (reefers) at sea. This allows them to stay at sea for longer periods without returning to port to off-load their catch. Transshipment can facilitate the continuous operation of fishing fleets. Transshipment means they



can refuel at sea and keep fishing.

Some Chinese fishing vessels may change flags and register in different countries to evade regulations and scrutiny. This practice, known as "flag hopping", can make it challenging for authorities to track the activities of these vessels.

International waters, which are beyond the jurisdiction of any single country, often lack effective enforcement of fishing regulations. This makes it easier for fishing fleets, including Chinese ones, to engage in unregulated or illegal fishing practices.

China's growing influence on the international stage can also impact its ability to maintain fishing fleets in distant waters. Bilateral agreements, diplomatic relationships, and economic partnerships can play a role in facilitating access to fishing grounds.

Pollution of the sea by these fishing vessels is commonplace. Hundreds of thousands of tons of sludge, or bilge water, a mixture of oil and other contaminants that accumulate in fishing vessels, is dumped, along with their garbage – solid waste such as foods, plastics and solid material, old fishing nets, some of which are kilometres long can drift for years, catching turtles,

dolphins, whales and seals etc; it is all dumped at sea. Accidental spills drift onto shores, creating massive pollution issues.

Exploitation of the workforce on the ships is not unknown. Both Al Jazeera and the German National News (DW) broadcasting networks have produced lengthy and accurate documentaries on this exploitation, firstly on the destruction of the natural environment and secondly on the human cost where native fishing grounds and human suffering, even starvation have resulted for those who work on board the ships.

According to these TV networks, some on board ships who complain have been thrown overboard! It is a form of slave labour.

Clearly vast areas of the world's fishing grounds are on the brink of collapse. Parts of the world's oceans are on the edge of being empty of life. Bear in mind 50% of our oxygen comes from the oceans, the majority is from oceanic plankton – drifting plants, algae, and some bacteria that can photosynthesise. Perhaps it is good to keep the seas healthy?

Over-fishing has been so hard, it is destroying the natural ability of fish to reproduce. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation



(FAO) of the United Nations, as of the last update in September 2021, approximately 34.2% of the world's fish stocks were estimated to be over-fished or depleted.

A significant portion of fish stocks (about 58.1% at the time of the data) was classified as fully exploited. This means that they were being fished at or near their maximum unsustainable yield. Fish cannot reproduce at a rate fast enough to stop extinction.

Countries which are concerned have attempted to address over-fishing include the establishment of catch limits, fishing quotas, and marine-protected areas, as well as initiatives to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing are occurring.

Conservation organisations, some governments, and international bodies are working to promote sustainable fishing practices to ensure the long-term health of marine ecosystems and the availability of fish for future generations.

However, achieving sustainability in global fisheries is all falling on deaf ears; the exploitation of the oceans does not stop. Long-distance fishing fleets ignore any such agreements or turn a blind eye.

Underwater deep sea dredging has been developed and is now mining along the ocean's bottom, creating even more disturbance to the marine balance. Giant vacuum systems suck up sand which may contain minerals, and of course any other marine life which exists within the machine's path dies.

Papua New Guinea has begun the Solwara 1 project, and Belgium, the UK, China and Japan are all engaged in deep sea mining. A substantial portion of the world's oceans fall under the category of international waters, which are beyond the jurisdiction of any single country. The absence of a single governing authority makes it impossible to regulate and enforce fishing activities.

Many countries, especially developing nations, lack the resources and capacity to effectively monitor and enforce fishing regulations in their own waters, let alone in international waters. This creates opportunities for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to flourish. Corruption is of course not unknown; bribes can flow to allow illegal fishing to occur.

Many Governments, even if honest, may prioritise short-term economic gains from fishing over long-term sustainability. This is particularly true when elections are influenced by immediate economic concerns rather than the long-term health of fish stocks.

Currently on track are an ecological imbalance, decline in biodiversity and the destruction of food security, followed by the obvious: economic disaster, mass movement of millions of people and an end to much of our oxygen supplies.

There are international efforts to address the exploitation of the oceans by fishing. Some countries are taking unilateral action to combat IUU fishing and protect their marine resources.

The trouble is who, if anybody is going to be strong enough stand up and say enough and get the fleets to stop? Even if they do, is anyone really going to listen?

Basically, it is still business as usual, the exploitation of the oceans will go on.

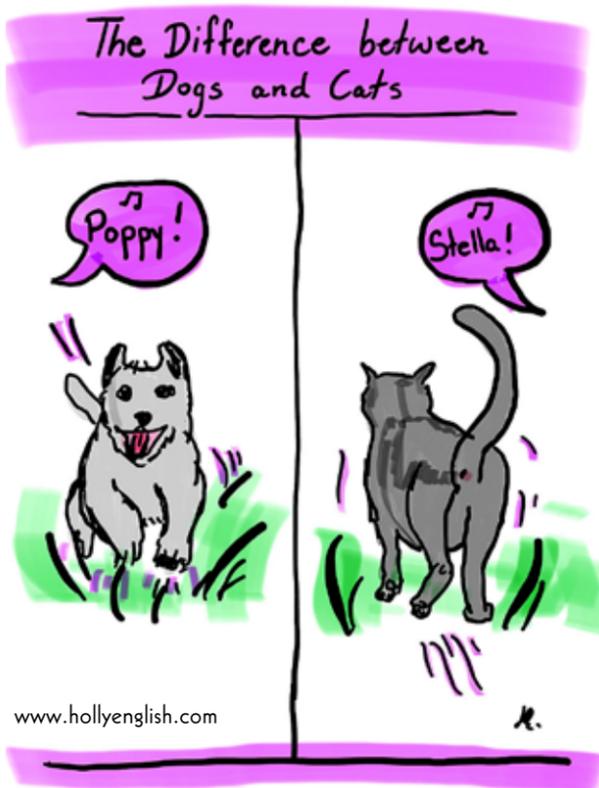
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Debunking climate disinformation

I read with interest Aidan Ricketts' article 'Navigating disinformation' (NGT November); very well written and on the money. It is unfortunate that Keith Haydock and others took offence at Aidan's perhaps less-than-diplomatic plea for people to listen to experts on life-critical subjects outside their field, such as climate science. Keith opens with declaring knowledge of the scientific method, then proceeds to decry scientific consensus as "group think", the literal opposite of science. He misrepresents ourworldindata.org in stating that "in general the severity and frequency of disasters around the globe ... was greater 50 to 150 years ago." What they actually say is: "This explorer does not provide data on the severity or frequency of disasters over time." Their data *does* show a decrease in deaths over time, but as the UN states, that has been attributed to "improved multi-hazard early warning systems" and disaster response. However, "economic losses have increased sevenfold from the 1970s to the 2010s" and in general "climate and weather-related disasters surged five-fold" over the last 50 years. On a number of Keith's other points, as I understand: NASA is *not* reporting that Antarctic sea ice is increasing, the opposite actually: "Antarctica is losing ice mass (melting) at an average rate of about 150 billion tons per year, and Greenland is losing about

270 billion tons per year, adding to sea level rise." In fact, the 2023 sea ice is at its lowest extent since satellite measurements began in the 1970s (National Snow and Ice Data Center). And no, volcanic activity does *not* account for the rate of polar ice melt (NASA 'Fire and Ice: Why Volcanic Activity Is Not Melting the Polar Ice Sheets'). Temperature measurements are more complicated than in the Arctic, but ice cores provide accurate proxy data. Law Dome in East Antarctica is "uniquely positioned to provide exceptionally high temporal resolution ice core records." I've personally spoken to an Antarctic researcher in Hobart who worked at Law Dome, about the high resolution nature of that ice core data – I encourage all to explore that.

I don't know of any scientist that has stated Arctic sea ice melting causes sea level rise – an obvious furphy to discredit scientists. Though Keith is correct in that you don't need a law degree, a science degree would be rather helpful, preferably a PhD with research experience related to climate. According to the WWF, polar bear populations have on average stabilised from previous declines, but contrary to Keith's assertion they are "exploding", polar bear numbers are projected to decline by 30% by 2050. Interesting that climate change sceptics celebrate CO₂ fertilisation effects on vegetation when this is further proof of AGW, but also likely has limits including as a Science paper which states: "declining trend in the forcing of terrestrial carbon sinks by increasing amounts of atmospheric CO₂ implies a weakening negative feedback on the climatic system" (Wang et al. 2020 'Recent global decline of CO₂ fertilisation effects on vegetation photosynthesis'). This is part of the shift of outright science denial to attacking policies and solutions, as shown in



analysis of conservative think tanks e.g. Coan et al. (2021) 'Computer assisted classification of contrarian claims about climate change', Nature Scientific Reports. Again, contrary to Keith's "dangerously close" to 150ppm CO₂ "a hundred years ago", the CSIRO data from Antarctic ice cores of the last 2,000 years show CO₂ not below ~ 270ppm, with his 2,000ppm proposal being seriously catastrophic. The Great Barrier Reef is *not* "in the best health on record", with the latest of a number of coral bleaching events occurring in 2022, according to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. Keith has a somewhat bizarre statement about Jupiter "opposite the Sun" causing up to 2 degrees temperature increase. With ~ 12:1 ratio to Earth of orbital periods, Jupiter would be "opposite the Sun" every 13 months as we orbit, wouldn't it? Keith may be referring to the astronomical term 'opposition', where Jupiter is closest to Earth. Either way, according to the Milankovitch cycles, orbital eccentricity is forced the most in 100,000-year cycles (the other factors being axial obliquity and precession). As NASA states, "The total change in global annual insolation due to the eccentricity cycle is very small. Because variations in Earth's eccentricity are fairly small, they are a relatively minor factor in annual seasonal climate variations." Multiple studies and reports have thoroughly debunked the Medieval and other warming periods as proof against AGW, such as in Nature: "...no evidence for pre-industrial globally coherent cold and warm epochs" (Neukom et al 2019). Please folks, by all means

get a second opinion, but at the end of the day we need to collectively make irreversible life-changing decisions for Earth based on optimal research meta-analysis. Even if you don't accept climate science, consider that we need to take all the same action asap, as we are using two or three planets worth of resources which is clearly not sustainable for future generations. Lenny Aronsten Safety Beach

Railway studies
It's always interesting to hear from Lydia and the two community-based railway companies, Northern Regional Railway Company and Northern Rivers Railway Ltd. Everyone is waiting for the outcome of the railway studies looking into the current condition of the tracks and associated infrastructure. However it is not the first such study in 20 years! In fact there have been quite a few, some conducted by two civil engineers, one employed and one retired. These have assisted the four local councils with their government submissions, and the latest (\$480K) funded by the government to look at the section from Lismore to Crabbes Creek which will link the currently constructed or under construction rail trail at Murwillumbah and at Casino. Obviously, previous studies had to occur to obtain the more than \$20 million that the Federal and State governments have already spent to cover feasibility and cost analysis and construction costs by construction companies who tendered for and then built the existing rail trails. The Casino section of the rail trail is due to open this

March. See you all there! There will be some more great photos for the NGT to use. Richard White East Ballina

Armaments

As a member of a peace group and also a member of various environmental groups, I wish to say how appalled I am that our Governments at all levels support the continuation of supplying armaments to various cold wars and those who bear arms against other countries who have never attacked our country. The military establishment insist on giving weapons of mass destruction and supplying soldiers and personnel who operate the launchers, aircraft carriers, planes, rockets, grenades and gas attacks, despite those countries not even asking for their help.

All these many explosions heat the atmosphere and the ocean massively and they seem to care little for Australians who are currently suffering flooding, homelessness, destruction of their businesses and massive destructiveness of infrastructure. They also drown millions of Australian native animals, birds and insects in the web of life. The cyclonic weather uproots trees and other vegetation and the oxygen they give us, but our leaders do not care about the misery they have caused, or their lack of action to mitigate climate change when solutions have been available for the last 50 years. Thousands of submissions made by our ratepayers and citizens have been ignored by those in power to their shame. Surely, we must change this before most of us drown. Anne Sutherland Robina

Satanist scientists?

Is everybody quite finished freaking out about everything? In John 12:31, Jesus said: "Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." However, 2000 years later we remain burdened with an almost global industry of Satan-mania. Pity poor William Tyndale who was burned alive for translating the scriptures to English. Obviously people don't read them. Satan-mania is testimony to the penchant of individuals and organisations to promote home-spun delusions and launch personal and profitable agendas based on piecemeal information and lack of facts to an ignorant and gullible public. The blind will lead the blind straight into the ditch!

There has been no Satan since the great judgement of the world at the time of Christ. Neither was there any lethal virus, nor is there any climate crisis, but we are surrounded by global industries of such mania. This Christmas-time, let us celebrate the birth of hope and cast out the merchants of mania. As a rather well-known minstrel once sang: "Let's hope it's a good one without any fear." As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Edward Kent Suffolk Park

Palestine genocide

There is a repeating pattern in history: a colonised and occupied Indigenous nation commits desperate acts of retaliation in defence of their sovereignty against the settlers who violently colonise their land. These terrible acts of Indigenous resistance are then used to justify and carry out horrific mass slaughter and ethnic cleansing. We have seen this pattern in the colonisation of the Americas, Africa, and here on this land, and we are now seeing it being executed in the tiny, besieged native reservation of Gaza with modern firepower, broadcast live for all to see. The rate at which children, journalists, and medical staff are being shot, blown up, or buried under rubble and killed is unprecedented in modern history. Even worse, deliberate mass starvation is being used. Reportedly, UN experts have said that 80% of world famine right now is in Gaza, "In my life, I've never seen anything like this in terms of severity, in terms of scale, and then in terms of speed." 1.8 million terrorised and starving civilians have been ethnically cleansed into tiny areas with the combined size of a large airport, with almost no infrastructure, food, or medical support. Amputations, caesareans, and the wounds of 80,000 badly injured are being treated with no anaesthetic or medicine often just on dirty floors. There is almost no access to clean water or sanitation and disease is running wild. We bear witness to modern-day unrelenting massacres and deliberate mass starvation of a trapped Indigenous people that can only be described as a genocidal war crime. This must stop. It is time to take act. Please join our community through Facebook: Northern Rivers Friends of Palestine and watch out for our events and fundraisers. Subhi Awad Mullumbimby

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The Nimbin GoodTimes acknowledges the Bundjalung people, the traditional owners of the land and waters on which we work and live, and pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Bookkeeper Martha Paitson
Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com
And find us on Facebook
NGT is published by the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin.
NEXT DEADLINE:
Friday 26th January
Email nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

In Memoriam

In memory of Damian Bozanic

24/6/1968 – 18/11/2023

Damian was truly a beautiful gentle soul on this earth. He cared for all people and walked with others in times of hardship helping them to find a path back, especially during the recent flood events in Nimbin where he helped to co-ordinate efforts in town and surrounds.



Like most locals, he struggled with superfluous 'rules' and advocated for change, especially in helping people who did not have a place to live, working in social welfare for over 30 years.

His motto of "It's just guideline" influenced how he approached many things and was summed up in a reading at his service written by Jim Morrison which ends with "There are no laws, there are no rules. Just grab your friend and love him!"

Sadly, Damian left this earth without warning when he couldn't find his path back. He will be remembered for his great story-telling, incredible energy and open, honest and loving ability to connect with others.

He will be missed mostly by his five children Bronyhr, Griffin, Eryiel, Oisin and Ameliana, and partner Marishia.

A service was held for him on 8/12/23 at the Church of Aquarius and the Nimbin Bush Theatre. Thanks to both of these places for providing such a beautiful farewell with a loving heart.

Farewell for now – see you when I get there.

– Marishia Crooks

A Tribute to Mazz Webb



Gwynneth Marian (Mazz) Webb left this world on Friday, 13th October 2023 and the Northern Rivers lost one of life's great enthusiasts.

Mazz was many things: musician, teacher, horsewoman, feminist, social justice and environmental activist, a loving partner, daughter, sister, aunt, Granny Mazzy, a wonderful friend and all-round creative, funny, generous force of nature.

Mazz was born on 5th August 1958 in Sale, Victoria and grew up on a dairy farm – a childhood of wild and free adventures where her lifelong love of horses started.

After high school Mazz studied journalism before ditching that idea and heading to Hobart where she joined the feminist music scene, forming her first band 'Gwynneth Junior and the Budgies.'

In Hobart she also started a Reverse Garbage initiative, recycling industrial waste into art and craft materials for schools and community groups.

In the mid 80s Mazz moved to Lismore to study music at a time when the women's music scene was thriving. She played sax and guitar in the 'Shrieking Violets', a popular all-female swing band, and together with Marie Makinson co-wrote a funny feminist musical called SOUP, parodying life in the Northern Rivers, which played to appreciative audiences in Lismore.

Mazz joined Sue Edmond's 'Hubaphonia Philharmonia', featuring steel-drum style instruments made from hubcaps, and arranged the music for their performances, which included the Blue Moon Cabaret, Maleny and playing at Circular Quay during the 2000 Olympics. Mazz played in other bands over the years including 'Just Throw Money', 'The Closet Cowgirls' and 'Orkeztar'.

Mazz studied to become an English/music teacher and school librarian and taught at Casino High before moving to Nimbin Central in 2011 and becoming a part of that unique school community. As a librarian she knew every student, and her Book Week decorations and dress-ups were a riot. As music teacher she was the driving force behind Nimbin's Café Central and other musical productions, helping students find the confidence to step up and shine.

It was at Nimbin Central that Mazz met the love of her life Mary Jane, and soon became part of MJ's family and a much-loved Granny Mazzy to the grandkids. Mazz and MJ shared a love of horses, their dogs, their home, travel adventures, and being outrageously silly and their years together were jammed full of these.

Mazz was known for her generosity of spirit. If there was a fundraiser, a working bee, a friend's building project, a musical collaboration, she would be there and find a way to make it fun.

During the last two years of her life, Mazz lived with Motor Neurone Disease, which she faced with her usual positive attitude and gutsiness, and with MJ's love and support. During this time, they travelled to Australia's Top End and New Zealand (where she swapped her motorised scooter for the back of a Harley). Mazz squeezed every last drop of joy out of life, her sense of humour ever-present to the end. She departed this world with grace in the arms of her beloved MJ.

We were so lucky to have known her.

– Lee Duncan

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Rohan John Petherbridge

21/7/1993 –
21/12/2023

Rohan was the deeply-loved son of Miriam and Gordon, younger brother to Francesca, brother-in-law to Steven and adoring uncle to Jasper and Arabella.



Rohan arrived in the Nimbin valley when he was eleven and first attended the Aeotoma school starting in 2005. Rohan later attended Nimbin Central School starting in 2008.

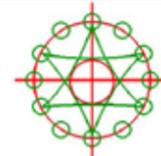
Notable achievements this year were his completion of his Diploma in Graphic Design at SAE Byron and his Village Firefighter with Nimbin RFS.

Rohan had recently returned to making stencil art. He loved being part of village life and tried to be kind to everyone he met.

Although his passing was peaceful, the suddenness leaves us all in shock. The family will post funeral/memorial arrangements in Hookups when available.

– Miriam Petherbridge

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