



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

I am filled with a growing sense of optimism about our community and our local government area.

Last week marked two years since the natural disaster, and while everyone is not back to where they want to be, as a community we have come a very long

Recovery milestones

way on our journey of recovery.

One of the biggest highlights for me was the re-opening of the much-missed Lismore Memorial Baths. Council fast-tracked its repair as we know how important the Baths are for our community.

For me, another milestone was the reopening of Nimbin Road to two-way traffic after the village was cut off due to a landslide.

And of course, there are the smaller successful repair projects, such as Lismore's croquet and tennis clubs.

So far \$17 million of restoration work and \$13 million of emergency works have been completed, and 310 new businesses have been registered across our

Local Government Area as Lismore's CBD nears its pre-disaster occupancy rate.

Work has also just started to repair the Lismore Library and Regional Art Gallery, with an expected completion date of June 2024, subject to weather.

There is a lot that still needs to be done, but I have great confidence that by working together we can make our Local Government Area an even better place to work, live and raise a family.

Nimbin Place Plan

One project that I am excited about is the development of the Nimbin Place Plan.

The aim of this project is to collaborate with

residents, businesses and community organisations to develop a collective vision for the future of Nimbin, building on existing strengths, whilst addressing potential opportunities.

The future success of Nimbin will require action at all levels from Council, our local businesses, community organisations and residents.

The final output for this project will be a plan that authentically captures the identity of Nimbin and the community's future vision that can be used by everyone. It will also include a series of actions that will require a high degree of collaboration between Council and community partners.



Re-opening of 'The Cutting' section of Nimbin Road before Christmas.

Together we can ensure what is loved about Nimbin is retained and enhanced now and into the future.

The first workshop will be held on Monday, 4th March with a second one on Wednesday, 6th March, both at the Nimbin School of Arts from 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

Update on Nimbin Road
Works are continuing at

the site four km out of the village, after the successful completion and opening of the site closer to Nimbin.

Recently work crews completed implementation and maintenance of the erosion control following the heavy rainfall.

About 70% of the concrete blocks have now been placed on top of the pile cap and approximately 60m of drainage laid.

Heart, Hope and Homes

by Janelle Saffin MP
State Member for Lismore

It is wonderful to have a good news announcement about our rebuild and recovery as we mark the second anniversary of the 2022 national disaster that hit our region.

In February, I joined Premier Chris Minns, Planning Minister Paul Scully and Housing Minister Rose Jackson at Southern Cross University in Lismore to announce a landmark housing agreement that will deliver more than 400 homes in East Lismore.

The agreement, between Southern Cross University, Landcom and the NSW Reconstruction Authority, unlocks a parcel of 72 hectares of university land for housing development.

Southern Cross University has played a vital role in our community's recovery, housing emergency evacuation centres and recovery centres, schools, TAFE, banks, government offices and more, and this is yet another initiative to support a revitalised Lismore.

This announcement gives heart, hope and homes to our communities. It makes our rebuild and recovery real and gives a great lift to our economic and social recovery.

Importantly, at least 20% of the development will be set aside for affordable housing, and those in the Resilient Homes Project will be given priority access to purchase the land and housing.

This means people can move away from the floodplain and stay in their community. This is the first housing

announcement, with more to come across the Northern Rivers.

I encourage you to read more on the website where you can also lodge an expression of interest: www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-reconstruction-authority/our-work/northern-rivers/resilient-lands-program

It was also timely to see the NSW Auditor General's report on the 2022 disaster, which had the recurring message that there was no plan in place to respond to the temporary housing, and as we know, no plan for such a disaster. I have said that there was no public policy framework and hence no plan and no actions. Hence the demise of the Resilience NSW, which was charged with being prepared for such disasters.

The Auditor General's report showed clearly that there was a lack of coordination and no plan for providing temporary housing in the face of a massive natural disaster. The key thing was that NSW had already faced a massive disaster with the 2019-20 bushfires and at the time set up temporary pod accommodation. But the report found that despite that, there were no lessons learned from that disaster so there was no plan when the 2022 floods hit.

So the then NSW Government had to work out how to meet the demand for temporary housing as it was responding to the flood emergency.

Without a plan for how to manage temporary accommodation, there was no clarity about which agencies should be doing what, no land identified in advance for temporary



Premier Chris Minns, Janelle Saffin and Planning Minister Paul Scully inspecting the first Resilient Lands development site at East Lismore.

housing sites. It was policy on the run and led to a situation where there were more pods available than land, and lots of unmet housing demand.

I want to make it clear that it was the then NSW Coalition Government that had the duty to ensure that the public policy framework is in place for such disasters, and it was not in place, and of course in 2024 that duty is with the NSW Labor Government and I can report action is underway.

The Auditor General makes recommendations for the NSW Reconstruction Authority to develop an all-of-government approach to temporary housing.

This is just one example of where there needs to be lessons learned. And that is happening. The NSW Labor Government has just released the nation's first State Disaster Mitigation Plan, to prepare for the threat of extreme weather before disaster strikes.

So on this anniversary it's hard to

find words to describe the journey we've been on. The challenges are many and one I face daily is working with bureaucracies that do what I call BAU, Business As Usual, when we are in a situation that is anything but business as usual.

Red Cross Australia, here locally but also a national institution, and Social Futures show that recovery is anywhere between three to five years, and beyond that in some areas.

We were not told this at the outset and whilst our needs have been made clear, we were not informed what to expect in recovery.

However, the most powerful part has been working at such an intimate, interconnected level with community. There's been a coming together that happened right across our community and that's what is making us go forward together.

We are recovering, we are rebuilding, and we're about to reimagine our whole community and that's a lovely thing to be part of.

Flood mitigation

Federal Member for Page, Kevin Hogan has sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Premier, Ministers, Local MPs, Mayors and other organisational heads, pointing out that the flood recovery is too slow.

It read in part: "Currently, our region does not have a clear future and the recovery is not going well."

"Over 2,000 homes were identified to be unsafe by the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation, but less than half of the homes identified will be bought back. This means over 1000 homes will remain on the floodplain."

"Also, some families who accepted a buyback, bought back on the floodplain."

"Those individuals and families will be no safer and are still at risk. The CBD, industrial estates, businesses, villages, farmers and the road network are no safer."

"The strategy of withdrawing from the floodplain has failed. Flood mitigation is the only strategy that will give the region a sustainable future and safety."

"The Government on all levels must act. Mistakes have been made and significant amounts of public funds have been spent with marginal return."

"A vision document focussing on economic recovery, economic development, regional workforce, housing, water security, residential and industrial land development is also needed."

"You as decision-makers will determine whether the next major flooding event in this region kills people, destroys people's lives financially, or the region has been made safer."

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GETTING THINGS DONE

Janelle Saffin MP
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It's time to limit police access to firearms



by Sue Higginson,
NSW Greens MLC

Aserving NSW Police officer has been charged with a double murder in Sydney, a crime committed with a police issued handgun. These unnecessary and wrongful deaths are just the latest in a long list of tragic deaths at the hands of police officers – police who have discharged deadly weapons against people who were offering no direct threat of harm to themselves or others. This most recent case shows

that police who are not attached to particular police commands are able to book out firearms and take them home and then return the weapons to a different weapons depot. Those weapon stocks are only checked once a week and seem to provide for weapons to simply go missing for periods of time – what a terrifying circumstance this truly is. Peaceful protests, people experiencing domestic and family violence and the general public are being exposed to an unknown number of firearms where the only evidence of wrongdoing is discovered after a crime is reported. What role do police firearms have in intimidating the public? How many domestic partners of police officers are living in terror with the knowledge that their abuser can drop down to the local police station and grab a weapon under a system with



clear failures? The police officer accused of the double murder of the two much-loved gay men in Sydney last week becomes more distressing when the history of the officer is considered. This is a police officer who had previously been investigated for assault after he fired a taser into the face of a First Nations man in the inner city – a highly visible area. Why are we allowing police with previous investigations against them for violence to still access deadly weapons? The crisis demands a response, and the response is very straightforward. General duty police officers should not carry firearms by default.

Police firearms should not be distributed to officers to take home on weekends. Firearms in Australia and NSW are well controlled in every regard, except when we look at paramilitary police forces. Other jurisdictions around the world have taken firearms away from beat cops and the results have been good for police and good for the community. NSW must take the lead in Australia and get to work on community based policing and policing by consent. These models can and will work wonders for public confidence and safety. They will also mean police are not terrified of the weapons that they carry and the deadly outcomes that can result from a single mistake. The Greens are chasing an inquiry to achieve this exact outcome. We just need the NSW Labor Government to see the opportunity and grab it with both hands.

Disaster Ready Together

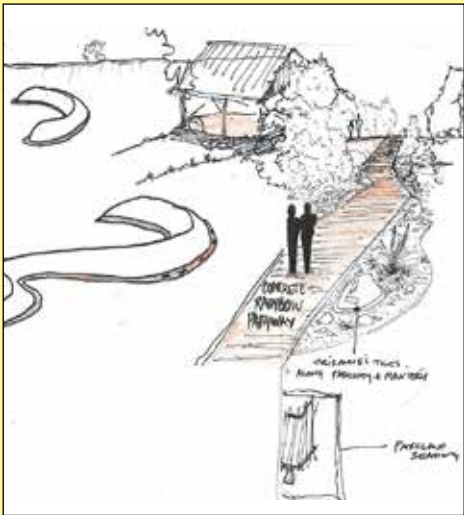
Resilient Lismore will host a 'Disaster Ready Together' Summit on Thursday 7th and Friday 8th March at Southern Cross University, Lismore in the Whitebrook Theatre. This event will bring together Northern Rivers-based community sector organisations, disaster recovery practitioners, community organisers and government agencies. "This is a quality, practice-focused event that will give people working in community services a critical and timely opportunity to learn from leading experts in the disaster recovery and resilience sector," DRT Project Co-ordinator Jenny Bird said. "Participants will share regional, national and international knowledge to help reduce risks to the sector when disasters strike in the future. We know they are going to happen so we want to ensure we prepare ourselves as best we can. This Summit will equip participants with the knowledge to do so." A programme of concurrent sessions will run across the two days, with three keynote addresses and a final panel titled 'Working Together'. Topics include building community resilience, emergency management, building organisational and staff resilience, P-CEP (building preparedness with clients) and strengths-based approaches to populations most vulnerable to disasters. There will also be a day of dedicated workshops on Wednesday 6th March. "This Summit is an opportunity to bring national and international perspectives on disaster preparedness to a regional centre and is able to take place due to the generosity of our partners, the Reconstruction Authority, NCOSS, Southern Cross University and Invercauld House," said Resilient Lismore's Executive Director, Elly Bird. For more information, please visit the website or contact Alison Kelly (Summit Organiser) on 0428-216-079.

On the same Page

by Kevin Hogan
Federal Member for Page

Nimbin Walking Trail

The walking track is coming along. It will link to Nimbin's iconic Cullen Street. The project includes concrete pathways, lighting, interpretive signage, way-finding signage, artwork, small bridges erected over the nearby creek system, park furniture and native plantings. I was excited that six local artists were selected for collaboration on the artwork project. These artists have shown exceptional artwork concepts towards this project: Donato Rosella – Stone Monolith Sculpture Rebekah Seriah Webster – Rock/Stone Seating Jesse Dodd – Ground Concrete Snake



Holly Ahern and Eden Crawford-Harriman – Kombi Convoy ABS Seating Greg Bowering – Wooden Totems Crisanne Fox – Clay Tiles with local native animals and plant drawings. It was great to obtain federal funding for this project. The track will be over one km long and fun for locals and tourists.

Northern Rivers young sporting champs

I held an event to celebrate our young sporting champions, presenting them with a certificate and \$550. They have all excelled at their sport and represented us at a State, National or International level. Congratulations to Daniel Frey and Mikayla Frey from Nimbin representing us in Athletics. The Local Sporting Champions Program provides financial assistance for competitors aged 12-18 participating in state, national or international championships. If you visit: www.sportaus.gov.au and go to Grants and Funding you can apply there.



St Vincent De Paul re-opens Lismore Office

It was great to attend the re-opening and the launch of the new Lismore Vinnies Van service. The Regional Office will help meet the demands of the community and the welcoming space will support people experiencing hardship.

The launch of the new Vinnies Van will deliver meals and support to vulnerable people in our area. St Vincent De Paul provided just under \$5 million of direct assistance to the Northern Rivers Region after the devastating floods. The local members in the area have given \$1.2 million in financial and material assistance over the past six months. This organisation plays a special and important role in our local community.

HOW OUR GOVERNMENTS SPEND YOUR MONEY:

State and federal Labor governments haven't delivered enough funding for three quarters of flood survivors to access the buybacks, retrofits and raises their homes need - even though it's been two years since the floods.

Scan here to sign the petition calling for a fully funded flood recovery or visit tamarasmith.org.au/FloodPetition

THE GREENS

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

\$1.5B

promised Resilient Homes Program spend

\$11.1B

state and federal fossil fuel spending

\$0.8B

actual Resilient Homes Program spend (not enough for 3/4 homes)

TAMARA SMITH MP

MEMBER FOR BALLINA

www.nimbingoodtimes.com

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Moving forward together

by Cr Elly Bird

As we get into 2024, one of my New Year's resolutions is to come back to the *Nimbin GoodTimes*. I used to write regularly for the *GoodTimes* before we were impacted by the disaster in 2022, and then I simply got far too busy and it was one of the things that slipped.

I've missed it over the last two years and I am pleased to be back writing again and talking to you and to our community about things that matter for us here in this fantastic place we call home.

It's almost impossible to talk properly about everything been going on over the last two years. We all live here. We know the complexities and the challenges that we've been navigating together. But we've also come a very long way.

An anniversary – which is upon us at the time of writing – is a moment for reflection. A moment to look back and see what's happened, where we've come from and also to look at where we're going.

It's been a tumultuous couple of years and so many people in our region have been affected in very

profound ways, but we have also seen the very best of community along the way and the power that we can have when we come together to respond to disasters particularly in the early response.

The reason I haven't been writing for this paper is because I've been consumed by starting up and building Resilient Lismore which is a local, place-based, charitable not-for-profit that is working as hard as we possibly can in the recovery to assist with restoring people's lives. Our organisation has co-ordinated volunteers, co-ordinated trades people, put on events, and participated in all sorts of conversations and meetings to help inform the recovery and to try to bring the community voice to government. And we are still doing all of this as we move into 2024.

I've also been occupied with Council. Council has of course been considering and managing a huge body of work as a result of the disaster, and it's no secret to anyone in our community that it's been a very challenging and contested space with a lot of disagreement in the elected body, and from where I sit a lot of missed opportunities

to properly engage with the community about the wicked challenges that we face moving forward.

There have been moves to unwind and undo long-standing initiatives such as the 7 Sibley Street development; and in our last meeting the majority of councillors voted against adopting any new flood-prone land development control plan in response to the 2022 flood.

I really can't understand that decision because it's been clearly shown that the flood risk in Lismore is such that it creates significant risk to life, and in spite of this, the current council have not taken any action in response to that risk, which has been clearly highlighted in flood modelling.

Their argument appears to be that adopting a new DCP would inhibit any development in the floodplain. That's not accurate, because the DCP that was developed by staff clearly had options for existing development, and any new development would be able to be considered as long as it addressed flood risk appropriately.

So what we are left with is the old DCP that doesn't reference the 2022 floods or



draw on any of the modelling that we have worked so hard to acquire and then respond to. It's been a really difficult and challenging thing to bear witness to, and to be in the chamber while it is all going on.

Particularly frustrating for me is that a majority of Councillors don't explain their position to the community and don't engage in the debate. They make up their mind beforehand, they don't take on anything community members present on matters, and to me that is complete disregard for the role of an elected representative.

It is an election year with Council elections happening on 14th September, so it's time to start paying more attention, if you don't already, to the decisions that are being made by the elected body of Lismore City Council.

Conciliation hearing for North Lismore Plateau

by Dot Moller

On 13th February, two former Lismore Mayors, a Widjabul Wyabul Elder, and three Speakers for Community stood with the crowd on a sloping roadway at the bottom of the North Lismore Plateau.

The occasion was a Conciliation Hearing by the Land and Environment Court regarding the Development Application by Mackycorp for the Northern section of the North Lismore Plateau (Allura Parklands).

The Hearing was held at the end of a private driveway with most participants standing on the road adjacent. Mackycorp employees, a couple of lawyers and several Council staff were also present.

The owner of the private driveway, an impacted near-neighbour to the proposed development, had not been consulted. She said she had been trying to contact Lismore Council for some time about the Mackycorp development proposal.

She hadn't been asked to speak, even though her five acres were about to be impacted by a proposed Colourbond fence shielding her eyes from the wastewater works needed for the massive development above her property. She stood close by, listening to the proceedings.

The Commissioner said she couldn't hear the first speaker. There was no microphone provided, no seating, and no protection on a hot morning.

After Auntie Marie's Acknowledgement of Country, speaking on the significance of the Plateau to First Nations, and the three speakers had finished, the Commissioner asked the speakers to leave so she could consult with the other parties – Mackycorp, lawyers and Council staff.

The Commissioner headed up the hill



Above: The development on Sexton Road in 2020. Below: Protest at pit site in 2019.

into another shady access point and left the Community representatives a little puzzled by it all.

Is this what Justice looks like? So careless of the physicality of participants? So thoughtless of property privacy and access? Where was the opportunity to question and discuss the issues with Mackycorp representatives and attending Council staff? Surely the Conciliation process should include and indeed encourage some discussions between participants.

The definition of Conciliation in Law, provided by Legal Aid Victoria is: "A process where the people in dispute try to reach an agreement with the assistance and advice of an impartial person (a Conciliator). The Conciliator usually has some experience of the matter in dispute and can advise the parties of their rights and obligation."



In 2022, Lismore City Council refused this Development Application 5.2021.221.1 for Allura Parklands. The Northern Regional Panel consequently refused the same DA ("Not in the Public Interest").

Now we await the decision of the Land and Environment Court. If the Conciliation fails, the matter will go to Court.

Maybe it can be resolved. The community will be the last to know.

Kyogle Council – a ripe old mess

by Graeme Gibson

Local government, we often hear, is the level closest to the people.

Roads, rates and rubbish for sure, but these days Councils have a far greater role. Along with environmental protection and supporting local economic development among other functions, the local level is far more complex than most people recognise.

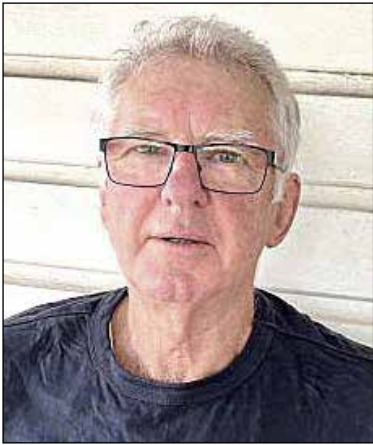
Even fewer people understand the often arcane processes and procedures that accompany this complexity. Local government is easily ignored and readily pilloried, yet widely defended when amalgamations are mooted. They might be bastards, but at least they are our bastards.

This is also the tier of government that nurtures wider political ambitions and local fiefdoms. Big frogs in small ponds. Here's what happened in one local small pond over the last couple of years.

The sudden sacking of the Kyogle Council General Manager in December 2023 led to a community petition to the Minister for Local Government seeking his intervention to sack the council, appoint an administrator and conduct an enquiry into the GM's sacking.

Staff have unanimously moved a motion of no-confidence in the Councillors behind the sacking and there is talk of a community class action lawsuit to have those Councillors made responsible for the \$330,000 payout to the GM.

A ripe old mess, but it's worth back-tracking a little to get a clearer picture.



Due process

Kyogle Council is divided into three wards of three Councillors each. At the December 2021 elections there were a total of just 12 nominations for the nine Councillor positions. In one ward, the three nominations were all sitting councillors, returned without the bother of an election.

At the first Council meeting after the election, a majority of Councillors elected Councillor Kylie Thomas as Mayor. This surprised many people with disappointment and public protest at the replacement of Councillor Danielle Mulholland, who had held the position for the previous six years.

The election of Thomas was, however, a proper process and properly followed, though deviation from proper process was soon to set in.

In April 2022, just a few months into the new term of Council, an Extraordinary Meeting was called with just one agenda item. As this was personnel matter, it had to be dealt with in Closed Session.

Under the *Local Government Act* the only staff the Mayor has any control over is the General Manager. This was widely interpreted as an attempt to sack Graham Kennett, who had worked for Kyogle Council for 24 years, the last seven as GM.

Something of a staff and public revolt took place. Mayor Thomas, along with her four supporting Councillors, backed down.

At this meeting Council resolved that any concerns raised by Councillors about the General Manager's performance be raised through the General Manager's existing Performance Review Committee "...as required under the General Manager's contract."

Note this was an existing committee, and note also the words I have italicised. Clearly, following proper process was seen to be optional.

This skirmish took some political skin, with Mayor Thomas apologising for the distress caused and blaming Facebook for the drama and mayhem. Later on she said there had been a request for a frank discussion around the GM's contract but it was leaked to the community and took on a life of its own.

This is disingenuous; a mushroom farming approach to communicating with the public. Feed them bullshit and keep them in the dark. A publicly-available meeting agenda cannot be said to have been leaked.

Fast forward to December 2023 and the last Council meeting until February 2024. As the end of the meeting drew close, Mayor Webster (having changed her name from

Thomas) introduced an agenda item of Urgent Business Without Notice. This was to consider the employment contract of the GM.

Being a personnel matter, it was required to be dealt with in Closed Session. After ten minutes of closed session the Mayor read out resolutions. Firstly, that GM Graham Kennett was to be dismissed, effective immediately, with a 38-week payout. Secondly, an interim GM be appointed for a period up to 18 months, effective from the next day.

The new General Manager, Brett Kelly, was at the time, CEO of the Australian Mango Industry Association (AMIA). Based in Brisbane, he would continue to hold that position for an unspecified period. Two jobs, essentially.

It seems Mayor Webster and her supporting Councillors had learnt the lessons from their previous failure, with neither the remaining four Councillors, or any staff or members of the public having any forewarning. This action was pre-planned, executed with precision, and despite howls of protest from other Councillors and a couple in the public gallery, little trouble.

In providing no explanation, Mayor Webster has drawn heavily on confidentiality provisions of the *Local Government Act* and clauses from *Council's Code of Meeting Practice*.

A week later, Mayor Webster addressed a crowd gathered outside council offices for a couple of minutes, showing grit and determination to withstand the jeering and heckling she received throughout.

Mayor Webster did herself no favours in providing no extra information and telling people they didn't understand how local government works. She did herself

an active disservice, when on returning to the Council building for the meeting, she stood at the door and bowed.

Since then, the level of community angst would appear to be waning, as is the norm in matters of upheaval. Mayor Webster and supporting Councillors have disarmed any community demands for answers or explanations, making good use of closed sessions where the public gallery is cleared.

To make matters more interesting, interim GM Brett Kelly has resigned. A senior staff member has been appointed the new interim GM. The Minister has received the petition but with Council elections due in September this year he is likely to leave it for the community to pass judgement at that time.

Election looms

The small number of candidates for the 2021 elections in Kyogle Council should have been seen as a warning sign by Council and the community. Local democracy needs a representative range of candidates for a contest of ideas and less of a winner-take-all numbers game.

Council could have seen this as an opportune time to urge the citizens of Kyogle to take an active interest in local government and to seriously consider the need for more candidates at the next election in September 2024.

With encouragement from Council, civil society organisations of all types – sporting, cultural, business and environmental groups, churches and faith groups – might have brought this issue to the attention of their membership.

And now, with just over six months before the next election, Council has that opportunity. If the desire is there.



Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan

All folks living within 30 kms radius of the Nimbin village are warmly invited to:

Community Workshop #2

Food and Farming Security

Key Result/Vision: The community actively participates in ensuring an abundant, local and resilient food and farming network for all.

Goal 1: At least 50% of food consumed locally is locally & sustainably grown/produced.

Goal 2: We Grow Good Tucker

Goal 3: The Community is engaged in local groups which work together and with all local farming stakeholders. No-one is left out!

Goal 4: The community is well educated about food & farming security.

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Key Result/Vision: A clean environment, with high biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

Goal 1: A thriving natural environment which is preserved and protected and its biodiversity fostered and rebuilt.

Goal 2: A community that is well informed and educated about environmental issues.

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carergateway.gov.au

Drug tests are about illegality, not impairment

by Jeremy Buckingham,
Legalise Cannabis MLC

Picture this: You're a single mother with two young children who attend the local primary school.

Three years ago, you were diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. You have good days, you have bad days. On the bad days, you can barely move from the pain, and sleep is a nightmare of pain and bad dreams.

Your doctor tells you that opiates could ease the pain, but you've seen the videos of zombie addicts in the United States, and this scares you. Then a friend suggests two types of medicinal cannabis – CBD oil for the aches and anxiety and THC before bedtime for a good night's rest.

The treatment works for you. For many people, this is a wonder drug. It's non-addictive, side-effect free

and best of all, it's highly effective. There's only one catch – you live in a regional area where your children's school and shops are a 15-minute drive. Without a car, you're trapped.

The current law tests for presence of THC rather than impairment, which means you can be driving illegally days or even weeks after taking your treatment. So, you find yourself in a situation where you have an impossible choice – performing your role as caregiver or accessing the treatment that makes your life bearable.

This is the situation faced by many thousands of people with medicinal cannabis prescriptions thanks to our outdated, insane and unjust roadside drug testing laws.

So how did we get here? When Matt Brown introduced the relevant legislation into NSW Parliament in 2006, he

singled out speed, ecstasy and THC as the three drugs to be targets, in part because they were all illegal. Since the introduction of medicinal cannabis treatments in 2016, that is no longer the case.

Indeed, he was refreshingly honest in his intention for the law: "There will be no need for police to prove that a person's driving was impaired; it need only be proved that the drug was present in the person's sample," he said. "This sends a clear message to motorists that driving with any amount of these illegal drugs in the body is not tolerated in New South Wales."

So it was never about impairment, and it was all about illegality. It's also worth noting what the Bill does not contain. No mention of legal prescription drugs that can create impairment such as benzodiazepines or opiates, presumably because

the legislation was never intended to target patients following their doctor's instructions for a legitimate cannabis treatment.

All we are asking for is that this anomaly – where one prescription drug is treated differently from every other one – is corrected.

Of course, no-one is arguing for impaired drivers to get behind the wheel. We have no shortage of laws where drivers can be charged with impaired or dangerous driving, that is not the issue. Impairment tests work well enough in Canada and the 24 US states where adult use of cannabis is legal. They can work here too.

The saliva test administered by police is notoriously unreliable – one study has suggested up to 20 per cent false negatives – and the testing for presence means that patients can never be sure when it's safe to drive. We are unaware of any



home testing kits on the market, so patients are left to guess whether they are breaking the law or not. They already know that their driving is unaffected. This is the equivalent of punishing someone for having three schooners of beer on a Saturday night and then telling them that they can't drive on the following Tuesday morning.

So, what are the chances of fixing this inequity? There are promising signs.

I've met with NSW Premier Chris Minns and NSW Health Minister Ryan Park, and both indicated an intention to fix this

anomaly. In addition, the Legalise Cannabis Party vote is important for the Government in the Upper House, so our voice is heard. So medicinal cannabis patients will need to be patient, but we're not going to be patient for ever. The Government knows it has to move on this.

In the first week of Parliament, I tabled a petition signed by more than 11,000 people demanding a change to the law. Given that data strongly suggests that these people live in marginal electorates, they are a voice that Government MPs will ignore at their peril.

MardiGrass shapes up

by Michael Balderstone

The five Legalise Cannabis Members of Parliament, and I hope some Greens, are coming to MardiGrass after completing their first year as representatives of our favourite vegetable, as Timothy Leary called pot. Looking forward to hearing their stories.

Jeremy Buckingham was on the front page of the Daily Terror this week, Murdoch's flagship. He's the chair of the Budget Estimates committee hearings which gives him plenty of air for questions.

The DT editorial wrote, "During that hearing, the somewhat unlikely figure of Legalise Cannabis party

MP Jeremy Buckingham directed an impressively informed series of questions at Premier Chris Minns.

Buckingham asked "Do you accept that in recent years, there has been an explosion of organised crime activity across NSW that has manifested itself in gangland violence on the streets of Sydney?"

Minns agreed it's costing NSW taxpayers billions each year. Rumour has it his Drug Summit will be in October, but just for a couple of days.

Jeremy has also initiated the establishment of a NSW Hemp Industry Task Force which includes 12 representatives from growers and industry associations along with the Minister for Agriculture. Several

of our local hemp farmers are in the Roundtable discussion. Hippies being included! Unheard of. We'll hear all about it at MardiGrass.

MardiGrass is also all about sensible law reform for ALL drugs, so this year we will partner with Entheogenesis Australis entheogenesis.org to present a day/night program dedicated to other medicinal plants. We promise expert knowledge-sharing on botanical research, mushroom cultivation, harm reduction, the black art of saliva testing, and psychedelic therapy. Don't miss it! 10am - 10pm

Saturday 4th May in the Town Hall garden.

Meetings for this year's first weekend in May annual protest have begun and already the hippie traditions have been upset by, you guessed it, new rules.

It seems several of last year's Iron Grower Person Event contestants had taken an inordinately long time to recover and one, a medallist, has not recovered. Admittedly, following drug testing, it was revealed their previous night's activities would no doubt have been a major contributor to their collapse after crossing the finishing line.

IHOC officials attending the meeting on Zoom, said, "While we are still battling the consequences of the drug war with illegal

unregulated chemical drugs on the street, the committee has decided this event must be suspended until the war is over and respect for drug use returns."

After due consideration by the IHOC, plans are afoot for a replacement gold-medal event reflecting the change from outdoor to indoor growing, another drug war impact. The Dealer's Nightmare will be a team event, testing quick and accurate reactions to police raids.

In exciting news, the IHOC is also considering including Correct Weight as an official HEMP Olympix event this year after its growing popularity in the Fringe Olympix. Contestants aim to fill a baggie with exactly 28.35 grams. Correct weight keeps the bag.

Everyone is welcome at the MardiGrass meetings at Nimbin's Hemp Bar, every Friday from 4.20 until that first weekend in May.



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The State of the Hempire

by Gerald Taylor

The state of the Hempire in the Northern Rivers is healthy. In the two years since my last report many changes have come about, both strategically and tactically.

Many of these changes are political; the Legalise Cannabis party has won many seats in many states with the chance of at least one seat in federal parliament a very high probability in the upcoming federal elections.

Jeremy Buckingham, parliamentary leader of the Legalise Cannabis party in NSW, is actively championing hemp growers in the Northern Rivers and, in co-operation with the DPI and Labor minister for agriculture Tara Moriarty, have created a hemp task force to support and expand the hemp industry in NSW.

The task force has been selected from leaders in the industry. NRHGC (Northern Rivers Hemp Growers Co-op) has been chosen as one of these leaders. At the upcoming MardiGrass, Jeremy will be hosting a panel in the Town Hall made up of task force members to make a progress report and answer any questions from the public. These are the strategic changes that have put the wind into NRHGCs sails and given us an interface with the political wheels of power.

Tactically, great changes have occurred as well. NRHGC is philosophically built on the premise of cottage farming, this is our point of difference from all other hemp industry enterprises. We believe that hemp, because of its versatility, is ideally suited

to cottage farming and after two years of hard, co-operative endeavour we believe we have proved it.

Our dream is to have 1000 small holdings here in the Northern Rivers producing 5000 superior products, bringing sustainability to the farming community and resilience to our small towns and villages.

To date NRHGC and associated businesses and artisans are producing our own indiginised hemp seed stock for broad acre replanting; hemp seed oil and protein powder; hemp soap from the plant's flower as well as hemp flower oil as a pet or animal dietary supplement; and a range of cosmetics from infused hemp flower and several products for the wellness industry.

From the bast, the long, strong fibre, we make hemp carbon fibre products from Martin Ernegg's marvellous matrix; Hempstone; and also paper of the highest quality and supply our local weavers with raw thread for their looms. From the hurd, the pithy core of the plant, we are making chips to be used in hempcrete and other hemp-based building materials and, more importantly, we are using the hurd chips to feed the pyrolysis oven.

Pyrolysis is the cooking of carbon-based materials in an oxygen-free oven. Done correctly, this process separates carbon from the volatile elements carbon likes to associate with. A good example of this is methane, CH₄, a gas given off by rotting or burning carbon biomass.

Pyrolysis dumps the carbon atom in the oven while releasing the four hydrogen

atoms back into the wild. Or in our case, we grab the hydrogen atoms and use them as fuel to heat the oven to extract more carbon. It's a cycle, a beautiful, clean, carbon sequestering cycle whose only emission is a smoke flavoured water; wood vinegar.

Pyrolysis hurd makes the best possible soil mix or may be dug directly back into our depleted soils to perfectly sequester carbon from the atmosphere permanently. With this technology, which has come from Robbie Tonks who will also be speaking at Mardi Grass, we have achieved the holy grail of farming; a circular industry that may be transplanted into any rural community to create resilience, productivity and employment back to our farms and villages.

Forty years ago, the hippies were blathering on about how pot could save the planet, another hippy pipe dream of course, yet today we stand at the threshold of making the old dream a reality.

This year we will build a processing facility to separate hemp into its component parts as well as sequestering vast amounts of carbon. We will build workshops for the refining and value adding of our plant's products to enrich and enliven our communities.

The process has begun now and because it's a grassroots revolution in farming practice it cannot be stopped. NRHGC welcomes all fellow travellers on this path we tread; in the Hempire all people of good heart are welcome.

Come see us at Mardi Grass, we would love to share our visions of a better world built on HEMP. The possibilities are endless and the journey has just begun.

Treat the underlying cause, not just the symptoms



by Dr Antoinette Ensbey

Can you relate to this? "Doctor, I've got a tummy ache." "What are the symptoms?" "My tummy hurts." "You've got a tummy ache! I'll prescribe a tummy pill to take three times daily until the symptoms subside."

Symptom treatment is a common thing not only in medical practice. It has spread to all kinds of problem areas, for example, failing ecological systems that contain threatened species where reduced breeding is an indication that something is wrong.

We may find the measures taken to treat the symptoms are helpful but won't solve the problem in the long run.

Unfortunately also in mental health, where a deeper look at underlying symptoms is crucial to get to the core of the problem, symptom treatment is often a quick-fix solution.

We talk about 'mental filters' and how the brain takes care of our emotional wellbeing if we only program ourselves to think and focus on the right things to think and feel.

I'd be careful to over-emphasise the brain's capacity to correct our thinking in terms of what we ought to feel

or where our emotions ought to take us. I am ever in awe about the instinctual vigilance expressed in the plover birds' warning cries and cannot but think that we also possess an impressive inbuilt alarm clock when it comes to our feelings and emotions.

It's just that in our rational logical world of hard facts, even the fine-tuned antenna of intuition and instinct that shapes and guides our emotive being is under the quantifiable scrutiny of brain science.

There's a real danger in this. It turns us into functioning or non-functioning beings and interprets wrong behaviour as symptoms of a malfunctioning person. The cure therefore is to treat the symptoms, by medication (not recommended!) or by the switch-off method of calculated thought patterns.

The latter isn't working either. Negative thoughts, bad thoughts cannot be supplanted with good thoughts simply because our thinking is the fruit of our emotions.

Think of fear. Is there something called imagined fear? I think every type of fear is real fear, even if 'imagined'. The trigger, the symptoms, the reaction of our bodies and minds is the real thing. It's worth diving deeper and

looking into the black hole, however 'unreal' we believe our fears to be.

We need to listen to the symptoms and reactions and penetrate a little further to find the real cause of our fear. For example, someone may suddenly be seized by a moment of panic, say in a room full of people in the middle of a concert. A mere "You are imagining things!" is a dismissal of a profound layer of emotional distress.

It could be a feeling of alienation in a crowd, where the isolated individual feels the real fear of losing the security of the social safety net.

This is common in our detached society of individualism where it's hard to connect with anyone while they might be scrolling through their phones and not realising that you are in the same room with them.

Believe in your thoughts – any kinds! – that guide you to your real emotions! Negative as well as positive thought patterns have each a valid place in the realm of our minds. Yes, as a sentient being you are able to change and adapt behaviour if necessary.

But that affords a conscious decision and a willingness to change which can become a mammoth task if things aren't

going well for you. If all you want is to be understood. If all you want is the assurance that you are worthy of love.

It's the kind welcome into this world that sets the scene for the much-needed confirmation of your self-worth, the sweetest ingredient in your emotional wellness cocktail.

We are social beings and need and thrive on attention, love and care from others. Go beyond the symptoms of mental distress and almost always find that a lack of love, a kind of neglect and abuse or inattention is the underlying cause.

Re-framing thoughts as a symptoms treatment is possible only when the base of our mental frame is sturdy. If it has a few cracks from former or recent unfavourable experiences in life, we need to be careful not to overwhelm the system.

Talk about the person who is you, not the method. Bring out the individual strength, walk with the person, and protect the person by staying away from healing methods that care only to treat the symptoms.

It can be complex, but worth the effort!

I'm available for counselling. Please contact me via email: mlremedies22@gmail.com

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Once upon a Nimbin summer's night...

by René Norwee

At our first Storytelling Night of the year, we took a deep dive into the theme of Endurance.

We heard eight locals share their personal stories of: how some connections need a little endurance to bloom into something special (Cindy Thummel); the generosity from strangers that helps give you the endurance to cycle vast distances (Graham Jordan); learning that sometimes it takes less to endure the outback's wild elements than to endure a colleague's grousing (Richard Swinton); how William Blake's pebble and clod reminded him of a time he endured the strife of a political embargo and a jealous partner (Warwick Fry); pushing one's creative limit to get into the Guinness Book of Records (Maxx Maxted); how the lesson learnt in witnessing a majestic creature in captivity changes with distance

and time (Leanne Logan); discovering an unlikely dwelling on a remote bush track where one could disappear (Maree Therese); and how an unsuspecting school teacher endured the terrorism of a pack of fiendish boys (Danny).

We also had the pleasure of listening to the beautiful melodies of local singer and songwriter, Andra Cordell.

Thank you to Nimbin Bowling Club and Sibley's Bistro for hosting us; you guys are amazing.

Have you ever experienced something that felt mystical and inexplicable? Wondrous and mesmerising?

Join us to hear locals tell their stories on the theme of Enchanted, and maybe tell one of your own, at Nimbin Storytellers' next event on Saturday 6th April.

We'll gather around Hanging Rock Hall's stunning outdoor fire-pit to enjoy the warmth of the fire, a tasty meal, and share true personal stories under the night sky.



It'll be quite an experience to share our stories in this timeless way. (Food from 6pm, starts 6.30pm, \$2 p/p, BYO camping chair).

Learn more about our bi-monthly Storytelling

Photos: Marie Therese

Nights, the monthly Story Group, and listen to stories from past events at our website: www.nimbinstorytellers.com

Singer-songwriter's book launch

by Tanya Delys Mandorla

Mick Daley's cosmic gothic thriller *D'Angel Moon* is a luscious, raucous tale, spread over four books.

In Book One, *The Witch and the Foreigner*, the mysterious D'Angels find their mountain fortress under siege from twelve separate armies, all hell-bent on seizing control of the technology the D'Angels possess. Technology that can save the planet, or in the hands of greed, rule it.

Book Two, *A Quirk in the Continuum* takes a steeper dive into cosmic realms. Book Three is expected soon.

Daley lets his formidable grasp on language stretch into full gallop in these novels. D'Angel Moon blooms with characters... Who are the D'Angels? Who is coming to save them?

A pregnant folk singer, a battle-worn Irish Lieutenant, Hafiz the Persian poet, a painter and her revolutionist best friend, a Pitjantjatjara Cleverman, an axe-wielding innkeeper's wife and an ancient god.

D'Angel Moon is a wild read, available from Mick Daley himself locally, via: mickdaley@gmail.com or from Amazon.com.



Kyogle Readers and Writers Festival line-up announced

by Paul Shields

The much-loved host of ABC's *Gardening Australia* will be one of the headliners at this year's Kyogle Readers and Writers Festival.

Costa Georgiadis (pictured) will be in conversation with Angela Catterns, presenter of ABC North Coast's Saturday Breakfast programme, talking about his book, *Gardening for the Soil, Soul and Suburbs*, as well as his lifelong passion for all things horticultural.

Other highlights include conversations with Melissa Lucashenko, Mirandi Riwoe, Ellen van Neerven, Daniel Browning and Tim Baker, while astronomer, Duane Hamacher will be talking about his book, *The First Astronomers* with the Deadly Scientist himself, Corey Tutt.

Panels will explore topics



as diverse as the influence of gardening books and magazines on Australian gardening styles and fashions, First Nations writing, the writings of Australian snake man, Eric Worrell, non-mainstream therapies and transitioning to a more ethical society.

The always popular workshop programme is back again and includes workshops on self-

publishing, self-editing, performance poetry and creative resilience.

And for the poetry lovers, a special event, 'Page and Stage' will showcase both written and spoken word poetry.

This year's Festival runs across Friday 17th and Saturday 18th May and the full programme and tickets are available at: <https://kraw.com.au> from 5th March.

Memento mori

Remember that your greatest wealth
Is not your money, but your health!

While we are healthy, life is great.
Do we appreciate that enough?
This is a time to celebrate,
For the road ahead may well get rough.

Do not postpone your heart's desire,
Do what you want to, while you may:
Too soon we lose that youthful fire!
Our fate can change in just one day,

Not really 'if', but rather 'when'
A final illness comes our way
And robs us of our dreams,
and then
We're sliding down, 'til at the end
A prolonged life means prolonged suffering,
And Death is welcomed as a friend....

– H.d.V. 2017

Trivia Night fundraisers at Nimbin Bowlo

The Nimbin Bowling Club and Sibley's Bistro hosts a community fundraising trivia night on the third Saturday of each month.

Organised by the trivia team, Claire Delacey and René Norwie, February's fundraising partner was the Nimbin Open Mic Group.

The Nimbin Open Mic Group auctioned a signed watercolour by local artist Katie Lloyd, an acoustic guitar and a range of Beatles T-shirts. Thanks to Ian Dixon for a great auction.

Community businesses donated some awesome prizes. Thank you – Nimbin Bakery, the Aquarius Café, Nimbin Newsagency, Nimbin Emporium, Nimbin Hemp Embassy, Perceptio, Heart Connection, Sibley's Bistro and Nimbin Bowling Club.

The trivia team and fundraising partner managed to raise \$550 for new staging equipment.

Next Trivia Night

The next fun trivia night at Nimbin Bowlo is on Saturday 16th March.

Fundraising this month is for the Nimbin Performance Poetry World Cup, a group focussed on improving their commitment to fostering creativity and nurturing talent among poetry enthusiasts and literary connoisseurs. A raffle and auction on the night. Lots of fun for all and great prizes to be won.

Prize for the best dressed theme: from Shakespearean elegance to Edgar Allan Poe's mysterious allure, the possibilities are as boundless as the imagination. Dress as the embodiment of a beloved poem, or channel the essence of a famous poet – let your creativity run wild. Dress brightly, sprightly and poetically!

Door open at 6pm for 7pm start. Entry: Three gold coins. Bookings for Sibley's Bistro: 02 6689-1473.



25 years of fundraising with Fossil Rock

Celebrate 25 years of fundraising with Fossil Rock.

It's 25 years since the formation of the local icon band Fossil Rock, one of northern rivers most popular party/cover bands.

To celebrate this milestone the band will perform its Anniversary Concert on Saturday 6th April, at the Cherry Street Sports Club in Ballina from 6pm.

During its lifetime, Fossil Rock has participated in many local fundraising events helping to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for organisations including for Relay for Life (Ballina and Lismore), the Cancer Council, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal, the Queensland Flood Appeal, Ballina SES and the Farmers Aid Concert.

Fossil Rock's 25th Anniversary Concert will carry on this tradition, with raising funds for the local Love Bites Respectful Relationships program, which is a school education program for young people aged 11-17 years.

This program was developed in response to community concerns about unhealthy relationships within the high school environment on the north



coast of NSW dealing with abusive behaviour, bullying, gender expectations and respect.

The program is run by volunteers with no funding so the proceeds raised from the concert will be used for continued training of people and purchasing necessary supplies to continue this important program.

Fossil Rock band members are: Garry Lavercombe (drums), Jeff Massey (rhythm guitar/vocals), Paul Gill (lead guitar/vocals), Jon Aleman (lead guitar/vocals), Christos Nicolaou (bass guitar/vocals), and will be joined by special guest "Stephani."

With the band members having over 280 years of collective music experience, they will play music that appeals to everyone featuring classic songs from the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Tickets are \$15 ticket and include a free standard drink, with funds raised going directly to the local 'Love Bites' program.

Tickets are available from the Cherry Street Sports Club, Ballina, or via: www.Try-Booking.com

Solid screening on Country for IWD

Bundjalung women storytellers will be screening for International Womens Day, celebrating their unique and valuable contributions to Indigenous screen culture at Lismore Womens Festival on campus at Southern Cross University, presented by cyberTribe.

In the gathering spirit, Jenny Fraser has curated a Solid Screening of short films made on Bundjalung Country: *Eelemarni: the story of Leo and Leva* by Lorraine Mafi-Williams 1988 featuring Aunty Millie Boyd; *Nguura Muruy* 2023 by Sandy Greenwood featuring Gumbaynggirr Custodians and allies, and *Durangen* by Jenny Fraser 2023, also featuring Bundjalung plant



Tania Marlowe in Jenny Fraser's film, Durangen.

artists Euphemia Bostock, Faith Baisden, Deidre Currie, Tania Marlowe and Jasmin Stanford.

The event is a gift to the community so all women, men and children are welcome to attend this free screening.

The event kicks off at SCU Lismore at 11.45am sharp on 8th March, and there will also be a short time in the 2-hour

session for some yarnning over tea in joyful tribute of generational Bundjalung Screen culture.

Solid Screen Festival has been running since 2014, maintaining sisterhood and presenting women's work by Indigenous Screen Makers and acknowledging historically important screen culture, with a focus on cultural safety.

Solid Screen Festival director Jenny Fraser said, "The Bundjalung Nation has a deep history of maintaining culture and creativity across many artforms which has been celebrated all over Australia and other parts of the world, so we're here to remind everyone locally, and it's a time to help lift spirits after enduring natural disasters."

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- Social Bowls, Sundays 10am, all welcome

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