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# 101 things to do with 14 stolen hubcaps

by Sue Edmonds

When I was young and married, I borrowed an inspirational book from the local library which proved to be an incredible help in the kitchen. ‘101 things to do with mince’ kept us going for years.

Following a month spent in Nepal, I decided to write an article with the title ‘101 things to do with yak butter.’

This didn’t get off the drawing board because there were no yaks in Hobart to work with.

My current challenge is to write ‘101 things to do with 14 stolen hubcaps.’

So far the list is:

1. A giant ashtray
2. A dog food bowl
3. A dog water bowl (constant replenishment is required as an inverted hubcap is shallow)
4. A cat feeder
5. A cat water bowl
6. A kitty litter container for a little kitten
7. A chook feeder
8. A chook water bowl (see point 3)



9. A clock face
10. A handbag (two required)
11. A resonator for a banjo
12. A resonator for a guitar
13. A resonator for a ukulele
14. A stand-alone sculpture
15. A tuned musical instrument (this requires some knowledge about tuning metal so probably it’s a long straw)
16. Decorate a boring shed
17. Substitute a discus with a hubcap and get sporty (another long straw as thieves aren’t usually known for their sportiness)
18. Try one as a frisbee
19. Put them on an old car (circa 1975-1982)

20. Try and sell them on ebay
21. Hide them as they are proof of a heist and therefore a liability
22. Headwear to ward off chemtrails
23. A lampshade
24. Give them back.

The 14 hubcaps in question were from my ‘hubaphone’ sound sculpture that was installed in the Nimbin Rainbow Walk, stolen in late June, three months after the grand opening.

Many people, especially kids, enjoyed playing the sound sculpture during its brief life.

They enjoyed the hands-on approach, another thing to do while they strolled along the fantastic pathways.

Some folks dreamed of being in a Caribbean steel drum band.

Now the ladder, horizontal and naked, stands bereft in the landscape.

Do you have any ideas on how to thief-proof a sound sculpture?

Please send, with any more ideas on what you can do with stolen hubcaps, to *Nimbin GoodTimes*.

# Soft opening postponed

The opening of the re-vamped Nimbin Aboriginal Cultural Centre (NACC) has been postponed, with a future date to be announced.

NACC is renowned for its arts studio, and work is underway to complete the new Tribal Art Gallery showcasing artifacts and artworks from Bundjalung and other tribal artists

NACC’s Mahlie Bayles (pictured) explained that repairs and refurbishments have progressed to bring the floor up to scratch, and to redecorate the space. New appliances have also been installed in the kitchen.

NACC aims include organising functions showcasing culture; and a focus on kids to come in and get some life-skills in the kitchen with a focus on bush tucker, as well as workshops, and computers where young people can access services such as Jobseeker.

“I don’t want them hanging here; I just want them to be active. I don’t



mind if we have a little TV, and we can have a few computers games and that, but it’s got to be in balance.

“I don’t want them to be just sitting around,” Mahlie Bayles said.

“It’s going to be an active little hub where we’re going to be achieving stuff, where we are autonomous, where we don’t have to outsource anything, that’s what I’m looking for,” he said.



# Piano recital

Stephanie Hamlet’s musical life began early when the piano chose her to be its companion at the age of three. No doubt music is her first language, as she was reading notes before words.

That same passion carried her through to study at the Victorian College of the Arts and perform Rachmaninoff with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

She graduated with BMus Hons and is currently undertaking a Doctorate of Musical Arts at Sydney Conservatorium.

Stephanie currently resides in the Northern Rivers, where she teaches piano and gives regular solo recitals.

Tickets for the Classical Piano Recital featuring virtuoso Stephanie Hamlet at Nimbin Hall at 2pm on Sunday 31st August are now available at Perceptio Bookshop.

This very special afternoon recital of fine music will feature works by Schumann, Schubert, Shostakovich and Scriabin.

Tickets are \$20. First in best seated.



# Resilient Lismore's Two Rooms project

It is three years since Resilient Lismore launched the Two Rooms project – a grassroots response to the urgent need for safe, secure and warm housing following the 2022 flood disaster.

In the months after the disaster, during one of the coldest winters in years, thousands of people across the Northern Rivers were displaced. With a severe shortage of emergency housing, many were living in homes without lockable doors, internal walls, windows, electricity, or hot water.

“Immediately after the disaster, we looked around our community and realised that we had housing, where people could be sheltered; it was just damaged and needing repair. That focus has guided us ever since,” said Elly Bird, Executive Director of Resilient Lismore.

With La Niña conditions lingering and people living without walls, in damp and cold conditions, The Two Rooms Project began in May 2022 as a practical effort to help by creating two liveable spaces that could be heated. Resilient Lismore mobilised volunteers to re-sheet two rooms in each home, creating a heatable and secure living space. 117 Two Rooms volunteers contributed over 1,000 hours of work to improve living conditions in more than 320 homes during 2022–2023.

“Thank you so much for coming and replacing the walls of our ‘two rooms’.

We are very grateful for your work and help,” shared one homeowner, reflecting the deep impact of this simple yet powerful project.

This effort led to a partnership with Reece Foundation to bring volunteer plumbers to the Northern Rivers, and then to a locally-led partnership with the Diocese of Lismore, the Winsome and Joel Jensen Constructions that provided repair works for disaster affected homes using qualified tradespeople.

In March 2023, Resilient Lismore secured an election commitment from Janelle Saffin, and the project evolved into the Repair to Return Program.

Thanks to funding and support from the NSW Reconstruction Authority, the program is now a region-wide housing repair program that provides licensed trades to restore kitchens, bathrooms, plumbing and other essential infrastructure, ensuring homes are not only liveable, but safe and dignified.

To date, Resilient Lismore has delivered property repair to more than 700 homes across the Northern Rivers



Above: Resilient Lismore volunteers working on restoring ‘Two Rooms’ in 2022  
Below: South Lismore resident and ‘Repair to Return’ program recipient, John with Tony of Resilient Lismore in John’s repaired kitchen. Photos: Elise Derwin



through the Two Rooms project, and the Repair to Return program, helping hundreds of residents move back home.

“This work started with our community doing what it could with what it had,” said Elly Bird. “Three years on, we’re proud to be delivering a program that’s resourced, strategic, and still deeply rooted in caring for community.”

“The trust that the community and the people we have helped have placed in us, the thousands of hours that have been contributed by our incredible volunteers, and the efforts and commitment of our amazing staff, alongside the support of Janelle Saffin and the NSW Reconstruction Authority, has been critical in helping people return home,” Elly said.

The Repair to Return program is still running – if you or someone you know is living with property damage from the 2022 disaster, please get in touch.

Our Tool Library is also available, with a new on-line system that makes it easy to borrow free tools for home repairs or helping a neighbour.

Resilient Lismore continues to lead and advocate for community-led recovery and resilience in the Northern Rivers, and we are adapting our programs and activities in response to the needs in our region.

We invite our community to join us for our inaugural fundraising dinner at the Lismore Regional Gallery on Friday, 5th September from 5.30 to 9.30pm.

Tickets at: <https://resilientlismore.org.au/event/hearts-stars-fundraising-dinner>

Proceeds will support our tools and skills workshops and help households prepare for future disasters.

Learn more, register for Repair to Return, or browse the Tool Library at: <https://resilientlismore.org.au>

## 80 years since bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

by Benny Zable

In August 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The first, named ‘Little Boy’, was dropped on Hiroshima on 6th August, and the second, ‘Fat Man’, on Nagasaki on 9th August.

Between 150,000 and 240,000 people died from the bombings, destruction was widespread destruction, and the effects are still felt today. They are the only instances of atomic bombs being used in warfare.

This was the beginning of the arms race. The Nuclear Disarmament movement grew from the Japanese ashes.

Today, both the USA and Russia have the greatest number of nuclear bombs added to their arsenal.



The atomic bombs of today are much more lethal than ever.

We are closer than ever to an all-out nuclear war. Disturbingly, Israel is

believed to have nine nuclear bombs.

I recently attended a protest in Canberra calling on our Federal Parliament to cut all ties with Israel’s on-going genocide in Gaza.

Disappointingly, there were not that many people in attendance, although there was a strong presence of people from the Northern Rivers at the protest.

But I was told that the actions taken by other people had gained considerable international coverage.

I am attending the Melbourne day of the Hiroshima remembrance. Hopefully the first Life-size Protester/Disarmament statue will be ready to roll out on the day.

You can follow the progression of the project at: [www.funderestudios.com.au/benny-zable-the-protestor](http://www.funderestudios.com.au/benny-zable-the-protestor)

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# Staying on the case for recovery

by Miriam Torzillo  
Reclaim Our Recovery

Reclaim Our Recovery (ROR) members challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about issues such as housing, demolitions, evictions and relocations.

In July, members responded to concerns from soon-to-be-evicted residents of Pod Villages, as well as looming evictions of permanent caravan park residents in the Clarence Valley.

ROR speaks up to counter rumours, such as the false claims that squatters were living in a house and boarding house in Union Street that burnt down on 19th July.

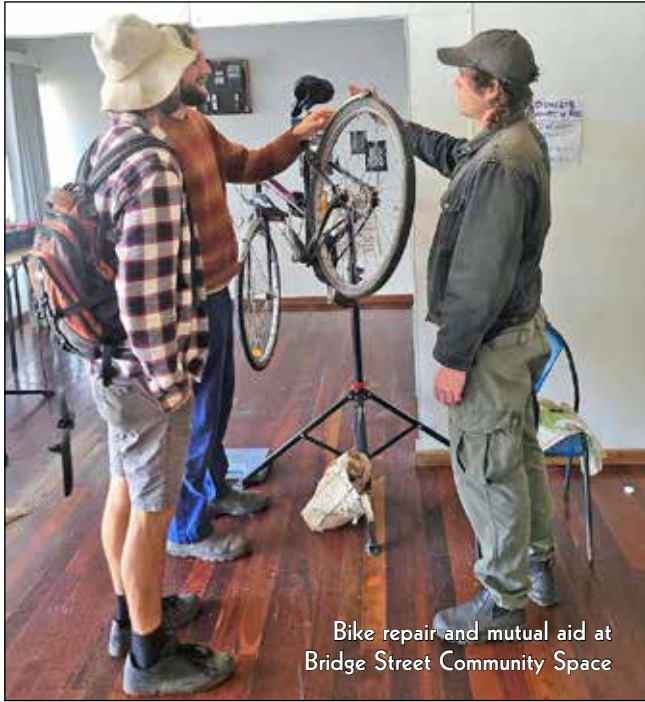
Statements by emergency services on the scene support the view of ROR members who live nearby that this was a deliberately misleading claim.

## Staying informed

ROR members continue to monitor the activities and operations of LCC, particularly in relation to housing, housing developments and Council's response to critical concerns such as adaptation and climate action.

The LCC's apparent hostility to the concept of housing affordability, and the relocation and preservation of the Big Scrub houses has implications for current community recovery and future resilience.

ROR together with the Community Disaster



Bike repair and mutual aid at Bridge Street Community Space

Action Group (CDAG) have attempted to maintain communications with the Reconstruction Authority and the Minister for Recovery, Janelle Saffin about these issues.

We access updates from Facebook groups, research and reports, to help us develop informed and critical responses to government and RA actions and behaviour.

## Staying connected

We develop connections across the region. As well as CDAG, we work with Resilient Lismore who help us to develop policy and responses to issues as they emerge.

Currently ROR and CDAG are advocating for the continued use of

empty properties, including commercial properties, as community spaces.

Our commitment to this is informed by best practice and national and international research on the importance of social connection in community for strengthening recovery, resilience and harmony.

Together with community members and other collectives, Socialise, Organise, Arts, Resist (SOAR), Lismore Environment Centre and Climate Justice Alliance, we hope to defend the continuation of important community spaces in North Lismore, which supports social and cultural life, mutual aid and safety for North Lismore residents

who continue to live on the flood plain.

## Staying democratic

ROR members involved in the Lismore People's Assembly Project maintain a program of professional development including participating in conversations with Disaster Wise in a Community Convergence and Facilitation Training with GroupWork.

## Staying involved

ROR members understand the interconnection of social, economic, political and environmental issues and the connection between the local, the national and the international.

Therefore, when needed we stand up for human rights by taking part in vigils and gatherings to add our voice to those calling for an end to Genocide in Palestine, for environmental justice, including participation in ecological surveys of forest threatened by logging, and social justice by protecting the rights of those in housing stress here in Lismore, who are caretaking empty buyback homes.

So where should we go next? We want to continue the work we have been doing and make sure it supports the aspirations and hopes of the community for fairness and transparency. But we need your help.

Contact us for updates and information via: ReclaimOurRecovery@protonmail.com

# Rail must be in Regional Transport Plan

by Stewart James  
Northern Rivers Railway Action Group

In May earlier this year, as representative of the Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG), I met with the Senior Electoral Officer of local state MP Janelle Saffin, along with Board members of Northern Rivers Rail Ltd (NRRL).

NRRAG wanted answers to the following questions, which were tabled well before the meeting.

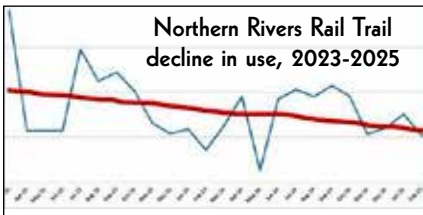
To date, more than 10 weeks later, we have not received a reply, and have been told not to expect one.

1. Will the government seriously commit to formally review, with an open mind, the reinstatement of commuter rail services as part of a NR Regional Transport Plan?

A 2024 expert engineering study and business case examining reinstatement of commuter rail services on the disused corridor commissioned by NRR, found that rail services could be brought back without massive public subsidy and operate profitably. This study estimates the reinstatement cost at only one third of the cost contained in the 2014 ARUP study.

2. Can the NSW Minister for Recovery and the North Coast, Janelle Saffin or the relevant minister, please explain the following:

- What is deemed railway land?
- How is railway land categorised?
- What will happen to railway land?



- Will it be protected by law?
  - Will it be sold?
  - Who will be the beneficiary?
  - Can the proceeds of the sale of such assets be redistributed into a NR regional transport plan fund?
- The big questions for me, and many in the community are around railway land and how it's gazetted like 'working corridor,' and 'excess railway land' to the working corridor.
- Is it the intention that local government will be funded, and otherwise supported and enabled by the State government to repurpose railway land away from rail services in favour of other uses like housing, manufacturing, and small business?
  - Can the relevant state ministers demonstrate to the people of the Northern Rivers that this railway corridor land won't be trimmed back and nibbled away? Especially given that local councils will struggle to budget for rail trail upkeep and maintenance costs?
  - Assuming this railway land is reclassified as Crown land, what guarantee can the Minister for Recovery and the North Coast give that it won't be leased or sold and



exploited for housing and commercial uses, leaving our region without a viable rail corridor for the future?

- Given Lismore CBD businesses are even now still slowly and barely recovering from the 2017 and 2022 floods, why hasn't the government recognised the economic benefit of encouraging tourists and others to the hinterland towns to sightsee, dine and shop that would be enabled by reinstating the Casino-Murwillumbah passenger rail services?
- What are the NSW government's plans for passenger rail and rail linking services (eg. feeder shuttle buses), if any, in a Northern Rivers Regional Integrated Transport Plan?
- Does the Minister for Transport acknowledge the rail trail from Lismore to Bentley and Casino has had a poor and declining uptake, due to multiple factors we could go into? That being so, will the Minister commit to any further rail trail planning and implementation, if any, that will be designed to preserve the railway tracks, and maintain the viability of the corridor for future heavy rail services?



# International approaches to pot legalisation

by Michael Balderstone

Germany officially legalised cannabis for adults on April Fools Day last year, which was a big move as far as European drug policy goes.

Their new rules allow over-18-year-olds to grow up to three flowering plants at home, and they can also join a not-for-profit cannabis social club, which can have up to 500 members.

Almost 300 clubs have already been formed and at the moment a new club is being registered almost every day; they are so popular.

Members can buy up to 25 grams at a time but only 50 total each month. The clubs can also supply up to seven seeds per month and five cuttings for personal home growing. The weed from clubs is about half the street price.

There are plenty of complaints about the bureaucratic processes and there is a planned policy review due later this year.

Predictably, the police and other health officials have been critical, the same as our police were about the ACT law changes.

That has now changed here, and our police actually admitted they are happy about the way it's going in Canberra. There's been no increase in cannabis use and no rise in trafficking or cultivation offences they say.

They also said they now had more time to focus on more serious crime and by being less punitive there is reduced stigma and more people seeking help.

How about just less fear? Friends visiting from Victoria tell me they are way less anxious driving in Melbourne now they have a medical defence. Wouldn't it make you a better driver? No brainer.

It's important Germany has called it recreational cannabis because the new trend seems to be allowing medical cannabis prescribed by a doctor, safe pharmaceutical cannabis.

Thailand is trying the pull back the weed freedom there to bring doctors into the supply chain, the same as we have in Australia now.

Globally there are about 60 countries now allowing doctors to prescribe pot, but only a handful allow recreational cannabis. Only three allow fully



A cannabis dispensary in Bad Reichenhall, Germany

regulated commercial sales nationwide: Canada, Uruguay and Thailand, which has vowed to change back by the end of this year.

We who have spent time at Nimbin University know recreational and medical cannabis are exactly the same plant although one could argue they can be quite different now.

The designer nuggets also known as medical weed is virtually all grown indoors and very little of it organic, while the illegal recreational street weed around the Northern Rivers has usually seen the sun for at least the second half of its life and is often grown organically, and never irradiated like all the mediweed.

So we now have two markets in Oz, the same as North America, the legal and illegal. The imported prescription pot is now available for as low as five bucks a gram, while street weed remains double that price.

It's a massive cultural shift for the cannabis community in only a few years and I don't think anybody predicted it to emerge like it has.

Surely the next step here is for us to follow something like Germany's path. Allow home grown and social clubs, if not dispensaries, which is the next step for them now with some pilot models already in place.

Supply is always what the authorities balk at and fuss over, like we are dealing with some dangerous animal.

Consistently the opposition in modern day 'Reefer Madness' tell us that

unregulated cannabis is dangerous, and it must be grown under clinical conditions. More likely the opposite is true, if anything.

There is in fact a great opportunity for satisfying jobs, one of the very important and senior Gods in our society. Rather than let corporate cannabis grow for the masses how about we start off with micro-licences and utilise 50-plus years of Aussie weed gardening expertise?

The stigma about being a cannabis user still looms large. Smoking anything carries stigma these days but the century of lies and propaganda about marijuana and opposition to legalisation remains huge.

There is a lot of money, and power at stake. Not just Big Pharma's endless lobbying to maintain the drug war and its profits, but our police leaders who appear to be super conservative and still seem to believe cannabis is addictive and leading to psychosis, and so on.

I guess it's also extremely hard for them to admit they've been barking up the wrong tree all these years and actually doing enormous damage to countless lives with their drug war. Further traumatising the traumatised. Like Gaza.

The health experts globally all say the same thing. Drug use is a health issue and should be treated as such.

Regulate drug supply with quality controls and help for users who always have a reason for their drug use, of course.

## Tweed Landcare celebrates National Landcare Week

Australia is celebrating National Landcare Week from the 4th-10th August.

Tweed Landcare has had a very busy, rewarding and successful year collaborating in broader regional projects, and bringing people together across the region to engage with Landcare and the broader environmental community.

There has been a lot going on, but some of our highlights have been as follows.

Early in the year we continued to develop a seedbank hub for the region, which has included running a number of seed collection training and processing workshops across the Byron and Tweed region to build the capacity of the restoration community to collect, store and supply native plant seed to the North Coast Regional Seedbank in Coffs Harbour in efforts to support biodiversity conservation and



Seedbank seed processing workshop

future restoration.

In April we showcased the new docu-series, 'Roots So Deep (you can see the devil down there)', exploring the vital importance of regenerative agriculture at the Citadel.

This included a thought-provoking panel discussion and Q&A session with soil health educators and practitioners, and local farmers.

In July we focussed on the broader community at

World Environment Day Festival on 13th July. We brought together families, environmental advocates, and community members for a day of education, action, and celebration at the Murwillumbah Showground, a day of entertainment and education, with expert speakers addressing critical environmental challenges.

Tweed Landcare helps support and represent 18 care groups working around our Tweed region to restore

bushland. By partnering with Council in the delivery of their new Nature Care Program we have formalised and significantly increased support for volunteers undertaking environmental restoration in Council bushland.

As part of Landcare Week and Local Government week we will be co-hosting with Council two free open days, one at Pottsville Community Dunecare on Saturday 9th August and one at Chillingham Landcare on Sunday 10 August.

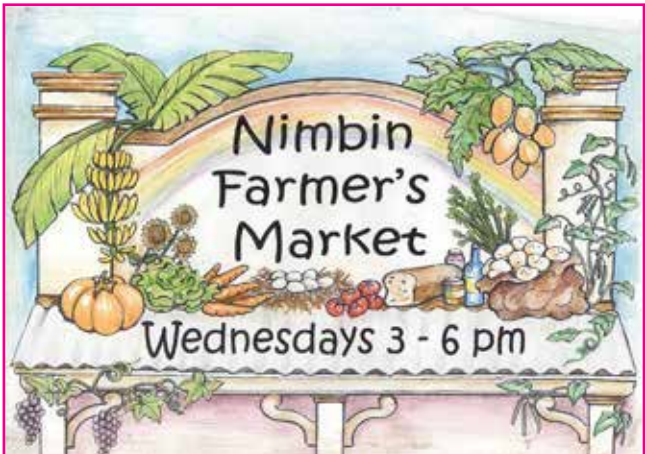
Volunteers from these groups will be undertaking tours of their site and demonstrating environmental weed control.

If you are interested in getting involved this is a great way to find out more. Visit: [tweedlandcare.org.au](http://tweedlandcare.org.au) or email us at: [tli@tweedlandcare.org.au](mailto:tli@tweedlandcare.org.au) or go to Tweed Landcare's Facebook page.



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# Lessons learnt from the genesis of multiple occupancy

by Rob Doolan

In the beginning of the 1980s, I had escaped the Queensland Bjelke-Petersen regime and moved to the Northern Rivers desiring some rural land to build my home and live differently.

In 1983 we were building the first roads on the property at Whian Whian where we planned to have a small Multiple Occupancy (MO).

I worked as a strategic planner at Byron Shire Council starting to put together the planning direction for the next few decades in Byron.

I had a consultancy with like-minded individuals called Sustainable Settlement Planners who were hired by the Land Commission of New South Wales – Frank Walker, the Minister for Housing, who had the idea of the state government sponsoring and building multiple occupancies for people for affordable housing.

We did the feasibility study and showed how it could happen in the Shire.

Also, in 1983 I attended the 10-year anniversary of the Aquarius Festival.

Sustainable Settlement Planners were also commissioned with the University of Sydney and others to prepare a Manual to guide Councils and would-be communities on how to establish a multiple occupancy.

Col James was a dynamo at the University of Sydney, also known for the *Low-cost Country Home-building Book*, which many of us relied upon to build our homes.

Meanwhile, in Byron Shire, I liaised on behalf of Council with some of the first multiple occupancies at Main Arm, working towards ways of making them legal.

Because of resistance from local councils, the NSW government (Minister Paul Landa) introduced an enabling state planning policy for MOs in 1988, overruling local councils.

In 1988, *State Environmental Planning Policy 15* was introduced by Bob Carr. In Byron Shire, the 1998 Rural Settlement Strategy was ground-breaking in that new rural settlements had to be either Multiple Occupancy or Community Title, which turned out to be a two-edged sword.

## Community Title

From the strategy came the concept of MO to CT, whereby existing MOs could convert to Community Title. There were pros and cons of this process for individual MO shareholders, the MO community itself, the wider community, and Councils.

In Byron, the community lobby and policy group for MOs that wanted to convert to Community Title was the Rural Land-Sharing Community Association (RLCA), with me providing planning guidance, to convert 18 of some 36 multiple occupancies.

Lismore Council in recent years amended their LEP to allow for existing MOs to convert to Community Title. Only a couple have done so for a variety of reasons.

Although there was some controversy about using the Community Title legislation for intentional communities, such legislation solves some of the biggest challenges that MOs experience, such as being able to borrow funds to buy a share or build a house,



Photo: Peter Derrett

and also aspects of enforcing community rules.

Watching the experience of using Community Titles in Byron, one can imagine ways that would result in more legitimate community-based models that benefit from the advantage of using Community Title legislation.

In today's housing crisis in our region, it is worthwhile to reflect on the significant contribution, at very little public cost, that intentional communities people, mainly multiple occupancies, have made to housing with, say, 150 to 200 such communities in the region, equating to some 1,500 or 2,000 homes.

This community movement in the Northern Rivers, with its five decades of lived experience, has much to offer.

## Future of intentional communities

Established local communities could form a combined lobby group with a role similar to PANCOM and RLCA in earlier years.

Important issues could be succession plans and community renewal.

Many communities are decades old, with a turnover of shareholders occurring as original members age.

This process offers great opportunities, but also can be perceived as creating threats. It raises issues such as tax implications, having up-to-date documentation, and maintaining the founding values of the community.

## Building greater resilience for natural disaster threats

Many long-established communities in the Northern Rivers, especially around Nimbin, are located on forested, steeper land, and hence more prone to the consequences of increasing natural disaster threats, like bushfire, slips, access issues, and flooding.

There are some great examples of communities, both intentional and wider locality communities, self-organising and self-actioning to managing these challenges.

Many long-established communities face issues with compliance with contemporary



Dharmananda community's garden

environmental, building, and bushfire regulations that did not exist in their current form in early years. Also, unaffordable insurance!

You may have heard of a recent case in Main Arm where the whole community received demolition orders.

Good collaboration between communities, state government, and Council may be able to make a more practical and affordable approach to these challenging issues.

The New South Wales Ombudsman guidelines provide a good approach to how responsive, practical, and fair discretion can be utilised.

On the matter of home insurance, I do not have any answers.

## New communities

For starting new communities, I want to suggest two themes to explore. One is about replicating the MO model, or at least a version of it, to other parts of NSW.

Throughout NSW, countless rural towns and villages could benefit from a modern version of the MO model.

At present, MOs are not permissible in most parts of NSW, as the state environmental planning policy I mentioned before, only applies now to a certain number of local government areas.

The other suggestion for new communities is a new closer-to-town model, creating housing hubs which could especially cater for older residents with less mobility.

I envisage small villages with walkable neighbourhoods on a wide variety of housing types, both in tenure, in size, and in affordability, all with high environmental performance.

The villages would have associated local food growing and village centres for work, play and services.

The lived experience of 50 years of intentional communities within the region brings valuable insights into alternative ownership and management models.

The new closer-to-town model could be a hybrid model combining the positive aspects

of MOs with the housing opportunities within, for example, updated manufactured home park legislation.

As a housing delivery vehicle, manufactured home legislation offers great advantages in relation to less planning approvals, timing, costs and overcoming construction-phase challenges.

With upgrades to the legislation, such as for management structures and application of more contemporary design, manufactured home estates are well-placed to become a more widely used model.

## Principles

Principles that may be the foundation for a new model could include not being developer-led. There are examples of how that can be enforced.

Another principle could be any uplift in value is retained or partly retained by the housing equity remaining in the village.

Another principle, recognising the cost of home living is not just the capital cost of the build, but also the on-going energy, transport, food, services and other costs. And these on-going costs of living should be addressed in the model.

Lastly, using alternative property ownership and management models, like rental co-ops, Multiple Occupancy and Community Title, can create places that are more affordable and less insular, allowing for a more diverse range of people to live in a community.

## Ministerial interest

Finally, we should see if Lismore MP Janelle Saffin, Minister for Recovery could interest Rose Jackson, Minister for Housing, in creating a small taskforce comprising experts from government, experienced MO locals, university specialists who have the skills and interest, to explore new models, just like in the '80s when Frank Walker was Minister for Housing, and delivered that mission to us.

This article is the text of a talk given at the Aquarian Talks in Nimbin Hall on 24th May.

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# Rainbow Power Company provides secure home for Aquarius Archives



Greg Bork signs the Memorandum of Understanding with RPC's CEO, Matthew Wittemeier, watched by Aquarian archivists Franca Wolfe and Tess Schofield

by Greg Bork and Megan James  
Aquarius Archives Working Group

Australia's longest-running solar energy provider, Rainbow Power Company (RPC), has partnered with the Aquarius Archives to provide a secure, temperature-controlled storage space for the preservation of important regional historical materials.

Aquarius Archives is a working group of Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Incorporated (NAFI). Founded in 1993, NAFI is a not-for-profit charity with an objective of caring for the cultural heritage of Nimbin's 1973 Aquarius festival.

The agreement with RPC provides a home at their Nimbin premises to safely store archival materials documenting the Northern Rivers' unique cultural heritage. In return, the Aquarius Archives will document and preserve the stories of Rainbow Power Company and its co-founder, Peter Pedals, adding to the rich tapestry of local history.

RPC's CEO, Matthew Wittemeier says, "This relationship beautifully aligns with our commitment to community. Just as we've been

powering the region with sustainable energy since 1987, we're now helping power the preservation of our shared history."

Founded in 1987, RPC has been a cornerstone of Australia's renewable energy movement, growing from a \$90 start-up selling rechargeable torches to a leader in off-grid and hybrid solar solutions. The company's story, intertwined with Nimbin's alternative culture and environmental activism, represents an important chapter in Australia's transition to clean energy.

Working group member at Aquarius Archives, Gregory Bork, said: "Rainbow Power Company has been part of Nimbin's story since 1987, and we're thrilled they're helping Aquarius Archives preserve that story for future generations alongside so many other diverse stories that form the history of our unique community."

The Aquarius Archives working group is located at the Nimbin Community Centre on Cullen Street, 81 Cullen Street. They are open on Thursdays from 11am to 3pm.

For more information see: [www.aquariusarchives.org.au](http://www.aquariusarchives.org.au)

## Leadership transition at RPC

Last month, Rainbow Power Company (RPC) announced the appointment of Solar Hall of Fame inductee, Nigel Morris (pictured) as Chair of the Board.

The move marks a homecoming to the company where Morris's pioneering solar career began 34 years ago.

Morris returns as part of a strategic leadership renewal, following the appointment of Matthew Wittemeier as Chief Executive Officer.

Together, they bring a powerful combination of global experience and local commitment to Australia's original solar company.

"RPC gave me my start in solar, and it's genuinely exciting to return at such a pivotal time," said Morris.

"My focus is simple: to help ensure RPC continues leading Australia's solar revolution while staying true to its community roots."

Morris's appointment signals a new chapter for the 37-year-old company, which has recently refocused on its



core mission of accessible, community-centred renewable energy.

His career includes senior roles with BP Solar, CATCH Power/Solar Analytics, and Roof Juice/Sungevity, as well as founding Solar Business Services, Australia's leading solar consultancy. He also hosts the top-ranking 'Just Another Solar' podcast.

"Nigel's return brings both gravitas and genuine passion to our board," said CEO Matthew Wittemeier.

"His vision aligns with our renewed focus on being the trusted local partner for renewable energy. We're rebuilding trust through

expertise, accessibility, and authentic community connection."

The leadership transition also sees Carly Chapman moving from Chair of the Board to Company Secretary, and apply her financial expertise to strengthen governance and strategic planning.

Ken Jones, who has served with distinction as Company Secretary since 2019, will remain on the Board as a Director.

The Board changes reflect RPC's commitment to blending deep experience with fresh perspective as it enters its next phase of growth.

"What excites me most is the opportunity ahead," said Morris. "RPC has endured and thrived through every stage of Australia's solar evolution."

"With Matthew's leadership and a dedicated team, we're perfectly positioned to serve our community for decades to come."



## A warm welcome to the new residents of Nimbin

The Nimbin Chamber of Commerce warmly welcomes the many new residents who have recently moved to Fairview Estate – especially those who, quite literally, shifted their homes in the dead of night, popping up like mushrooms by morning!

It's genuinely uplifting to see these homes reimaged and given new life in such a beautiful setting – with stunning views and a short stroll to the village.

More importantly, it's the people who occupy them – the new residents who have chosen to make Nimbin home – who are bringing fresh energy and whose presence will leave a lasting, positive impact on our community and local economy.

The relocation and rebuilding of these homes has already created a wave of economic activity, generating new work for local trades, transport operators, and service providers, and boosting demand at Nimbin's hardware store, fuel stations, cafes, shops and supply yards.

These workers, builders and future neighbours are supporting dozens of local businesses – injecting new life and income into our small economy at a crucial time.

This energy is also rippling out – helping to revitalise nearby spaces like the old Nimbin Butter Factory at the foot of the estate.

The Bush Theatre has reopened on Friday nights with film, food and a relaxed atmosphere, creating new moments of community connection. It's a quiet but meaningful revival,

strengthened by the presence of new neighbours.

We encourage new residents to explore the many community organisations here – from arts and environmental groups to sporting clubs, business networks and volunteer initiatives.

Getting involved is one of the best ways to connect, settle in and help shape the vibrant future of our unique village.

### Chamber General Meeting

Next meeting is Tuesday 19th August, 5.30pm at the Nimbin Bush Theatre.

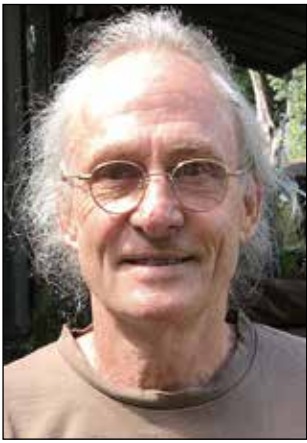
We invite you and all business and community members to the Chambers' next General Meeting, where we'll spotlight some of Nimbin's most inspiring local legends – business owners who are not only surviving but thriving in the face of growing competition from online retailers and out-of-town operators.

You'll hear firsthand how they're adapting, innovating, and staying relevant – through creative marketing, strong customer relationships, community connection and leveraging Nimbin's unique village identity.

Their stories and strategies will provide practical insights and inspiration for us all.

The following individuals will share their experiences and advice:

- Sammi Allen – Nimbin Apothecary
- Sue Churchill – Nimbin Emporium
- Ruben and Felix Mack – Nimbin Building Materials



### Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

- Matthew Wittemeier – Rainbow Power Company
- Wick (Aether Agency) – on social media and village branding
- Steph Seckold – reflecting on the original Buy Local campaign

We'll also present new information from Lismore City Council about initiatives in Nimbin designed to support local businesses through tourism-focused programs and economic development efforts.

### Welcome to our newest Chamber members

We're thrilled to welcome Aquarius Archives, Rainbow Goats, and Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services to the Chamber family.

Each of these members brings something uniquely valuable to our community – whether preserving our rich history, promoting sustainable farming, or supporting our elders with care and compassion.

Together, we are stronger. We look forward to introducing you all at future meetings and collaborative events.

Whether you're a business owner, a creative, or simply a community-minded local, your presence and input matter, let's continue to show what a connected village can achieve when we support one another.

Building a stronger local economy – together.



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**In August we explore the 'Natural Artist', using local materials:** making paintbrushes, tempera, distemper and clay paint, traditional gesso grounds for painting surfaces and more.

**Regular Workshops:** Gold coin donation  
• **Wed 14th: Spinners and Weavers** (Every 2nd Wednesday of month.)

• **Tues 19th: Knitting Group** (Every 3rd Tuesday of the month.)

**Community Tools Library:** Every Wed and Sat 10.30am-2pm, for home repairs, garden tools, food and craft equipment. Join at Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre Mon-Fri. Basketballs and pump available: with \$5 refundable deposit.

## August What's On!

For bookings, email: [sibley@nnic.org.au](mailto:sibley@nnic.org.au)



NGT welcomes letters and other contributions received by email or post prior to deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length, and articles for accuracy. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of Nimbin GoodTimes.

## Sugar cane burning

Given the serious health and environmental issues created by sugar cane burning, it is time for the immediate adoption of safer and cleaner methods.

Very few regions in Australia still burn, however within the Tweed Shire the practice continues.

An article dating back to 2007 in *The Tweed Link*, a Tweed Shire Council publication, stated that:

"Clear skies are forecast for the Tweed towards the end of this year, when the 30-megawatt co-generation facility at Condong brings an end to most cane burning across the valley, substantially reducing the incidence of cane leaf ash or 'black snow'."

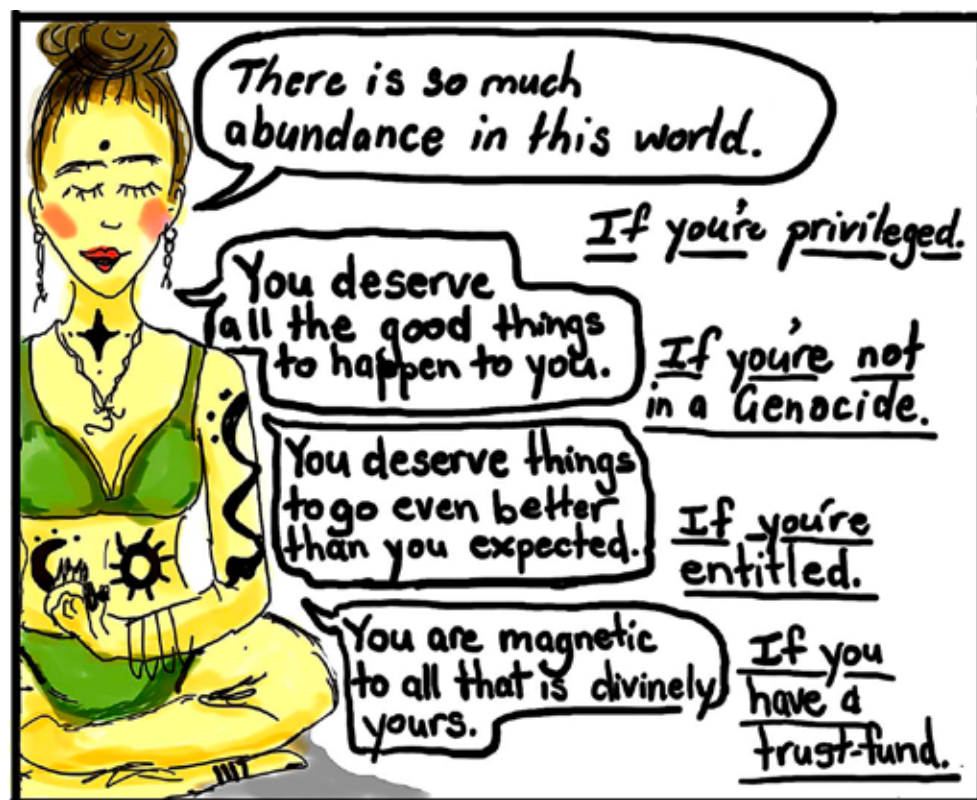
Yet here we are, 18 years on and the smoke and ash which can release toxic air pollutants is worse than ever.

The facility built in Condong in 2006 did provide a solution, however the NSW Cane Growers Association have stated that "the economics did not stack up and we had to return to the practice of burning cane before harvest."

The health risks are well documented. Thousands of medical, scientific, and academic research articles can now be found pointing to detrimental health implications for many people exposed to the smoke and ash caused from the burning of sugarcane.

The data is there: cardiovascular disease, pulmonary distress, chronic kidney disease, respiratory illness, bronchitis, asthma, lung cancer and systemic inflammation.

Sugar cane farmers work



(I was actually LISTENING to this meditation). *Holly*  
www.hollyenglish.com

hard to produce sugar and its by-products. They have a right to make a living and not be out of pocket, however alternatives to burning such as green harvesting must be reconsidered.

The NSW Cane Growers Association argues against green harvesting and trash blanketing citing climatic and technical constraints, a decrease in productivity and additional expenses such as transportation, fuel costs and maintenance.

A greater consideration must be given to the serious health implications and diminished air quality created by the burning.

A win-win solution is imperative.

Kathryn Edmunds  
Murwillumbah

## Humanity 101

When we communicate with someone through a social network, we're already disconnected from them physically.

We're not in each other's physical presence to experience the tone of their voice, their body language and gestures, their personal energy – but at least there's 'someone' on the other end of the line.

Yet when the other person uses an AI to communicate, there's a double layer of disconnect.

No longer are we indirectly sharing with or responding to another human being, but instead we're indirectly talking to their program!

And here's the rub. Once we normalise communicating via AI, the last vestige of human contact disappears altogether and is replaced by an automated proxy.

It's not thoughts and feelings typed directly by hand into a keyboard we're dealing with, but a language model that mimics human behaviour through a probability distribution algorithm that predicts a likely human response.

There's no beating heart at the other end of the phone line, no lived history, no physical encounter of the world – just a set of mathematical instructions.

Speaking for myself, I'd rather communicate with a real person.

I'd rather invest my valuable time and energy with a fellow biology rather than with a soulless machine – however clever. Why?

Because I value humanity. I value our physical existence and the opportunity to share that experience with likeminded souls.

It's what being human is all about – reaching out to someone, not some 'thing'.

R J Poole  
Lismore

## Weapons of war

The other night I watched a TV programme about advances in military efforts towards defence, which I was hoping would speed up world peace.

However as I watched it I gradually realised it was a little more gruesome than I expected.

I will try to mention some of the points they made, and it includes nations worldwide.

1. One weapon is a rocket with a pointed nose which pierces a mountain with various caves and tunnels where people might believe they might be safe from enemy attack but when it explodes it kills everybody.
2. Another is for people who rush to a beach and to the ocean to escape multiple explosions from a smart fragmentation bomb but another rocket from above gets the lot.
3. Most of these are launched from often American military stealth aircraft which fly low to the ground and cannot be detected by radar, however they love to blame someone else like any other country

but their own.

There were many more of these things, which are the major cause of global warming.

So I guess you get my drift, grief and total disgust that these guys can have no empathy at all, being so proud of their inventions and destroy the world they live on.

Anne Sutherland  
Robina

## Opposition to slaughter

Jillian Segal's anti-semitism plan strikes against national unity. We already have anti-racism and anti-terrorism laws for everyone.

We opposed the South African government's apartheid laws and regime; we condemned Saddam Hussein's government over the Halabja massacre, chemical gas attack against Kurds on 16th March 1988.

We intervened in East Timor in 1999, primarily through the International Force East Timor (INTERFET), because of a combination of humanitarian concerns and a desire to ensure a stable transition to independence for the nation.

We eventually had the Vietnam Moratorium, a series of large-scale protests against Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, which saw significant demonstrations in major Australian cities on 8th May, 1970.

Why can't we speak out about the current Israeli government's "heavy handed" retribution in Gaza (and some other sovereign states)?

Are the attacks we are witnessing in Australia also a reflection that many people are horrified by the endless killing of civilians, the continuing illegal settlements and the forced displacement of local people?

Hamas's attack on 7th October 2023 resulted in a total of 1,195 people killed: 736 Israeli civilians (including 36 children), 79 foreign nationals, and 379 members of the security forces.

About 250 Israeli civilians and soldiers were taken as hostages.

55,104 Palestinians have been killed since the start

of the war and 127,394 wounded. Many more are believed to be buried under the rubble or in areas that are inaccessible to local medics.

Women and children make up more than half the dead.

There is NO justification for this level of slaughter, and of course we should NOT have attacks against any national or ethnic groups in Australia.

We should be imposing some kind of sanctions against a government involved in starvation of civilians, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

R White  
Ballina

## Crisis of humanity

A haunting silence grips Gaza, where mothers cradle frail, hollow-cheeked children whose stomachs twist with hunger – a horror made all the more unbearable because it is unfolding in real time.

For more than four months, Israel's near-total siege has choked off nearly all access to food, prompting the UN to report at least one in three Gazans going multiple days without a single meal.

Nearly 700,000 people – including 90,000 children and 30,000 mothers – are enduring catastrophic malnutrition, their bodies withering toward death even as aid lingers unreachable at closed borders and locked warehouses.

Hospitals now hold wards bursting with children who weigh little more than a shadow, while journalists and aid workers collapse in lines, refusing to abandon people who survive on lentils boiled in salt water.

Each heartbeat is a reminder: life in Gaza has squeezed into spaces of starvation, fear and unbearable loss. This moment in Gaza isn't just a crisis of hunger – it is a crisis of humanity.

Though Australia has little impact on world events, to recognise Palestine as a state would be very helpful.

Encouraging countries to impose sanctions on trade and sport are also a possibility.

Mark Pestell  
Nimbin

## About us

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# Gaza is a microcosm of the world

by Julie De Lorenzo

Gazans are currently being deliberately starved. Without stating the statistics and details, I want to focus on the importance of how much we are needed right now.

Most of us have no idea what it feels like to have bombs dropped near us or to be shot at, but we all know the feeling of hunger.

Aside from seeing babies and children torn to shreds or buried underneath massive chunks of blown-up concrete, I cannot think of anything more torturous and disempowering for a parent than to helplessly nurse their baby as they slowly dehydrate and shrivel up to a mere skeleton, starved to death, whilst they are starving too.

It is totally heart-breaking and overwhelming for any human to witness the horror in Gaza, but we have the privilege of not being bombed, shot by snipers or drones, unlawfully imprisoned and starved and when this is acknowledged, it is impossible to sit by and do nothing.

We are all in our own stages of evolution, but collectively we are at a crucial point and humanity is in desperate need of each and every one of us.

I understand that some people simply cannot even look at the horror, but if you are one of the people who see



or hear about it, and go about your day, what exactly are you doing with that information?

What do you do with the emotions that arise in you... the rage at our so called leaders, the feeling of helplessness, the grief?

I can testify that channelling that energy into supporting the cause of Palestinians is a healthy one, no matter how small. I can't so much save their lives, but it's the least and most humane thing to do.

Let me try this analogy, if we have a disease that needs treatment, we need to first feel the pain and discomfort, acknowledge that something is wrong and then seek out the right medicine with herbs and food to assist the body

to heal. We turn our attention towards the parts of us that need love and healing, rather than ignoring it and hoping it will go away.

If Palestine is our metaphorical heart and it is under attack, we are simply compounding their entrapment, by starving them of the oxygen and love that they so desperately need now.

This is an emergency that needs as many of us to participate as possible.

If you feel the urge to take any kind of action, there are several ways you can play a part to help free Palestine and dismantle the colonial empires that wield their power and control.

- Boycott companies whose funds contribute to supplying weapons to Israel.
- Visit: [www.bds.net.au](http://www.bds.net.au) to find out more.
- Download the No Thanks app (allows you to scan any product with a barcode and will tell you it's either good to go, otherwise it's a No Thanks.
- Join Northern Rivers Friends of Palestine via Facebook and be informed of rallies and fundraising events in the Northern Rivers
- Join APAN (Australian Palestine Advocacy Network) Here you'll find resources to call email government reps, sign petitions, make donations to verified organisations etc

No matter how much time you have to give in whichever way, any amount is valuable.

Every Wednesday outside the Farmers' Market 4-5pm we, Nimbin Friends of Palestine stand in solidarity and offer an open space for conversation.

Join us to create a presence for Palestine in our town or come and have a conversation.

The same happens in Kyogle on Thursdays, 4.30-5.30pm corner Geneva Street and Summerland Way, and also in Lismore on Thursdays, 4.30-5.45pm corner Magellan and Keen Streets.

Every decision to help, helps.

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# Where is the humanity, the love?

by Gwilym Summers

I recently went to the Convergence In Canberra for Gaza to try and sway our Government towards sanctions on Israel.

Recently I saw a YouTube clip regarding the surveillance of Palestinian people, and saw the drones that have guns on them, all cold hard machinations of war which hold Gaza in brutal genocide.

Afterwards I thought it was pointless to watch that because it was horrendous and doesn't lead us to any kind of compassion or caring for our fellow humans, who in this case are under extreme duress. It did not consider us as humans or lovable.

How could we consider heading toward peace? We must put our focus in a place of love for peace to prevail.

After watching the film, I then considered my own feelings, the grief for what is happening, it is all-consuming. The pain of what one nation does to another I have never been able to come to terms with.

There is so much hate in our world, and consider this: a baby does not hate, as the baby grows it is taught, and thus becomes separate from one group of people.

Then he/she might become a soldier who can't say no to their authoritarian rulers who have extreme ideology, which includes killing others to gain land.

If they are a sensitive type, they might burn their draft card and refuse as they will feel wounded in their own heart.

It hurts our very being to have love in our hearts which is reserved only for



our very own special people who might belong in the one church that we adhere to.

This is where our so-called love has become twisted. Love does not hold anyone out, it embraces all.

Having considered this, I went to Canberra and felt empowered by a common goal. Also walking with people who, like me feel the pain of watching 'Holocaust 2' being live streamed. We said, "Never again."

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