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# Bowlo welcomes new board

by Kate Imeson, president

As I write this article, the new board of the Nimbin Bowling Sport and Recreation Club is working hard behind the scenes in preparation for the club's re-opening on Wednesday 3rd September.

It was disappointing that we needed to close while we worked through the required accreditation, training and many legal requirements for the club and board members to operate.

Being a registered club, there are a number of legal requirements the club and the board must adhere to. That said, we are all incredibly grateful the club will go on, and are enthusiastic for our role in the Bowlo's renewal and its future.

While we have been closed, we have used the downtime for a mini-refurbishment, and I want to personally thank all those involved in this, included the young crew who volunteered their time on the tools, the local tradies, Nimbin Building Materials



The new Bowlo board members

and Haymes Paint. Thank you.

I know you will all be keen to hear what will be happening with the kitchen, and I am pleased to share with you that we are moving ahead with selecting a Bistro operator and its likely operating days/times for the kitchen will be similar to those previously.

In addition, we expect feature nights that were

running previously, including open mic night and monthly storytellers to continue, and we are excited to introduce new ideas for additional social events.

Moving forward, we intend to consult with members and the community regarding what you want to see, as we appreciate and understand the club is a not-for-profit entity, owned by members, for members, and is an

important space within the Nimbin community.

Thank you again for your continued support, and thanks to everyone who has spoken to us about the new Board, whether that was to offer gratitude, constructive feedback or (you legends!) volunteering time, skills or advice.

We look forward to welcoming you all back in early September.

## What's on at Nimbin Youth?

by Rain Wickham

Most arvos on Cullen Street you'll hear it: laughter, dice rolling, bead trays clinking, the toastie press sizzling, and Rain taste-testing her (ever-evolving) mean fruit punch. That's Nimbin Youth.

Each week, anywhere from 20 to 60 young people drop by to eat, hang, game, yarn and get the help they need.

It's not just games and toasties. We back it with steady support: homework help, referrals, youth 'crisis' care, advocacy, tech access strengthened by wrap-around partnerships with services across our village.

A huge thanks to the Nimbin Hemp Embassy: they are absolute champions helping keep our doors open; and



The Nimbin Youth room

to everyone who's chipped in. One hundred per cent of donations go straight back to 'Youth Care.'

### What's On

- Friendship band making with beads
- D&D campaign nights (new players welcome!)
- Toasties on the go and chilled space
- Rain's weekly "How do I make this punch even better?" experiment

• So much more!

### Calling in the village (that's you)

If you're calm, kind and up for being a solid adult in the room, we'd love you on the crew.

- You must have (or be keen to get) a Working With Children Check
- Flexible arvo shifts + occasional events
- Induction, guidance and back-up provided

Come meet Rain and Wick, see the space, feel the vibe and jump in where it suits you, from bead-making and D&D nights, to toastie duty or behind-the-scenes help.

Keen to volunteer or support? Go to: [nimbinyouth.org.au](http://nimbinyouth.org.au) or contact us at: [office@nimbinyouth.org.au](mailto:office@nimbinyouth.org.au) phone 0401-944-623.

## Falls prevention is everyone's business

by Jacintha Duivenvoorden

On a recent winter's afternoon, the feeling in the cosy room at Nimbin Aged Care & Respite Services social centre was deeply heart-warming.

As I listened to people share personal reflections on their experience of the Falls Prevention Program, I realised the positive transformative impact taking part in this group had for each person. Gail, my co-facilitator, felt it too, smiling across the room.

We understood why we were drawn to making sure this happens. Not only does it work to reduce falls, participating makes a difference in people's worlds.

Falls are the greatest cause of injury and death worldwide, across all ages. Falls prevention is everyone's business. One in three people aged over 65 will fall every

year. As we age, falls can have a more severe impact on our bodies. Sadly, falls in older people are the leading cause of premature death or early admission into residential aged care.

The Stepping On falls prevention program was created and developed by Australians Megan Swann and Lindy Clemson and is proven to reduce falls in older adults by up to 30%. The program increases knowledge around falls through education, story telling, and the sharing of personal experiences.

Over the seven weeks, people work towards building strength and balance, confidence and body awareness, encouraging people to claim back the sense of bodily autonomy that getting older can sometimes take from us.

One participant at Nimbin said, "What a difference to



my confidence as I developed the strength and balance in this incredibly useful, practical course."

A big thankyou Doug from Nimbin Optical for volunteering to help us understand the importance of vision in falls prevention, and to Dr Jackie Boustany for sharing her knowledge of how medications can impact our balance. It takes a village and we so appreciated these two giving their time.

We proudly acknowledge all the people who have completed the last two series of Stepping On, showing us how successful this initiative is. It's been an honour to take this journey with each of you.

The Stepping On seven-week course is free, located in town at the NACRS Social Centre (Bottlebrush Studio at the Community Centre). We have 12 spots available with the next course scheduled to commence in mid-November.

If you would like to sign up for future Stepping On sessions, please collect, complete and return the Stepping On Registration Form from Nimbin Aged Care & Respite Services at Bottlebrush Studio (the rainbow building at Nimbin Community Centre) between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday. Or phone 6689-1709 to arrange an email copy or a posted copy of the form.

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# Homeless camp ends after MP refuses meeting

by Chels Hood Withey

A week-long homeless camp outside Minister for Recovery, Small Business and the North Coast, Janelle Saffin's Lismore office ended after the MP refused meeting with housing advocates, and called police on constituents seeking help with the homelessness crisis.

The camp was established by community members made homeless by recent NSW Reconstruction Authority evictions, sky-high rents, and unaffordable homes. They demanded action on housing while more than 800 empty buyback properties remain vacant across the Northern Rivers that could be relocated for public housing as a simple step towards ending the homelessness crisis on the North Coast.

"We just wanted a meeting with our local Minister about housing solutions," said Chels Hood Withey from House You, who was recently evicted from a taxpayer-owned property that never flooded.

"Instead, Janelle Saffin closed her office to the public under 'security concerns' and repeatedly called police on us for trying to book appointments. The only risk to safety we witnessed living on the street was for those rough sleeping, not an MP," Chels Hood Withey said.

During the week-long peaceful homeless vigil, Minister Saffin's staff called police multiple times on homeless constituents seeking meetings, with staff members claiming members of the public who went in (separate from the camp) were 'intimidating' and causing 'PTSD.'

The camp received overwhelming community support, with locals providing food, coffee, hot water bottles, clothing, and even a sofa delivery. Supporters included Sue



Higginson MLC and numerous community members, who thanked the campers for making homelessness visible.

"I found the lovely people at the camp represent me more than our state member," said Tahila Bloom, homeless grandmother and supporter of the camp. "I am 50. I had a job, but I still lost my home. I have been suffering in silence and isolation until I found that there is a whole community of people who are also locked out of this basic human right to safe shelter."

"Our state governments have collectively let 1.5 million people fall through the cracks. We still want to work with the government to develop more affordable housing solutions during this crisis," she said.

"If we can organise land and funding, we can build tiny homes out of the flood zone with communal food gardens, kitchen and bathroom facilities so that people can have their dignity and feel safe. But this is such a huge problem, it needs to be repeated in every town," she said.

Chels Hood Withey said, "we were peacefully offering

our community food, care and a safe place to rest because we have nowhere to go. We were visibly homeless for all those who suffer in obscurity and feel silenced by vulnerability and a system rigged against them."

A tradesman living in his van with his two dogs, Gabriel Pizarro said, "the police demand we follow the law, we demand to be treated like humans. We can no longer afford the greed and heartless attitudes. Hardworking Australians should not be homeless and attacked by the people that serve them."

Homeless people and community members are seeking dialogue to begin to address the housing crisis with the NSW government. Solutions include:

- Rent caps to address affordability crisis;
- Sufficient public housing so no one sleeps rough;
- No empty homes while people are homeless;
- No demolition of livable public housing;
- Collaboration with the community on housing solutions; and
- No real estate portfolios held by politicians during a housing crisis.

The camp highlighted government hypocrisy, with campers witnessing a single mother and children denied housing by Homes NSW, despite being evicted by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

"Other states have ended homelessness, why can't Australia?" asks Chels Hood Withey. "Everyone is entitled to meet with their local Minister. We just want leadership, accountability and our tax dollars spent on welfare, not warfare," she said.

After seven days, Lismore City Council ordered the camp to move to a park within 24 hours, or face a \$700 fine, preferring that homeless people remain hidden from the Minister who could actually address the crisis.

"The only security concerns we saw were the insecurity, risk to safety and cold faced by people sleeping rough," concluded Chels Hood Withey. "Janelle Saffin has the power to do better, but chose avoidance over action."

The campers continue seeking dialogue about housing solutions while remaining homeless themselves.

## Tribute to David Hallett on the occasion of his 75th birthday

by Mariska Pinkerton

He's an enigma. As he stands to the side quietly in the shadows, he smiles, he speaks, though also he keeps to himself.

You may say that this is a contradiction. Maybe that's what he is too, loving to shine right out front. But in the meantime, just sitting back most of the night.

Smile at him and he will talk with you, he will chat and banter with you but really, where is his mind? It seems to be somewhere else.

Then out he comes upon the stage like a flower, his petals open up as he projects and nuances his words as he speaks his mind, from his brain he remembers the words.

A professional poet. One who lives his poems, knowing them intimately. He's thinking of them while he's talking to you.

His voice lilts with ebbs and flows, highs and lows. They play in silver knots entwining, describing and feeling themselves, but fully under his control.

He is a craftsman. He crafts the ideas, the words come alive. With influences of poets now, and those that are no longer alive.

He studies meter and stance. His face, like a curtain that you can't penetrate, or see within, only the poem comes forward and when he's in it, you do not see him thinking, you only see poetry and motion.



Once his poem is done he recedes back, back, back as he lets others shine forward in front of house. This is what makes him so special.

He, by his actions, by his work, sweat and tears, shows us the way that we can be poets, thus we find him dear.

He inspires people, opening them up, letting them be who they are, while watching them grow. He encourages and puts forward a place where people can be safe.

Year after year, he brings out the gear, he drives it, carries it, lifts it, and parries it into place. He does this thoughtfully creating this space. The Poetry Club stage where people share love,

nuance, humour, feelings, and rage.

This man has enabled me and for this, I thank him every night that he carries on this fight. The fight for justice, fight for expression, love, care and nurture.

David Hallett. You are the champion of champions as you quietly watch and keep to your own. Your contradiction in character is what brings great things to life.

If you stood out too much there it would leave less room for poets to nurture their growth though through your extraordinary strength of being the penultimate example of fine poetry when you delicately allow yourself to shine, you guide us through our journeys forward. I find myself here upon your stage again, and again thank you.

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## New donations for archive project

by Greg Bork

Aquarius Archives apologises if you've come in expecting to find us on Thursdays. We've moved our weekly working group day to Fridays at 11am-3pm due to volunteer availability.

We love all of our weekly visits from community members, so please come and say hi on Fridays at the Nimbin Community Centre, 81 Cullen Street, with the "May the long time sun shine upon you" bags in the windows.

The Aquarius Archives is looking ahead to what we hope to do next year, with the next round of grant applications with the Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF) due in September. NRCF grant funding for 2025 was what began the Aquarius Archives project.

We've achieved most of our goals for our first year, with our storage depot now secure at Rainbow Power Company and our thriving headquarters at the Community Centre. We've begun some exhibitions in the Community Centre hallway, especially on Fridays when we put out all of our display books.

Joining the exhibitions in the hallways soon will be displays from the former Nimbin Visitor Information Centre that were recently donated by Lismore Council, thanks to Karen Hirst. These include large information



boards about the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival, and a replica of the signpost in Allsopp Park in 1973 that directed Festival participants to cosmic and radical destinations.

These displays were the centrepiece of the Archives at Aquarius exhibition at Aquarius50 festival in 2023 (pictured), thanks to Franca Wolfe.

Having 'moveable objects' on permanent display officially makes us a 'museum' eligible to apply for grants from Museums and Galleries NSW, and we're hoping to kick off with our grant application for a Strategic Plan.

Of course, there are many more grants out there that we may be eligible for. We would welcome someone with grant writing experience writing themselves into our budget.

With all of this happening

we have a significant bottleneck in our workflow, getting on top of our initial collections. Katie Cawcutt amassed a mountain of documents and ephemera from her many years at Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc.

These are now stacked high in our headquarters as we gradually treat them for insects by freezing them, and then begin sorting them.

We've also begun to receive the Aquarian Archive, which has been in storage at Richmond Library for 15 years. Gary is kindly bringing two boxes at a time weekly with the mobile library. These go straight into our freezer for insect control, which is always chockers.

In all we are anticipating around a hundred boxes! This collection includes the archives of the Pan-Community Council.

If you are familiar with these archives, you may like to help us sort and catalogue them please. Also from this collection are the archives of the Northeast Forest Alliance, with John Corkill kindly joining us to sort these in future.

This substantial backlog leaves open the question of how we accept the numerous other archives in the community in the near future. You can get ten steps ahead by organising, labelling, cataloguing and cleaning items for donation.

Familiarise yourself with our Collections Policy and 'Looking After Your Archives' at: [aquariusarchives.org.au](http://aquariusarchives.org.au) for more information. If you need help and advice with any of this, please get in touch.

We are very keen to chat about your archives. Even if we don't have the capacity to accept your donation straight away, let's work together to make it happen soon.

With much of our essential infrastructure in place halfway through our first year, acquisitions will continue to be our top priority throughout 2026, and looking after the cultural heritage of Nimbin in perpetuity.

While our 2025 grant from NRCF was about establishing the Aquarius Archives, our 2026 application will be about how we can provide a useful and accessible resource for the community.

## First meeting of the Lismore Villages Advisory Group

by Gwen Trimble

In March, Lismore City Council (LCC) voted to disband the Nimbin Advisory Group and instead created a Lismore Villages Advisory Group (LVAG), which comprises 12 village representatives (two reps from each of the six village regions), as well as council representatives, including Cr Waters (chair), Cr Rob (deputy chair), Cr Jensen, Cr Dalton-Earls, Cr Battista, and Cr Knight-Smith.

The LVAG will meet quarterly, and had its first meeting on 2nd August, 2025. Group members include Max Pike and Gwen Trimble from Nimbin, Denise Whitney from Rural North West (Jiggi), Len Johnston from Richmond Hill, Lucy Kinsley from Wyrallah, Col Baker and Adrienne Morgan from Dunoon/Modanville, and Des Harris and Tracey Whitby from Clunes/Bexhill.

There are still three position unfilled, one each for Rural North West (Jiggi), Rural South (Wyrallah) and Richmond Hill. So, if you have an interest in taking on these roles, please contact the group's chair, Cr Waters.

### Matters presented at August meeting

**Clunes:** Council's strategic planning staff presented information on the current community consultation they are undertaking regarding the Draft Clunes Master Plan and asked for advice on what might be the best way to collect community feedback.

**Nimbin:** We were advised that the developer has submitted a plan to meet the deferred commencement conditions for the approved DA for a mixed-use development at 62 Cullen Street, Nimbin. Proposed works include a handrail and stairs along Rainbow Lane's steepest section and landscaping works in four small areas of the western car park adjacent to Nimbin Central School's fence.

Nimbin representatives drew staff's attention to: (i) the need to include access alongside any stairs for those using mobility aids; (ii) unsuitability of including Bangalow Palms in the landscaping; and (iii) that the school is planning to replace the fencing, so suggested any landscaping work should be deferred until after that.

Council staff said they were aware of all three issues, and that all would be accommodated.

With the support of the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce and Nimbin Interagency, reference was made to the many residential developments approved in and near the village, now placing increased pressure on the narrow and poorly formed streets, and a request for a Nimbin Traffic Management Plan was made.

Safety concerns were raised regarding the pedestrian access to the Western car park, between Nimbin Bakery and Birth and Beyond, as it's difficult to see some steps. A request was made for reflective strips be installed as a safety measure. It was agreed to refer the request to Lismore Traffic Management

Committee and Strategic Planning Department for investigation.

Although the newly constructed Nimbin amenities block has the necessary fittings for hot water to be connected, there are only cold-water showers. The community have requested that Council investigate options to install and connect a solar hot water system, and Cr Waters agreed to look at how that might be achieved.

**Rural North West:** Council was requested to explore the possibility of constructing public toilets at Goolmangar.

**Modanville/Dunoon:** Staff were asked about the likelihood and possible time frame for providing sewer connections, footpaths and public toilets in Modanville. Council staff provided information regarding the strategic planning and prioritisation of these services in the LGA, which made it unlikely to be a funded project in the near future, but agreed to provide regular updates on other strategic and village plans that may identify opportunities.

The poor state of repair of Dunoon Road was raised, and Mayor Krieg provided a thorough briefing on the new roads programme and methodology, which should see a much more efficient use of staff, time management and available funds going forward.

It was acknowledged that the extreme wet weather was a major factor in our poor road conditions.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 3rd November.



# Zac McDonald's Canadian dirt track adventure

by Marc LeBars

While most Aussies head to Canada for the snow or the maple syrup, Zac McDonald (pictured) decided to pack his race gear and take on some of the toughest dirt tracks in North America. "I'm here in Quebec racing for Team TBR," Zac says, grinning through the phone.

"I'm so lucky to be able to drive for one of the best teams in the country, The competition's wild, these guys over here don't muck around. You've gotta be sharp from the green flag or you're toast, miss your mark once and your getting passed."

Racing against some of the best in the game, Zac's been holding his own and then some. "Back in Australia, I've been a top-five finisher for the last couple of years. Over here, it's a new ball game: different tyres, different tracks, and a whole lot more French swear words being yelled in the pits."

One of the biggest curveballs has been the Canadian tracks themselves, as well as the chassis set-up "The clay's slicker, the racing lines change faster, and if you're not paying attention you're at the back," Zac laughs. "It's made me drive smarter, not just harder."

"The chassis, bar angles and spring



curves are different to what I'm used to so that's been challenging getting used to that while trying to race the best of the best."

Despite the change in scenery, the Canadian fans have been just as passionate as the Aussie ones, maybe even more so. "They love that I've come all the way from the other side of the world just to race here."

After the race, people come up, shake your hand, and want to know everything about Australia and hear my accent. It's been unreal," he said.

As for what's next? Zac's keeping it

simple. "I just want to keep learning, keep pushing, and maybe try to get on the podium before I head home to Nimbin."

But really, I'm just here to have a crack, put on a show, and maybe teach these Canadians a thing or two about Aussie dirt track racing."

So while the maple leaves fall in Quebec, keep an ear out for the roar of a V8, it might just be Zac McDonald making his mark on the other side of the planet, fuelled by grit, determination and a whole lot of hard work.

So let's cheer on our local racer!

## Re-visiting the hippy trail in Thailand

by Michael Balderstone

I hadn't been to Bangkok in 50 years. Back then it was a hub for hippie travellers, an access point to fly anywhere and buy anything.

The Thai Song Greet cafe had a big sweaty fellow in a singlet cooking in the front window using a giant wok with the ash dropping off the ever-present fag in his mouth straight into the mix. I remember thinking, oh well burnt ash can't be too bad for you.

Upstairs you could buy fake cards of any sort, and passports too no doubt. We all had student cards which got discounted flight prices. I went walking among the opium growing villages in the hills around Chiang Mai in the north with their bamboo roofs blackened with the smoke.

I remember putting a paper around a whole Buddha stick up there and lighting it up after pulling the stick out and hallucinating freely.

It was a time of wonder. Wandering the planet in the seventies as a hippie, living as frugally as possible to stretch out any money for as long as possible, living could be super cheap. On the beach at Goa, I slept in palm leaf beach shacks for 50 cents a night and eating wasn't much more, especially if you helped the fishermen pull in their nets.

The little fishing villages that have now become international resorts were made for hippy dreaming with super cheap weed and mushroom milkshakes in some cafes.

Good on Jeremy Buckingham opening up Ivan Milat's history again after discovering there are dozens



A weed shop in Bangkok

and dozens of missing girls, unsolved cases on our east coast.

I know the drug war helped create a super-dangerous situation for thousands of vulnerable and innocent hippy girls, and boys, who were criminals only because they smoked weed or tripped on mushrooms. But that throws them into a criminal shadow land where you don't go to the police and are easy prey for predators.

Charles Sobhraj, the French serial killer who is eerily familiar to me, was living in Bangkok when I was here. He murdered 20 hippies they know of in those years, 14 in Thailand. His victims were all western tourists travelling on the hippie trail, and I can easily believe he struck up a conversation with me one day at a beach cafe because that's how he worked. Netflix made a series about him called *The Serpent*.

My point is the illegality of the sacred entheogenic plants the hippies were using made them super-vulnerable. There were no guides as was tradition back in the days of indigenous tribes using these sacred plants.

Mushrooms and hash blew

my mind, and I wandered around Asia for decades trying to work out who I was and what to do, staying away from Australia which just wanted me to get a job.

There were thousands of us on the hippy trail and I know many never made it home. Innocent young westerners with ten years salary for an Afghani casually in their pocket. I was in a super cheap hotel in Old Delhi where they carted out a dead junkie nearly every day. People got habits they couldn't leave and home was a long way away.

I looked after a girl with cholera, isolated in a Manali forest, and didn't seem to care about dying. There was a real brotherhood on the trail as we all had a lot in common spiritually, just like there is in Nimbin.

Little weed shops are all over the place here in Bangkok, some of them just a hole in the wall. A prescription wasn't an issue until the eighth one who wanted one before selling us any weed. We needed to show our passport, pay 15 bucks and we could pick up the prescription the next day.

Others said next year they expect they will need a doctor on site, but enforcement hasn't

happened yet. They all say business is down because of the media talk that Thailand is clamping down.

The weed is expensive. Perfectly manicured buds handled with tweezers and gloves, every strain and type you could want, but most of it over 30 bucks a gram! Some as high as 50. Scottish me I bought some ready rolled joints for 15 dollars a gram, perfectly good weed, but there was nothing cheaper.

Then out of nowhere a Facebook friend I scarcely know invites us to visit. I remember Warwick going to enormous trouble getting a licence to grow medical weed legally in Oz but he couldn't find a millionaire backer so instead moved here, where he has an export licence now. So glad he invited us over to view his hundreds of samples that growers are trying to get him to sell for them.

The mad green rush that started a few years ago has started to flatten out, but Thailand is clearly becoming the big new supplier to the Aussie legal weed market. It makes sense seeing as soon as the Thais legalised it, expert and experienced growers from places like Canada moved here and the climate is perfect.

The Thais also traditionally grew some cannabis plants in their gardens and as I heard, often threw some leaves or buds into the evening soup so everyone had a good sleep.

Also exciting, Warwick told me the Thai gardeners are often women and being Buddhist they don't like killing anything, so don't like using chemicals. He's taking us out to a big growing operation business he likes called 'Thai Stick' so we will see for ourselves.

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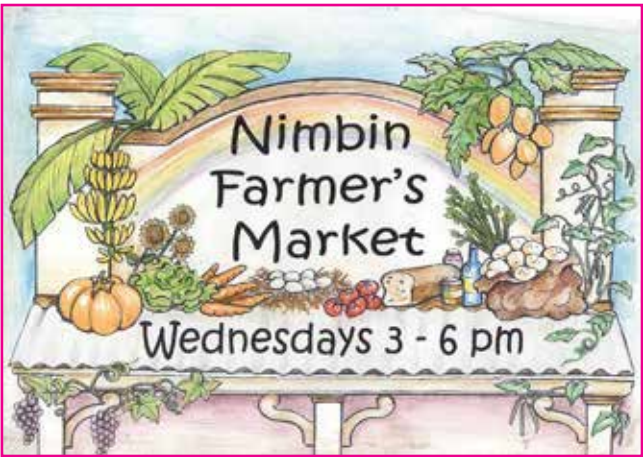


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# Building communities for the 2020s: the future of ecovillages

by Shane Sylvanspring

I grew up in Melbourne, but when I was 13 my mother brought me to Nimbin briefly, where we lived in a teepee on a Multiple Occupancy.

In my younger years I also lived in large share houses, communities and attended many gatherings and conferences. Those experiences planted a seed.

Later, as a trained town planner, I sought out international ecovillages such as Findhorn in Scotland and Damanhur in Italy, where I deepened my passion for community living.

Training with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in Ecovillage Design Education at Findhorn helped me develop the skills I use today.

Community living is, I believe, one of the solutions to many of today's challenges. I have been helping communities form at different stages for years, and my biggest project so far is the Afterlee Ecovillage near Kyogle.

### A model for affordability

Afterlee Ecovillage, now two years into development, was created because so many people are seeking community living at affordable prices, with new models of transparency and integrity.

Many people are wanting to experience living in community, realising the resilience and satisfaction community living brings as well as improving the environment and moving towards a regenerative future.

We had to move away from the coast, where land prices are prohibitive. Kyogle offered large, affordable parcels, making it possible to create a village-scale project. Village scale was required to ensure affordability and resilience.

We chose a co-operative model to purchase the land, ensuring integrity and avoiding speculative schemes. It is low-risk. People's money goes into the land itself, not into questionable structures.

To tackle affordability, we are exploring manufactured homes, with two-bedroom units at around \$170,000, alongside rent-to-buy schemes and even the potential relocation of government-acquired flood houses. These are practical ways to provide real homes for people who can afford a share in the co-op but not immediate construction costs.

The great news is there are increasing options with manufactured and prefab housing to get individual finance options not tied to normal Torrens title, which will solve many historic barriers for people with low incomes on Multiple Occupancies developing a legal dwelling.

### Lessons from the past

Looking at decades of planning history, I see clear contrasts between earlier community movements and today's challenges.

In the 1970s, passion alone was often enough to start a community. Today, land prices, regulations and busy modern lives make it much harder.

Community Titles can be a good legal framework, but I have also seen them



Shane speaking at the Aquarius Talks

misused by developers in Byron to create rural subdivisions, with million-dollar lots and no real community.

That is why I argue for reforms, such as requiring five years as a Multiple Occupancy before conversion to Community Title. This ensures projects remain genuinely community-driven and affordable – the aims the policy sets out to achieve.

### Professional support for community-driven projects

One of our biggest innovations at Afterlee has been combining community ownership with professional expertise.

In the past, many communities collapsed under the weight of regulations. At Afterlee, we have brought in professionals, including planners, governance experts and facilitators to assist for the first two years.

This prevents members from burning out on bureaucracy while still keeping the project community-driven.

This kind of professional support is now necessary if we want functional Multiple Occupancies. It ensures we can work within government policies and legal frameworks, while building governance and ideals that reflect the intent of the Land Sharing Policy.

### Intergenerational design and the future

I strongly believe in intergenerational diversity. Often it is older people who have the resources, but younger families are essential too. At Afterlee, some older members are even sponsoring younger ones, which is fantastic.

We have designed the village with smaller, affordable accessible lots so residents can age in place. It is one of the first Multiple Occupancies to consciously plan for ageing.

Education is another cornerstone. Through the Village Development Program I developed, based on my training at Findhorn, prospective members complete courses to learn what living in community truly means.

It is better to realise at the start if this lifestyle is not for you. Education is the foundation of sustainable communities.

### A call for co-operative finance

The greatest barrier, in my view, is finance. Banks do not recognise shares in co-



Shane at Afterlee

## Response to recent council attacks on multiple occupancies and communities

by Shane Sylvanspring

In July, Lismore Council passed a motion to prepare a planning proposal to remove provisions for Rural Land Sharing Communities and to hold workshops on the status of existing and non-compliant communities in the LGA.

This is a backward move in the current housing and climate crisis.

MOs are part of the solution – not the problem. The Land Sharing Policy that has now existed in the NSW planning framework for 40 years has achieved its aims very successfully.

The Schedule in the State Planning Policy Framework lists the following aims of the policy:

*This Schedule aims to encourage and facilitate the development of rural land sharing communities committed to environmentally sensitive and sustainable land use practices by:*

- (a) enabling people who collectively own a single lot to erect multiple dwellings on that lot without dividing the lot (such as by subdivision or by contractual arrangements), and
- (b) enabling the sharing of facilities and resources to allow a wide range of communal rural living opportunities at a

- lower cost, and
- (c) facilitating development on rural land (preferably in a clustered style) without undue harm to the environment and without creating a demand for the unreasonable or uneconomic provision of public amenities or services, and
- (d) creating opportunities for an increase in rural population in areas that are experiencing population loss.

Rather than being attacked, this policy should be celebrated by the Lismore Council and the State at large for actually achieving its policy outcomes, unlike many other planning policies that try and achieve similar outcomes.

I hope the Kyogle Council, which similarly passed a motion in August to “develop a list of pros and cons on the topic of Rural Landsharing Developments in the LGA” comes to the same conclusion.

I ask these Councils: what is the issue? What has come about to attack existing communities and remove the ability for a new wave of communities to be established?

Using tools and methods explained in my talk, this new wave of communities could be part of the solution to the multiple crises within the Shire and the world at large.

operatives, and that is the stumbling block.

Governments have money for social housing, but grassroots co-operatives struggle to access it.

I believe we need a credit union for communities, inspired by the former Maleny Credit Union, to provide financing for ecovillages and Multiple Occupancies.

If all our communities banked with one institution that supported us, it could transform the landscape.

There are also alternatives such as the co-operative that owns the land being a guarantor for loans and as described above manufactured housing options.

### The bigger picture

While today's context is very different from

the 1970s, the vision and the need remain alive.

What worked then, passion and land, has to be re-imagined now with professional support, innovative finance, and co-operative governance.

But the essence is the same: building affordable, resilient, community-driven villages where people can live in harmony with each other and the land.

Afterlee Ecovillage shows that this can be done and there are many people seeking this alternative housing option.

*This article is based on the text of a talk given at the Aquarian Talks in Nimbin Hall on 24th May. A video of Shane's entire talk can be seen at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=E--cfot7Aio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E--cfot7Aio)*

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# Shopping local in Nimbin

## Building a strong village economy



### Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

When people in Nimbin choose to shop locally, they do more than purchase groceries, building materials, solar panels, or saffron tinctures. They support business owners' ability first to survive, and then secondly, to reinvest – expanding product ranges, improving services, and enhancing the overall customer experience.

Equally important, the money remains within the community rather than flowing to multinationals, which helps build a stronger local economy. This, in turn, supports local employment, enhances community ties, and maintains a resilient and values-driven business environment.

At our recent Chamber networking meeting, we asked: What encourages locals to spend their money in Nimbin? The responses were clear and consistent – people shop locally for reasons that go well beyond price. They value customer service, reliability, follow-up support, and above all, trust and personal relationships.

Many Nimbin businesses also operate with ethics and sustainability at their core. Profit is often secondary to principles of service, integrity and community contribution.

### What businesses are currently experiencing

At the meeting, business owners shared powerful examples of how shopping locally is shaped by personal connection. Most operators reside in the area and are deeply involved in the village's life – creating a cycle of trust and mutual investment that is one of Nimbin's greatest strengths.

This philosophy is embodied by the Harris family at Nimbin Emporium. Their business has long been a hub



for the community – not just economically but socially – offering employment opportunities and basic skills for young locals. Their willingness to collaborate, such as referring customers to the Nimbin Servo for products they don't have, keeps money circulating within town and fosters a culture of cooperation.

Sammi from the Apothecary demonstrated how authentic storytelling on social media – whether showcasing her kitchen where she crafts tinctures or her partner ploughing herb fields – has resonated more strongly than conventional advertising.

Matthew Wittemeier, the new CEO of Rainbow Power Company (RPC), spoke to this same spirit. While RPC may not always offer the lowest price, its skilled local workforce, strong after-sales service, and long-standing community ties offer genuine value. Historically, RPC shareholders invested not for quick profits, but to support a principled, local enterprise. Their renewed focus on the local market reflects a broader trend: people want to help businesses with a purpose.

### Embracing new tools

Marketing and digital engagement were recurring themes at the meeting. While there was strong interest in the new nimbinvillage.au website created by Wick and Rain of Aether agency, many businesses acknowledged the need for support in utilising digital tools – primarily social media – to tell their stories and reach new audiences effectively.

### Signs of strength

Remarkably, Nimbin currently has no vacant retail shops – a rare achievement in regional towns.

Our February business survey also found that local trade is now more stable and less reliant on tourism than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Businesses have adapted, and so have shoppers, who now look more broadly within Nimbin for their needs.

This growth in collaboration between enterprises helps

retain spending locally and strengthens the village's economic ecosystem.

### The role of the Chamber

The Nimbin Chamber of Commerce plays a pivotal role in nurturing this ecosystem. We manage funds from the Business Rate Levy, membership fees, and occasional grants to deliver volunteer-led economic development initiatives that benefit the entire community.

Our work includes lobbying the council for better streets and infrastructure, restoring murals, supporting local events, and promoting the Rainbow Walking Trail.

We run business skills workshops, support Women in Business initiatives, and enhance the local business landscape. We're also working to build a stronger digital presence for Nimbin businesses through the village website and social media strategies, while keeping business owners connected through regular updates and networking opportunities.

### Looking ahead

The meeting also highlighted some practical concerns, including the ongoing issues created by the western car park being used as a campground. A thriving economy needs more than just strong businesses – it requires an attractive and functional village that people enjoy visiting. The Nimbin Place Plan, adopted by Lismore Council last year, provides a solid blueprint; however, turning those recommendations into reality depends on both community effort and council action. We look forward to seeing progress soon.

With the support of a strong member base, The Chamber will continue to advocate, work together, and create opportunities for local businesses to thrive. But as the meeting highlighted, shopping local in Nimbin isn't just about convenience or price. It's about shared values, trust, and a sense of community spirit.

When we choose local, we're choosing to invest in each other. That's what makes Nimbin strong.



For most Australians, life without electricity is unimaginable. Yet in nearby Papua New Guinea, millions live without power. Since 2013, Rainbow Power Company (RPC) has been working to change this by delivering solar solutions to villages, schools, health facilities and communities otherwise left in darkness.

Since 1987, RPC has installed solar systems in eight countries, completing more than \$50 million worth of projects in the past decade with a further \$10 million pipeline underway.

Collectively, these systems generate over 6,000 kWh each day, more than 2,000 MWh annually, powering remote communities, eco resorts, commercial hubs and schools across the Pacific.

### A decade of lasting impact

What began with a single 2013 contract has grown into long term commitment to PNG's energy future. That first project electrified remote villages along the Fly River in Western Province, offering reliable power for lighting, refrigeration, education, and health care.

"As designers and engineers, we are not just thinking about solar panels and batteries," said Paul O'Reilly, instrumental in RPC's PNG operations. "We are thinking about children studying after dark, vaccines kept safe, and families gaining opportunities that electricity makes possible. That is the real change we are working toward."

PNG's rugged terrain and more than 600 islands make extending the national grid impractical. RPC responds with modular solar systems from 5 to 300 kW, engineered in Australia for Pacific conditions. Its containerised SolVA stations, designed for schools and community hubs, reduce diesel reliance by up to 95% while providing round-the-clock power.

### Powering education

Education is central to RPC's mission. At Goroka Baptist Bible College, unreliable power once disrupted classes and communications. RPC's \$450,000 SolVA installation now supplies 112 kWp of solar, 230 kWh of lithium battery storage, and 96 kW of inverter capacity in a containerised unit. Linked to both a transformer and backup generator, it delivers consistent electricity.

"Education is the foundation of development," notes O'Reilly. "Reliable power improves attendance, outcomes and

community well-being." Students now study after dark, computers run without interruption, and classes remain connected on-line.

### Historic Kokoda receives solar power

In 2024, RPC partnered with the Kokoda Track Foundation to deliver the first large-scale solar project in the Kokoda catchment. Funded through Australia's \$75 million REnew Pacific programme, the 60 kW mini grid with 192 kWh of battery storage now powers classrooms, dormitories, and facilities at Kokoda Memorial College, supporting hundreds of students in one of PNG's most remote regions.

"The project shows how co-ordinated efforts can deliver change in even the toughest locations," says O'Reilly. "Funding, local knowledge and technical expertise together create lasting outcomes."

Beyond Kokoda, RPC installs village-level solar pumping, stand-alone systems for health clinics and larger grids for entire communities, tailoring each to local needs.

A defining feature of RPC's approach is training. By working with local technicians, the Company helps communities develop the knowledge to manage and maintain their systems long term.

### The ripple effect of reliable power

Reliable electricity changes daily life in profound ways. Small businesses can operate around charging stations and shops. Health clinics store vaccines and run medical equipment. Students extend their study hours and access digital tools. Communities connect with the wider world through communications.

In Western Province, villages supported by RPC's first project now hold markets after sunset, classrooms remain lit into the evening and clinics operate more reliably. These changes, while simple, bring new opportunities and security to everyday life.

For RPC, this work is about applying decades of renewable energy experience in ways that support communities for the long term.

By combining technical expertise with local partnerships, the company delivers practical solutions that help meet Papua New Guinea's development goals with clean, sustainable power.





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**Past workshops included so far:** The Natural Artist – making paintbrushes, watercolour binders and tempera, traditional gesso grounds for painting surfaces; Stardome building; bristle-brush making and more.

**Regular Workshops:** Gold coin donation

- **Tues 2nd: nimBIN CHICKENS** Join our community recycling project, shredding plastic lids and re-making them into useful stuff at the showground.
- **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.



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.

### Trump has done us a favour

Trump's militarisation of the police to take over Washington DC (where crime is at an all time low) has revealed the levels of exposure of the politicisation of police forces.

Australia hasn't quite reached that degree of ideological corruption of the US yet, but given the track record of the Australian police forces, it could and does.

The history of corruption (The Fitzgerald enquiry that led to the fall of a Queensland government), the brutal attempts to suppress demonstrations against South African apartheid (the arrest of Civil liberties observers at the Springbok tour demonstrations), the often violent repression of the Vietnam War Moratorium demonstrations (Premier Atkin saying 'run over the bastards') – they have been wrong so many times.

'Just following orders', but some, perhaps too many recently (as ever), are overzealous in 'containing' a demonstration that resulted in breaking the eyeball of a pro-Palestinian non-violent Muslim member of parliament in a non-violent demonstration. That is fascism, and it travels to the top. There are good cops, and there are bad politicians. Unfortunately, the latter prevail, and the former are sidelined. A well-trying recipe for fascism.

"Ever to confess you're bored means you have no inner resources" – John Berryman

Warwick Fry  
Nimbin

### Trump's reason to pressure the US reserve

Trump, who repeatedly has found support from the people who live in the lower socio-economic areas in the country, and was elected to lead, regularly has stated he wants the national interest rate levels lower for banks. In truth he is really only feathering his own ego.

While Trump's exact net wealth is unclear, the Bloomberg Billionaires Index last month estimated the US president to be worth \$6.4bn. Most of this money has been accumulated during his two terms in office. Previously he has been bankrupt numerous times.

Under legislation passed in 1978, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, US presidents are required to disclose a broad accounting of their finances, but they are not obligated to divest from assets that could potentially raise conflicts of interest.

Trump has \$100 million worth of conflicts of interest, as he has purchased US bonds in his own name, since taking office in January 2025. It is another example, where Trump only cares about himself. If the interest rates are lowered, the price of bonds will rise, thus increasing his personal wealth. It is a clear conflict of interest, with his aim to make his own wealth grow, not to support those who need it the most, being his own supporters.

Mark Pestell  
Nimbin

### Pensioner poverty trap

I am advocating that everyone in Australia be paid under the same conditions as your beloved aged pensioners.

Can you imagine your prime minister and treasurer: "Oh Anthony, you and Jim are living with women, two can live more frugally together, so let's reduce your salary."

"Oh Anthony, you and Jim have substantial assets, let's reduce your salary, you can sell them, our treasury will receive CGT and you can live off the proceeds."

"Oh Anthony, Jim, aged pensioners are being called



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into Centrelink for audits, how about you and all MPs submit themselves for taxation audits."

Nothing like the stress of being called into Gestapo HQ at 80 years of age. Yes, can anyone imagine this occurring?

I once approached your local MP about the above and he stated: "You have a health care card, what's the problem?"

(Did not pick up on my accent)... was doing it for my dad.

The premise seems to be "we want you to die of loneliness, poverty, starvation, homeless, have a heart attack or stroke from stress, and the Treasury will be better off."

Your ACTU was not interested that former union members now aged pensioners, were being subjected to these cruelties.

Inflation you are told is now around 3% but why are groceries and bills still rising by at least 10%?

My dad's electricity rose by 100% and when he wrote to his local member a three-page explanation of bullshit arrived. Council rates are rising far above the dictated

inflation rate.

My dad went to a council meeting and the mayor said it was due to depreciation... He advised the meeting depreciation was not a cash item.

The mayor replied, "Oh it's only \$15 a week."

Think of the above when you see MP Wong staying at luxurious overseas hotels, and remember PM Ghandi accommodating himself in East London. Why isn't Mr Rudd being moved to the Bronx, NY?

Is it any wonder crime rates are up.

Clair De Ellae  
Galesburg IL USA

### Notice

The Nimbin Community School Co-op Ltd is conducting a postal ballot for members, to propose a special resolution to convert from a non-distributing co-operative with share capital to a non-distributing co-operative without share capital.

Closing date of the postal ballot is 22nd September 2025.

Contact Secretary via: [nimbincomskool@gmail.com](mailto:nimbincomskool@gmail.com) or 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin.

## Broken Triangle

In loving memory of

Stephen John Smith

29th November 1962 – 20th August 2019

Rezna Maurice Bels

4th May 2009 – 6th September 2024



by Janet Bels

Stephen, the day you left our Triangle is etched into my soul. A moment of devastation so profound, it shattered everything. The grief unbearable.

Some in Nimbin may remember Steve, a kind soul with a wicked, dark sense of humour. He left unexpectedly, unable to say goodbye, unable to say a final "I love you."

That was the first corner of our Triangle to fall.

For five years, a Circle formed, of love and deep connection between mother and son. Rezna was my light, my purpose, my joy. We dreamed of futures filled with promise.

But then, the unimaginable happened, again. Another earth-shattering moment seared into memory.

Rezna, our kind, beautiful boy with his golden curls, chose to leave this cruel world behind. I admire his bravery and courage, even as my broken heart breaks. What I wouldn't give for one last hug, one last smile and one final "I love you."

The second corner of the Triangle collapsed.

Now I live with questions that have no answers. The What Ifs are relentless. Grief is crushing and inside, I am unravelling.

It's been six years since Steve passed, and a year since Rezna left. The Triangle, once whole is now shattered.

Every day, I search for signs of you both. A glimpse, a whisper, a feeling. But all I have now are memories, and my greatest fear is that they will fade.

Every day I spend time at Rezna's Corner, the only place where I may feel some relief for my broken heart and where I grieve in tear-streaked silence.

I thank the Nimbin community for all their love and support and I invite Nimbin community members to spend time at Rezna's Corner to reflect, remember, always remember and pay respect to our loved ones. Please be kind to self and be kind to others.

Steve and Rez, I love and miss you both so deeply.



### About us

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# The politics of false equivalence:

## Fascism and woke, are they really as bad as each other?

False equivalence is where you take two quite different things, and by identifying a single criterion they may have in common, assert that they are somehow morally equivalent.

To glibly suggest that fascism and woke politics are just as bad as each other, because both limit freedom of expression for example or that both tend to require adherence to strict ideological dogmas, is a dangerous false equivalent that I encounter much too often to ignore.

Trees and frogs are both green, but they aren't the same thing.

Fascism is an innately violent repressive ideology that thrives on its own performative cruelty. It begins with a rejection of shared humanity and proceeds quickly to industrial scale killing, torture and even genocide.

Fascism usually begins with choosing a vulnerable scapegoat in the general population and then building hatred through dehumanisation to the point where human rights atrocities are not merely tolerated but performatively celebrated.

Right now, we see this in the ICE immigration raids in the US and in the genocide in Gaza. It has been a recurring theme throughout history.

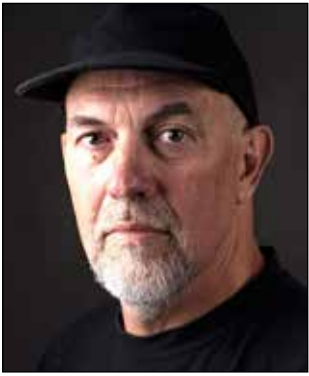
Let's park that there for a moment and ask do modern progressive movements also sometimes enact quite oppressive tactics to discourage dissent? Well at the level of verbal and written discourse they do to an extent.

Their campaign aims centre around restorative justice for traditionally marginalised groups and from that flows an understandable desire to protect those groups from further discriminatory attacks (verbal or otherwise).

Enacting these changes to social discourse have come to be seen as urgent priorities for many of the identity-based movements in particular, but politics is never simple, and any tactic can be overused, and sometimes the blowback can be worse than the initial problem.

In a democratic society most social movements' tactical focus is upon winning hearts and minds of the population to build momentum for popular change. We can see this process historically in the civil rights movement, Indigenous movements, suffragettes, the environment movement, gay and lesbian pride movements, the union movement and so on.

Many of these groups have had to fight long difficult struggles often against violent repression, and



by Aidan Ricketts

often had to engage in quite robust protest, strikes, and sometimes suffered much violence in the process, but usually their key underlying tactic was still about ultimately winning hearts and minds.

This is also true of the marches against genocide we are seeing around Australia.

In more recent decades, movements have focussed strongly on speech as a tool of oppression of minorities and so a complex tactical repertoire has developed to discourage language seen to promote violence, vilify or publicly degrade traditionally marginalised groups.

These attempts to prevent vilification have in some cases resulted in legislation that makes it an offence to engage in serious vilification of vulnerable groups.

Beyond the legislation however there has also been a more general and much wider attempt to encourage respectful language in society more generally. This has tended to gain more traction in universities, the media, government, the Arts, than it has in beer gardens, or on social media.

Now here comes the difficult part. No movement is monolithic and no campaign is without its zealots. The success of earlier campaigns to outlaw hate speech for example, and the relative success of campaigns to encourage respectful speech that doesn't perpetrate negative stereotypes of vulnerable groups have led to a gathering backlash from some who feel that the 'language policing' is going too far now. It's anyone's guess where the too far line in the sand is but I am not trying to define that.

Maybe some people do go too far. I suspect that the early successes in outlawing hate speech and vilification have encouraged a generation of activists to possibly over-invest in the tactics of language policing, and to under-invest in the longer slower journey of winning hearts and minds.

I have written about purity spirals before. Progressive politics is intrinsically motivated by ethical values, and some people can get caught in a 'race to the top'



Sydney march for Palestine  
Photo courtesy ABC TV

trying to each be ever more ethical than the next person.

This spiral is extremely counterproductive, can cause elitism, huge division inside groups and also causes campaigns to contract away from mainstream integration.

Many of us have probably been annoyed by purity spirals and cultish behaviour inside progressivist groups. Some may have even felt excluded, sidelined or missed out on an arts grant based on their structural identity.

More than annoyed, some have probably felt intimidated that if they speak out, they will be attacked as bigots and perpetrators. The experience is so common that it has become the fuel for its own very counter-productive backlash.

Winning hearts and minds is an inclusive strategy, but sometimes activists become impatient and seek 'power over' approaches. Using whatever levers of power are currently available to implement a particular set of ideas about how others should speak and think is fraught with risk.

Risky because it probably won't succeed but will generate backlash. Risky because it's a power fantasy that reveals an element of power-seeking rather than movement building behaviour.

But worst of all what we have seen in the past decade or more, is that overreach by progressive campaigns has been seized upon by bigots, racists, homophobes and real actual fascists as a potent recruitment tool for genuinely extremist causes.

But let's get back to the false equivalence in all of this. Regardless of potential overreach in the tactical repertoire of progressive social movements, regardless of how many people feel they are being bullied into saying or not saying what they feel or think, it is ultimately a war of words, opinions and at worst closed ranks and exclusion.

Fascists on the other hand will do all those things and

more. You will be targeted for what you say and what you believe, but not just with criticism, cancel culture and name calling but with guns, secret police, concentration camps, torture chambers, death squads, bombs, missiles and escalating violence.

There is no equivalence. For all of the handwringing about people being silenced by the woke movement, where are they?

Drew Hutton hasn't been silenced, JK Rowling hasn't been silenced, Andrew Bolt, Andrew Tait, Jordan Petersen whoever, no-one has actually been violently forced to stop saying stuff. It's not and never will be the equivalent of fascism. Its like comparing a sternly worded rebuke to an assault rifle and a can of pepper spray.

Why does this matter? It matters because we are seeing truly alarming signs of emergent fascism. To fight fascism, it is necessary to build very broad-based social movements of citizens, including the mainstream, who value human dignity, rights, democracy.

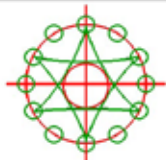
To do this we may all have to loosen up a little about each other. Just like in World War Two, there is fascism afoot and it has guns, bombs, surveillance technology, prisons and an army of angry haters.

There is no equivalence between fascism and woke political correctness or whatever you want to call it. Be annoyed at it if you must, but genocide, environmental annihilation, war, and totalitarianism, these things we must resist together as a whole broad coalition of humans with a deep heart in our collective chest.

If your idea of inclusivity does not include the mainstream, you probably aren't going to succeed.

It has been very heartening to see hundreds of thousands of Australians walking together to reject genocidal fascism, and the mass rejection of the extreme right ideology at the last federal election. We can do this.

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