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Bill to exempt medical cannabis patients from drug driving charges to be introduced

The Greens will introduce a bill to Parliament this week that will provide an exemption for medicinal cannabis patients if they test positive to THC during a roadside drug test if they are unimpaired, hold a prescription for medicinal cannabis and are using it as prescribed.

The Road Transport Amendment Bill (Medicinal Cannabis – Exemptions from Offences) Bill 2025 will be introduced in the NSW Upper House by Greens MP and drug law reform and harm reduction spokesperson Cate Faehrmann (pictured).

The law as it stands in NSW means medicinal cannabis patients risk testing positive to THC and losing their licence for three months, even if they are not impaired at the time of driving.

In comparison, drivers who use other prescription drugs such as morphine are provided a medical defence against testing positive while driving under section 111 of the Road Transport Act 2013.

A key recommendation arising from the Drug Summit in the area of law reform was for a medical defence to be provided for medicinal cannabis patients who are driving. That's what this bill does.

"I call on all sides of politics to support this



Cate Faehrmann MLC about to be drug-tested at a police roadblock on her way to the Nimbin MardiGrass in 2021, by an officer who could have contaminated the sample by not wearing gloves as required by the drug testing protocol. None-the-less, her result proved negative.



important reform which simply updates our road laws to recognise that medicinal cannabis is a legally prescribed medication which is growing in popularity to treat a range of conditions," Cate Faehrmann said.

"The reason that this issue

needs addressing is that THC can stay in a person's system for quite a few hours after use, sometimes even days, even though any effect has long worn off.

"Medicinal cannabis is proven to provide relief to those living with depression, insomnia, chronic pain, epilepsy and much more. It's time our road laws caught up and stopped treating people who are doing nothing wrong like criminals.

"My Bill seeks to remove the discrimination on medicinal cannabis that forces patients to live in fear

of losing their licence or to have to forgo life-changing medicine so they can keep driving.

"Victoria moved to allow a defence in March of this year, Tasmania already allows it while other countries like New Zealand, the UK and Germany also provide a defence for medicinal cannabis users.

"It really is ridiculous that our road laws discriminate against a legal drug when the potential driving risks that many other legal drugs like opioids and alcohol pose are managed," Ms Faehrmann said.

Northern Rivers Rail almost a reality

by Lydia Kindred, NRRL Secretary

Bringing low-emission, passenger train services back to the Northern Rivers railway line is the closest it will ever be, right now. The required reports have been lodged with UGL Regional Linx and Transport for NSW and we now must raise sufficient funds for a licence to be granted.

Northern Rivers Rail Ltd, local community-based railway company, t/as Northern Rivers Railway, has been working for four years with the Northern Regional Railway Company P/L to secure the licence to extend train services between Lismore and Yelgun, at the top of Byron Shire.

This renewable energy commuter service will be called the 'Country to Surf Train' (CTST). It can provide transport for passengers, plus luggage, prams, wheelchairs, bikes, light freight and surfboards, continuing to Mullumbimby from the current three kilometer journey of the 'world's first' Byron Solar Train.

We are almost there, but we need your help to jump the last hurdles of raising sufficient funds, showing community support, to extend services from Byron Bay to Mullumbimby (1st stage), and up to Bangalow (2nd stage), via a new train station called Lillipilli.

Having tax-deductibility is a real plus, thanks to Mullum SEED, who support our proposed non-road, all-weather, frequent service for residents and the



many visitors to our region.

You can 'buy a sleeper' for \$200, a package of five sleepers for \$1000; or make an interim pledge for a much-needed larger donation, or a loan on agreed terms, to help us bring this vision through! Our fundraising document can provide you with more detailed information.

We have done the hard yards to secure this license. If we don't pull this together right now, having provided all required reports, we will be sacrificing the future of train services ever running again on our 72 kms of tracks between Lismore and Yelgun. This is an important chance to grab now, to move our transport options forward.

We need to protect our tracks for trains to connect our towns and villages for communities and visitors. The railway corridor can also accommodate a bike/walking path, off the railway formation.

Don't believe it when they say it's not possible, because it is the win/win for everyone, and the key for the future, economically, and environmentally, of the Northern Rivers!

Please make a donation: BSB 728-728, Account 22330962 (last name and contact). Or to be tax-deductible, go to: [support.mullumseed.org.au/Northern-Rivers-Rail-Ltd-\(NRRL\)](mailto:support.mullumseed.org.au/Northern-Rivers-Rail-Ltd-(NRRL))

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McBride's appeals rejected

by Joe Lauria

The Australian government whistleblower David McBride is headed back to jail with no end of incarceration in sight.

He is serving nearly six years for leaking documents to the media exposing Australian war crimes in Afghanistan.

A three-judge panel at the Supreme Court in Australia's capital on 28th May spent less than one minute dismissing all appeals by David McBride, sending the government whistleblower back to prison where he is serving a six-year sentence for exposing his country's war crimes in Afghanistan.

McBride appeared only briefly in court and waved to his lawyer, family and the few supporters who were able to make it into the courtroom.

After the judges pronounced their decision, he was whisked off back to his Canberra jail cell, leaving his ex-wife in tears.

His attorney and a few supporters were left stunned and ashen-faced as they reeled from the ruling. McBride's next step is to ask leave of the High Court, Australia's highest court, to hear his case. That could take many months with no guarantee the appeal will be heard.

The Supreme Court seemed to have wanted to minimise the number of McBride supporters in the courtroom, as previous hearings have produced scenes of outbursts of standing ovations from the packed public gallery. One of the judges even admonished the few in attendance not to protest.

This time McBride's name and courtroom number were not posted on a large board in the court's lobby, leaving his supporters scrambling to find out where his hearing was.

By the time they arrived, McBride and the judges were already gone, three minutes after the hearing had begun.

The judges had made a single pronouncement: "The appellant's appeals against his conviction and his sentence are dismissed."

Some judges read their decisions in court. This time the judges waited three months to spend less than



David McBride with his legal team and dog Jake arrive at the Supreme Court for his trial in November 2023. Photo: Joe Lauria

three minutes on the bench. The thinking behind their ruling is contained in a 40-page document.

Appeal denied

McBride pleaded guilty to the charges against him after the trial judge in November 2023 denied him a public interest defence and allowed government agents into the courtroom to seize reams of McBride's documentary evidence in the name of protecting "national security".

McBride was thus convicted of unlawfully communicating naval, military or air force information other than in the course of his "official duty" as well publishing confidential information outside of his "duty." He was also convicted of theft of government property.

McBride appealed his conviction because he argued that there was a miscarriage of justice since his guilty pleas were entered as a consequence of a "wrong decision of law," the judges' ruling says.

This was, "whether by way of the appellant's oath of enlistment ... extended to acting in the 'public interest', even where in contravention of a lawful general order."

The judges found on Wednesday that there was no wrong decision of law and no miscarriage of justice and dismissed the conviction appeal.

They contended in their decision that McBride really

didn't want to reveal war crimes, but rather to cover them up.

"In taking and disclosing the confidential material, the appellant was not attempting to bring allegations of war crimes committed by Australian soldiers to the public's attention," the judges wrote.

"On the contrary, the ... appellant's concern was not that alleged war crimes by Australian soldiers were being under-investigated by the ADF. Rather, his concern was the converse: that such allegations were being over-investigated by the chain of command."

McBride has argued that this is a deceptive interpretation of events. He says that he complained that minor incidents in and after 2013 in Afghanistan were being over-investigated while major war crimes in 2012 were being covered up.

Sentence appeal rejected

The sentence of nearly six years was appealed on the grounds of McBride's motivation to wrong an injustice, that he believed what he was doing was lawful because of his duty to the public, which he held took precedence over duty to the King.

There were also considerations of McBride's mental health. A reduced sentence or community

service was considered, but these were also denied.

The courts have taken a very hard line against McBride, a non-violent offender who revealed actual evidence of Australian war crimes following his duty under the Nuremberg Principles to do so.

Eddie Lloyd, McBride's attorney, said that the next step was to file an application for leave to appeal the case to the High Court, Australia's highest court. She said McBride would not be due for a parole hearing until August 2026.

After the ruling, Lloyd issued a statement from McBride. He said, "People who have stood up for what is right in history have suffered far more than I have ... It is a great privilege to sacrifice for the country and I am confident the outrage produced by this judgment will be felt by all Australians. I will not give up."

Lloyd called Wednesday's judgment "a failure of justice." She said, "We are disappointed in the court of appeal in their failure to appreciate the public interest issues in this case and the ramifications this decision has for other Australians."

"David should never have spent a single day behind bars. Yet as we speak, he is returning to a cold, dark prison cell – preparing for winter in a concrete jungle – while those who committed crimes walk free and those who covered up those crimes have been rewarded with medals and promotions."

"It cannot be illegal to tell the truth. When a soldier acts on conscience to report wrongdoing, their actions must be protected – and their complaint properly investigated."

"Otherwise, we are not a democracy. We are something else."

To donate to David McBride's legal fund, go to: <https://chuffed.org/project/davidmcbride>



Photo: Chibo Mertineit

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Emergency dental care saves wallaby

Last month the Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers team received a referral call for a sick wallaby out in Nimbin.

Mick, a member of the public, had reached out for help after noticing one of his resident wallabies had a large lump on the side of her face and a weepy eye. She was also carrying a small joey in her pouch and he was concerned about the welfare of both of them.

After discussing all the different scenarios through with one of the rescuers, it was determined the best option would be to have the wallaby darted and assessed by a vet to minimise as much stress as possible on both the wallaby and her joey.

The team reached out to Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital and discussed the case with Dr Chantal who agreed to come out and help. These types of rescues are always high risk with so many things to take into consideration, with even more caution needed due to her having an in-pouch joey. A team was rallied together with rescuers Leanne, Paul and Brooke along with Mick and some of his neighbours and a plan was put in place.

They scattered around different locations on the property out of sight so that if once darted, the wallaby took off they would have eyes on her when the sedative took effect. Dr Chantal's shot was perfect and within 15 minutes the wallaby was asleep. Luckily she didn't go too far.

They set up a makeshift hospital on Mick's porch where Dr Chantal was able to assess and treat the wallaby with the rescuers assisting her where they could. The wallaby didn't have any broken teeth or signs of lumpy jaw. It was determined likely a grass seed had become lodged in between her teeth and caused the abscess.



Above: The wallaby mob at Mick's place.

Below (left) Mama wallaby with nasty facial lump, and (right) the wildlife carer rescue team at work.



Dr Chantal was able to drain and clean out the area successfully and treat the wallaby with some pain relief and long acting antibiotics. The team then made a comfortable spot under Mick's porch for her to wake up safely and calmly from the sedative out of the elements, back in her home and with her family. The mob were keeping a close eye on what they were doing and came to



check she was ok once she was set up. They are such loving and family orientated animals that really care for their own.

Mick has since been keeping the team updated and reports that the swelling has gone right down and the wallaby and her baby were back with the mob the next morning. Mick will monitor her over the coming weeks. They don't get many

saves when it comes to adult wallabies, so this was a really special rescue for everyone involved.

Thanks to Mick for reaching out to get her help and taking such brilliant care of his local mob, Dr Chantal for her involvement in this rescue as it would not have been possible without her and rescuers Leanne, Paul and Brooke going out to assist with the rescue mission.

Everyone's invited to the Furry Friends Festival

The Furry Friends Festival is on again at the Bangalow Showgrounds on Saturday 7th June, 8am-1pm, and it's a dog 'on lead' event with lots of fun, talks, demos, food and entertainment for all.

This is a free community event proudly hosted by Byron Shire Council to celebrate our furry friends while providing some practical advice and assistance with pet ownership to their humans.

Council's Manager of Public and Environmental Services, Sarah Nagel said, "This year's we're hosting a new Doggy Arena and centre stage with a great line up of engaging dog talks, training demos and games.

"We have the Paws and Claws Market featuring 40 pet-related stalls, live music



and entertainment, delicious food stalls, free face painting for the kids and a photo booth to grab a snap of you and your pooch to enter a prize draw.

"Having all our pets on leads will help everyone enjoy a safe space and the morning's activities.

"We'll also be promoting Byron Council's Dogs in Public Places Strategy, reminding people how to find information on dog areas and why it's important to stick to the rules to avoid fines, but most importantly, to protect our beautiful environment and wildlife," Ms Nagel said.

Programme

8.30am to 9.30am: Fun Dog Show – Watch and cheer as dogs show off their skills at the Dogly School for Dogs!

9.30am to 10am: Obedience, Searching and Protection Sports Demo – See Summerland Dog Training in action!

10am to 11am: Fun-gility by Kindred Paws – Ready to test your dog's agility? Join the fun and learn new skills with our expert trainers!

11am to 11.45am: Scent Games with Happy Dogs. Test your dog's sniffing skills and participate in exciting scent challenges!

Find out more about the Furry Friends Festival at: www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Furry-Friends

The saga of the floodplain: homelessness, squatting and demolition

The Reconstruction Authority have finally obtained a Supreme Court writ of possession to remove occupants from 10 homes in Pine Street and some other locations in Lismore, and one in Mullumbimby.

It is no particular surprise that the end result of the common law process is to privilege the interests of the private property owner over those of the homeless, but this outcome ignores many intersecting currents that brought this issue into being.

Following the massive 2022 flood in Lismore a well-intentioned government program to buy out residences in the most flood affected areas of Lismore was undertaken. The task was massive and there was not much in the way of existing road maps.

While we can see mistakes in hindsight, it is more important to seek solutions than apportioning blame. But we need to understand what went wrong.

The recovery and reconstruction program had two components, one that bought back homes, and another that focussed on providing subdivisions into which displaced homes and residents could hopefully be relocated.

Unsurprisingly, these two aspects proceeded at vastly different paces. The buy-outs proceeded quickly, whilst the subdivisions are still stumbling along.

The biggest problem in this two-speed process was that the Reconstruction Authority demanded immediate vacant possession of bought out properties, which sadly had the effect of supercharging homelessness in a region already suffering one of the most severe housing shortages.

Homeowners were given purchase amounts that were never enough to permit their relocation to equivalent housing out of the floodplain without massive additional borrowing, and tenants were being pushed out with inhumane haste. For South Lismore, it was worse, a buy-out scheme that never eventuated for most.

Another massive misunderstanding has been the idea of safety and risk. We get told these homes were bought out because they are a risk to life, uninhabitable and unsafe, a terrible exaggeration and simplification. Many homes were re-inhabited by their owners after the flood.

The real reason for the buy-outs was not a clear and present threat to life, but a planned retreat to avoid the future prospect of increasing climate disasters,

unaffordable insurance costs, and declining values keeping residents trapped in the flood zone. A staged retreat from the flood zone was certainly justified, but the level of risk of occupying those homes between flood events as they had been for over a century did not suddenly quadruple simply because a buy-out program was launched.

If we could intellectually distinguish between genuine safety concerns (and appropriate responses) and mere bureaucratic liability-anxiety, we'd be better able to manage a planned retreat.

It doesn't take a genius to know that empty, liveable homes in a homelessness crisis were going to be squatted, and squatting didn't begin or end with Pine Street. Squatting was and still is present throughout the region's buy back zones.

Society cruelly expects homeless people to hide, be invisible and ashamed; what Pine Street attempted to do was to break that oppressive stereotype, by being open, honest and taking a responsible attitude to occupying homes temporarily pending their relocation, and being open to negotiation with government.

For over a year, Pine Street has been occupied, has provided shelter and food to an untold number of people, including rough sleepers, homeless locals, people living in vans, and yes, even some itinerant workers on visas.

What the regional community has hopefully learned in that year was that no one was harmed (except by vigilantes), many were helped, the projected civilisational collapse never occurred and no one needed rescuing when the cyclone came through because they evacuated responsibly.

At first it seemed that the Reconstruction Authority together with the Lismore Police were prepared to tolerate that occupation, if not to formally license it. The Reconstruction Authority was not liable for something that it didn't formally allow, the police weren't required to allocate resources to eviction and the town's homelessness issue was partially being soaked up in a positive way.

In the New Year however, a concerted political campaign was launched against the squatters by the federal member, by a notoriously divisive right-wing Councillor, and to many people's surprise by one of the newly-minted labor Councillors. The political campaign was aimed at wedging the State government, and sadly the NSW premier took the bait during Cyclone Alfred,



by Aidan Ricketts

and quite cynically used the presence of squatters as an excuse to embark on a truly destructive orgy of demolition of liveable homes.

Truly, Chris Minns gives every impression of being from the Mark Latham school of Labor leadership. Ultimately all the Premier achieved was proving the Pine Street squatters' original premise, that their occupation of the buildings until relocation was needed to protect those homes.

The NSW government then launched an expensive, and rather pointless Supreme Court action to prove what everyone more or less already knew, that the government owned the homes and that the common law legal system would enforce the rights of owners over those of the homeless.

The squatters attempted to exercise their natural justice rights to defend themselves in court, with brave homeless people without financial resources or legal representation voluntarily stepping up to be defendants.

In their statement of defence, the squatters argued several substantive grounds including the common-law doctrine of necessity, various human rights to which the New South Wales government is committed, the history of negotiations with government, and also challenges to the legal formalities of previous attempted evictions.

None of these defences ultimately were able to be heard by the Supreme Court because the Reconstruction Authority with its expensive government-funded lawyers was able to successfully intimidate the defendants with the threat of going after them for substantial court costs should their defences not succeed.

So, what has the Reconstruction Authority achieved? Well, very little, they haven't gotten any closer to dealing with the squatting by necessity throughout the region. Pine Street has showed us that bought-back homes can be used to temporarily relieve homelessness in a safe and responsible way, if only the government was not too liability-anxious to properly

negotiate transitional arrangements.

Demolitions are vigorously opposed by the bulk of the community. The alleged recycling has proven to refer only to their eventual re-use as road base or mulch after being ground to rubble as we saw in Baillie Street.

Thankfully there appears to have been a pause in demolitions, hopefully the local member Janelle Saffin, who is now also the responsible minister, is going to find a better solution than demolition, possibly taking the available off-ramp of moving homes to a warehousing paddock pending future relocation or dismantling.

We have all witnessed a year of peaceful and safe occupation, and the community has undergone a moral test in which both the generous and the mean-spirited amongst us have revealed their true colours in the absurd theatre of social media for all to see.

I do not give up hope, and it is too late. I wish the new minister all the best in pressing reset on the mistakes of the past and finding new ways to manage a planned retreat. One that respects the needs and wishes of the whole community, and does not exacerbate homelessness nor involve the needless destruction of the beautiful old homes of our region.

If we zoom out a little and look at what's happened in the past year, what we saw was homes in the flood zone that had been bought out by the government, boarded up and left for three years.

About this time last year, a small group of homeless people consulted with neighbours in North Lismore and decided to peacefully, openly and honestly take possession of some homes there with a view to protecting them until the Reconstruction Authority could get around to relocating or properly recycling them.

If the concerns about squatting in the flood zone were genuine, most residents know that there was plenty of squatting happening in a much less visible much less positive way in lots of other places, but the punch-down campaign wasn't about squatting per se. It was a campaign against organised and up-front squatting, which was seen as a direct political threat.

Wedged by the political campaigns in the new year, the Reconstruction Authority began issuing eviction notices to the squatters and eventually commenced a highly expensive Supreme Court action to claim a possession over 10 homes.

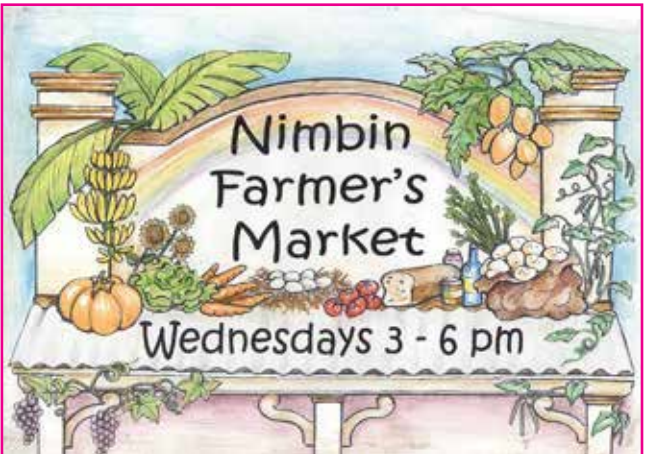


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Creating involvement, harmony and continuum in community

Recognition and heartbreak for the stolen land that we are land sharing on and have created homelessness for an entire nation.

We have recognition and heartbreak for the people of the mid-north coast experiencing a loss of housing crisis in the floods.

Land sharing, affordable housing and community are separate systems. Sharing land or housing does not automatically mean there will be what I call a bonded community as many such enterprises have attested. Affordable housing is essential in maintaining an equitable and healthy society. In the early days, the 70's here in the Northern Rivers, affordable housing was achieved through land sharing.

At our landsharing farm, Dharmananda, we are now building a dwelling for our older members. We are finding it very unaffordable and not as easy as it was then, and we already have the land. Council regulations have expanded and tightened conditions for consent, fees and timelines for DAs increased, fire and land stability need to be taken into account, building materials have risen in cost, Councils have not kept pace with innovative materials and deviance from standard structures.

In my view they need to be collating, advising and informing builders of alternative options, and Council's support and approach to those options. Bureaucracies are consistently behind the times it seems to me.

In the 70's we had the Homebuilders Association addressing materials and codes. This needs to be done now by a government agency since they are now



by Carol Perry

recognising that housing is a problem.

Whatever form affordable housing takes, rural land sharing, ecovillage, urban housing cluster or purpose-built co-living or any other housing constellation, it will not necessarily become a bonded harmonious community where members feel connected, valued and find meaning, inclusion, care and belonging in collective activities.

The absence of these features in normative mainstream life can lead to a sense of alienation. Alienation is often what draws people to the idea of an intentional community in whatever form.

The cultivation of community as described has to be intentional and that is the name that is used for land sharing living situations in this area and elsewhere.

However, it seems to me that the concept of intentionality has been relegated to land sharing systems and has not been widely applied to the realm of interpersonal relationships in those shared living situations. Skill development in the areas, of effective decision-making, conflict resolution, bonding activities such as sharing meals and celebrations needs to be intentional and on-going.

Daily communication processes where members aim to manage their triggered states as they arise, calm



'Aquarius Talks' Landsharing, affordable housing and community

On Saturday 24th May, Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc hosted the first annual 'Aquarius Talks' created to honour the anniversary of the 1973 Aquarius Festival and taking inspiration from Sydney's Festival of Dangerous Ideas. This year, speakers from across Australia explored the themes of 'Landsharing, affordable housing and community'. We will share a full reflection on the powerful, inspiring, motivating conversations of that day in our July issue. For now, we begin with Carol Perry's talk, 'Creating involvement, harmony and continuum in community'.

Carol draws on decades of lived experience in the Northern Rivers. She reflects on the evolution of land sharing since the 1970s, the rising challenges of affordable housing, and the deeper work required to build truly connected communities. With honesty and insight, she invites us to consider what it really means to live intentionally. This includes acknowledging that we live on stolen land, navigating today's housing crises, and facing the realities of climate and social disruption. Her talk is not only about place. It is about how we live together in harmony.

Photo shows Aidan Ricketts' address.

themselves and speak from a differentiated mind that knows thoughts generate feelings, or feelings generate thoughts, that these belong to you, not the other; that differences need to be identified, articulated and negotiated without maligning the character of the other in the form of: "You are so..." is foundational, as are good repair processes when in our humanness we engage unintentionally in hurtful communication.

Very few land sharing groups have a central focus on creating peaceful relationships in the dominator culture that is our conditioned heritage. My community started to take shape in the mid-seventies on land purchased by me and my husband in 1972. Our aim was to repair the very damaged land, grow food, live low-consumption lives sharing resources, help each other build houses and community facilities, eat together and work together.

To this day you will find us in the vegetable garden that from a distance looks like a Pieter Breughel painting. Those who cannot participate make other contributions such as morning tea and juicing fruit, drying produce, pickling and so on. We grow 70-80% of our food for around 20 people across all food groups – an organic subsistence farm.

Intentionality

Cultivating a bonded community or extended family without the hierarchies as I used to call

it, needs to be a fundamental choice. A fundamental choice as defined by Robert Fritz in his book *The Path of Least Resistance*, is the absolute foundation of any creative project or activity.

A fundamental choice is what keeps you on track regardless of external influences. Fundamental choices are supported by primary and secondary choices.

In the late 70's as numbers increased at our community, and many decisions had to be made, conflict escalated. It was most unpleasant and unsettling. Either I left or learned how to communicate. I decided on the latter as the former would have me back in mainstream alienation.

Remarkably, in provincial Lismore I found training courses and the Conflict Resolution Network in Sydney, as well as short courses at Lismore TAFE.

There was unanimity about improving our communication, decision-making and conflict resolution, so I brought back what I had learned, and we practised together over many years and things improved. It is on-going work, and each generation has to start anew.

Now we have an NVC (Non Violent Communication) group on the farm led by a member in his 30's. All groups go through the phases of forming, storming, norming and performing and when a new person joins, this process starts over again.

Robert Keegan, in his 1994 book entitled *In Over Our*

Heads: The mental demands of modern life, identified five levels of conversation. Level five, he says, is what is required in these times. Level five is not oppositional or absolutist. It is co-creative, living in a state of sympathetic friendliness, connected to universal values, rights and responsibilities, integrative, flexible flow and wholistic.

Learning communication skills is a primary choice that supports the fundamental choice to cultivate community. The world of other creatures is an inspiration for me, and I think of fundamental choice as akin to the journey of the Bar-tailed Godwit that sets out with its companions from southwest Alaska and arrives in Auckland eleven days later, having flown 12,200 kms over the Pacific Ocean with no land in sight for days. They do not stop flapping their wings, and navigate through an internal system that is a mystery to scientists.

This is the degree of focus on the fundamental choice that is needed to sustain a bonded community. The internal system for us is fundamental choice to create bonded community.

Our community is small, we all attend the weekly meeting and participate in decision-making, those who attend can sit around the table for dinner. There is no-one in charge or seen as the leader. However, groups of people or one person is responsible for different aspects of running the farm. These groups or persons are

consulted if someone wants to do something in their area of responsibility. It is a hierarchy of skill, not of position.

Ours is an MO where there is no freehold title to the land or the house situated on it. The members are all directors of the Co-operative Ltd and grant de facto ownership to houses. Houses can only be sold to an incoming member.

Membership depends upon the applicant's commitment to contributing to the management of the land, infrastructures and food growing as well as a commitment to cultivating peaceful relationships. It is like a form of reverse income. Together we reduce the financial outgo by producing food, contributing to land and building maintenance and new projects.

It is a very financially low-cost lifestyle but high input physically. If you don't want to do that, then it is not the place for you to live. There are a range of activities to choose from, so that you can do the things that fit with your skillset and inclination. In the vegetable garden, people grow the crops they feel connected with. I have grown carrots for decades. This year they have been taken over by someone else, as my physical capacity is becoming limited.

In the book *Alienation and Charisma*, a 1980 study of communal living by Benjamin Zablocki, it was suggested that charisma can reside in a leader, or it can be the quality of the community itself. This is something to reflect upon if you have made a fundamental choice to cultivate community. Charisma is a strange attractor, as is recognised in chaos theory.

In these times of upheaval environmentally and geopolitically, we cannot know what is going to happen climate-wise and politically. A few contemporary thinkers have said that cultivating a supportive community in whatever form is something that will be something of a buffer in the face of future difficulties.

We saw how the community at large responded to the 2022 flood. A social worker who goes to disaster areas told me it was the "best" disaster she had attended because of the high level of community.

Think Nimbin during the 2019 fires, or Gasfield Free Northern Rivers' four years of campaigning and a flexible flow community at the Bentley Blockade.

The capacity of flexible flow relationships (Spiral Dynamics) – self-organising, consultative, supportive, innovative, resourceful, participative, caring, relational, inclusive, co-creative, enlivening, are the charisma of community; ungraspable and potent.

NOT JUST NIMBIN

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Kalan: straight to the point with Aboriginal Art in Japan

by Jenny Fraser

Australia and the ancient Gondwana Rainforest are being represented by Bundjalung Artists in Japan alongside others internationally.

Women artists from a number of different areas across the Bundjalung Nation are participating in the JAALA Biennial with a group exhibition titled 'Kalan' which means 'point' in their language. The exhibition opens in Tokyo 15th June and runs until 21st June.

'Kalan' is a statement of Bundjalung Doobay Plant Art that points at the generational contribution of women's work in growing culture, alongside some of the many native plant companions of the rainforest and other ecosystems honoured in daily living for Bundjalung Aboriginal people since the first sunrise.

The artists representing Australia are featured in collaboration with cyberTribe invited to participate in the 24th Biennial exhibition, hosted by the JAALA association at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.

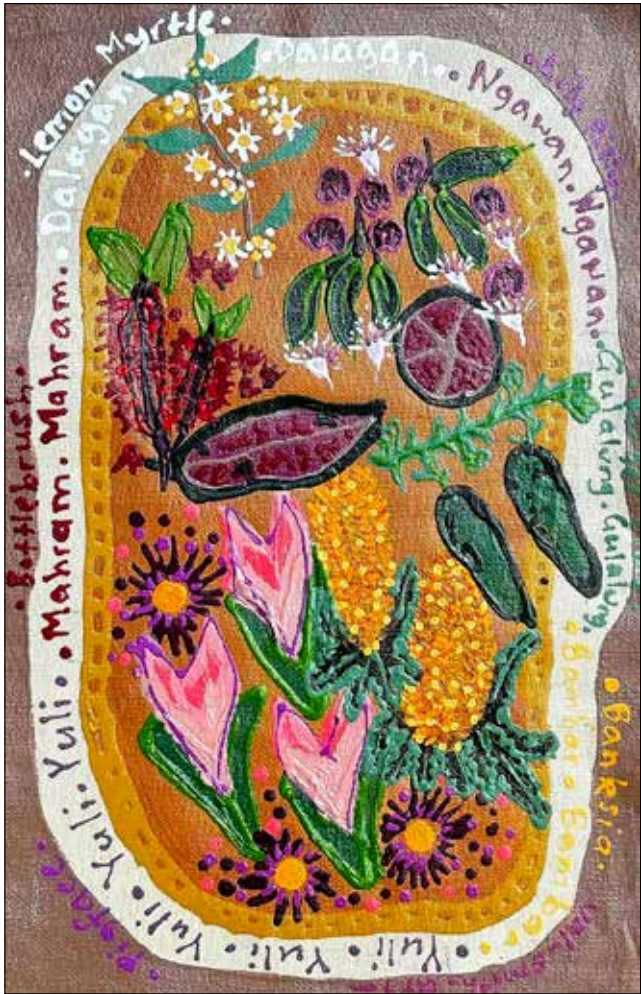
Since the formation of JAALA in 1977, under the leadership of art critic Ichiro Hariu, international exchange exhibitions have been held every other year by the artists themselves.

Initially included were countries such as Palestine, China, Korea, Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Kenya and others.

Since then, the JAALA Biennial also includes recent new focus on other countries: South Korea, China, Kurdistan, Taiwan and Aboriginal Australia. "The world is in a state of confusion due to wars and conflicts, but JAALA must stand up against them with artistic expression in the hope of global peace" is the manifesto of the JAALA association.

Artists from Australia include Maria van Neerven (Yugambeh), Sandy Greenwood (Gumbaynggirr), Val Smith (Widjabul Wiabal), along with women of the Bundjalung Tribal Society and Artist Curator Jenny Fraser (Migunburri) in the Kalan exhibition curated especially to premiere for the 2025 JAALA Biennial in June.

Maria van Neerven is a poet from the Yugambeh nation living in Meanjin. Her work focuses on themes such as colonisation, racism, discrimination, family, and mental health. "Growing-up in a large Indigenous family we had to deal with these issues daily." Maria has published work in journals *Aniko Press*, *Meanjin* and *Westerly Magazine*. Maria



Clockwise from left: 'Bundjalung Share Plates' painting by Val Smith, artists Maria van Neerven, Sandy Greenwood, Jenny Fraser and Val Smith.

van Neerven won the David Unaipon Award, (2023), and was one of five recipients chosen for The Next Chapter Fellowship (2024). She is currently working on her first poetry manuscript. The poem titled Kalan features for JAALA and is also the namesake of the group show from Australia.

Sandy Greenwood is a proud Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Bundjalung custodian who grew up on Bowraville mission on Gumbaynggirr country in a one room bush shack.

Sandy was raised by her mother who is a Stolen Generations survivor, and has worked in First Nations theatre and film as an actor, filmmaker, writer, producer, director and cultural educator for over two decades. Striving to create change for her people through activism, education and artistic expression.

Sandy is deeply connected to her elders and ancestors, inspired by authentic truth-tellers and believe in the power of nature and storytelling to heal our mind, body and spirit.

Val Smith is a Widjabul Wiabal woman born, raised and currently living in Lismore. She uses various art forms to share experiences from childhood through to motherhood. Val's art practices deepen her connection to culture. "I have chosen to paint some of the common Bundjalung bush tucker flowers and plants. Some traditional uses were cooking and medicinal purposes. They are still used today in medicine and cooking and are now a way to connect to our ancestors and traditions."

The Bundjalung Tribal Society was founded in 1975 and has played a vital role in supporting community through land rights advocacy, cultural preservation, housing initiatives, and grassroots leadership.

At the heart of its work is the ongoing revitalisation and celebration of Bundjalung culture, with the Society empowering community through cultural programs, protection of sacred sites, support for language and knowledge holders, and by fostering intergenerational connections.

As part of its commitment to healing and community strength, Bundjalung Tribal Society is also home to Namabunda Farm, a community space and program that brings together culture, connection, and care, while remaining a key supporter of strong and self-determined future for Bundjalung people.

Artist curator Jenny Fraser is a digital native working within a fluid screen-based art practice. Her ancestral homeland is Migunburri Yugambeh Country in the Scenic Rim, the Far Northern Bundjalung, on the border district between South East Queensland and the NSW Northern Rivers region. Her current focus is healing work with bush foods, plant medicine, flower essences and other body work, using the raw energy of plants, helping people to help themselves, and revitalising ancient practices.

Durangen is a documentary featuring the six Bundjalung women and artworks from the 2023 group exhibition that represented Aboriginal Australia as part of the

cultural exchange then. "After exhibiting in the JAALA Biennial from 2023 we continued on and made this film at home in Australia to show our lives, and now screen in Japan for the first time at JAALA 2025. A full circle moment."

cyberTribe is a sovereign (NonGovernment Self-Funded) arts and culture initiative running community exhibitions and showcasing Indigenous Artists internationally for love since 2000. cyberTribe is celebrating 25 years and the 'Kalan' women's exhibition is helping to mark the anniversary in a significant way by cross cultural exchange.

This is the seventh time Aboriginal artists have been invited by JAALA and curated by Dr Jenny Fraser since 2012, in the official Japan, Afro-Asian, Latin American Artists Association International Art Exchange exhibition that has been running overall for around five decades.

The 2025 self-funded group collection, titled 'Kalan', features a range of painting,

photography, film and poetry, with a focus on traditional plant uses for the matriarchs and custodians of tribal groups that make up the Bundjalung Nation on the East Coast of Australia.

JAALA was founded in opposition to the mainstream Japanese art world, which followed along with the West. One of its founding members was the artist Tomiyama Taeko. She was quick to recognise that "expression of new cultures was beginning amid suffering from colonial rule, invasion, oppression under dictatorships, exploitation, and poverty in Korea,

Palestine, Thailand, the Philippines, and other countries."

Meanwhile, coincidentally, in the same year that JAALA was founded, Tomiyama formed the Asian Women's Association with Matsui Yayori, Yamaguchi Akiko, Gotō Masako and others to express themselves as they stood together with Asian women who were experiencing political repression, economic exploitation, and other forms of oppression.

Tomiyama Taeko sought a way for 'Asia' and 'women' to become subjects who would create a 'new wind'.



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Imagine

Imagine the Blue Mountains occupied by a mighty military power driven by revenge for the death of their own.

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Imagine being driven from our homes and our land seized.

Imagine defending ourselves with the bodies of our dead children waiting for it all to be taken and the world watches.

Peter O'Toole
Uki

Peter Greste 'media freedom advocate'?

I note in your last issue (NGT May) an advertorial for the upcoming speaking event in Kyogle by so-called 'media freedom advocate' Peter Greste.

But as a lifelong working journalist who cherishes media freedom, I'm of the view that this former foreign correspondent is nothing of the sort.

While a real hero of media freedom around the world, Julian Assange, was locked up in a British prison and not getting any help from Australian governments at the time, Greste, was arrested in Egypt charged with aiding a terrorist group and spreading false information. He was then set free by huge pressure from Australian and U.S. governments, aided and abetted the US/CIA's falsification for keeping Assange locked up.

And many much more

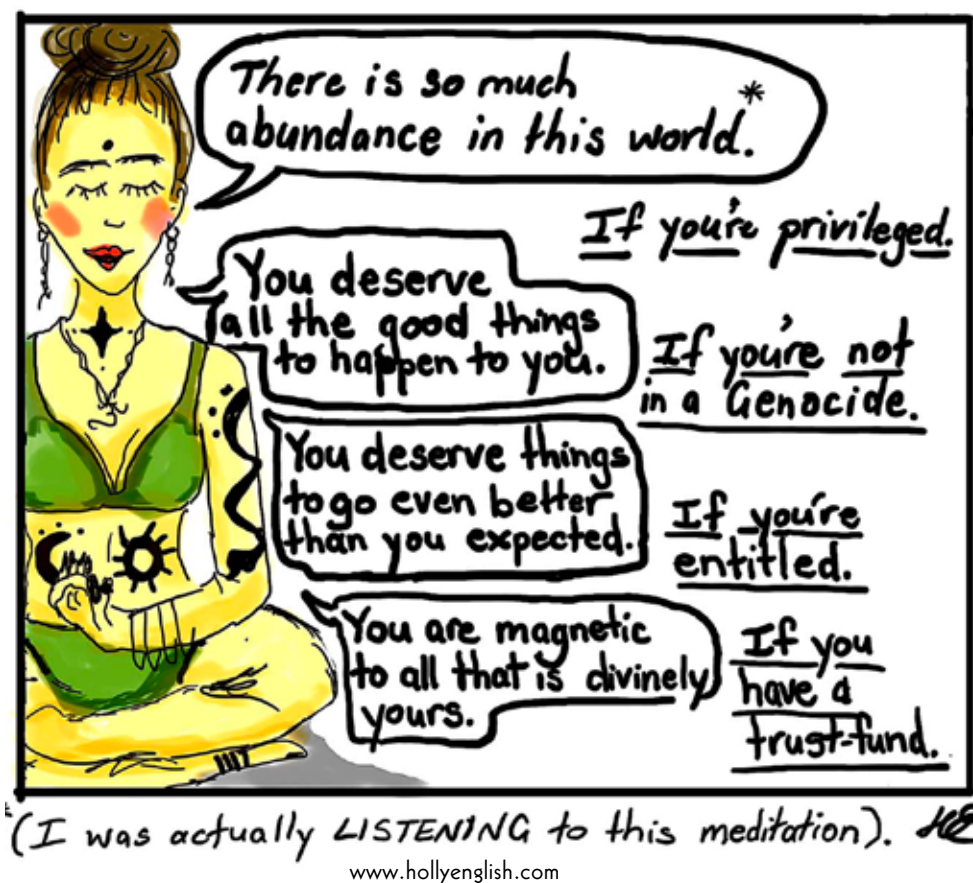
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respected journalists in Australia agree, such as the former ABC icon Phillip Adams or the late John Pilger, and many others I know, were all gob-smacked and shocked when the Sydney Morning Herald published an article by Greste, on April 12, 2019, headlined 'Julian Assange is no journalist: don't confuse his arrest with press freedom'.

In that article Greste argued that Assange, by exposing the US war crimes in Iraq (itself another genocide based on a big lie) and other US nefarious activities, had put the lives of US informants and assets around the world in danger of being killed, thus parroting the CIA propaganda against Assange.

At the time, it was seen by many as a backstab like no other, by someone who themselves had been locked up by a foreign government for simply exposing the truth, and since then Greste was anathema to real investigative journalists anywhere.

I hope people at his speaking event ask him why he did this, knowing the timing ensured government



inaction on lobbying to have Assange released.

Given his stance against Assange, Greste also recently founded the inappropriately named Alliance for Journalists' Freedom, to which he appointed himself as executive director.

However, other respected veteran journalists such as Mary Kostakidis, smelled a rat on this Greste organisation. She tweeted that the alliance was "about control". In an article in the online magazine Pearls and Irritations, Binoy Kampmark says Greste's position on journalism "has always been a pseudo-aristocratic one".

"It's an attitude that bedevils the Fourth Estate: individuals who think that press standards are dictated by immemorial rules forged by some forgotten elite. This attitude hardened with his arrest as an Al Jazeera English journalist in Egypt. His 400 days in prison gave him an aura of legitimacy," Kampmark wrote.

"When Greste became the UNESCO Chair of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland, he adopted a patrician air to those he regarded as impostors of the craft. He attacked the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, for not sticking

with the traditional script of journalism – at least the sort as understood by Greste.

Even as the enormity of Assange's arrest in 2019 was dawning on dim-witted journalists across the globe, Greste would still cling to the rationale adopted by the US Department of Justice: that Assange could not be a journalist for allegedly revealing sources in un-redacted documents, putting them, and the security of the United States, at risk."

"At no point does Greste mention Assange's own history of fastidious redaction, a point made abundantly clear in defence submissions in the publisher's extradition trial," Kampmark wrote.

The nature, and agenda, of Greste's creation, he wrote, was to "become a servitor to state power, in effect, its mediator and filterer. It will shun and condemn the publishing efforts of WikiLeaks and those of similar ilk."

Luis Feliu
Dunoon

End the genocide

I write to you as a mother, a Jewish granddaughter, a death care worker, and someone who has recently returned from the West Bank, where I served as an international peacekeeper documenting

crimes against humanity.

What I witnessed there was far worse than what most mainstream media are willing to show.

The brutality, the apartheid, the systemic displacement and humiliation, it is real, it is now, and it is happening with impunity.

Recently, the Freedom Flotilla, a peaceful humanitarian vessel delivering food and medicine to Gaza, was attacked in international waters by Israeli forces.

On board were over 30 international aid workers: doctors, nurses, teachers, elders. Civilians. Among them was Surya McEwan, a much-loved local man and international humanitarian who has dedicated his life to compassion and service. These people are doing what our government should be doing: responding with care and conscience.

The ship was bombed. This is not only immoral, it is a war crime.

This is part of a larger, orchestrated campaign of collective punishment.

Over 48,000 Palestinians have been killed.

Over a million displaced. 1.1 million people are being deliberately starved under Netanyahu's illegal blockade.

Israel's extremist government has openly declared its intentions

to ethnically cleanse and permanently occupy Gaza.

Let's be absolutely clear: this is not self-defence. Israel is the occupier.

It is an apartheid state, committing war crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is currently facing multiple charges of corruption, bribery, and fraud.

Legal experts and human rights observers widely recognise that this war is being used to evade justice and cling to power, manipulating fear and nationalism at the cost of tens of thousands of lives.

And yet, Australia remains silent. We continue to host Israeli diplomats, maintain a two-way arms trade, and refuse to impose sanctions.

This is not neutrality. This is complicity.

I speak as a woman from a long line of proud Jewish women, and I need to say, it is obscene that anyone who stands against apartheid, genocide, and Zionist extremism is labelled antisemitic.

That accusation is false, dangerous, and deceptive.

It is a smear tactic used to silence dissent, to suppress resistance to injustice, and to deflect from the brutal realities on the ground.

Zionism is not Judaism.

It is a political ideology that has hijacked the soul of a people and weaponised their suffering. My ancestors did not survive genocide so that another could be committed in their name.

So I ask you now....

Where is the courage?

Where is the integrity?

Where is the human decency to say 'no more'?

Australia must act now to: Sanction Israel.

End the two-way arms trade.

Expel Israeli diplomats.

Support war crimes investigations in The Hague.

Investigate Australians committing war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank with Israeli Occupation Forces.

This is a moment that will be remembered.

Please do not look away while a genocide unfolds.

Talitha Mitchell
Uki

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

Bookkeeper Lyndal Gray

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A reflective vigil in Nimbin

by Linnet Pike

A moving and powerful candlelit vigil took place at the Imagine mural in Allsopp Park on 29th May, in memory of those lost to family violence this year.

Flowers, with names attached, were placed as each name was read out.

Over 30 women and children had died this year at that moment in time, and sadly, this chilling number continues to rise.

This reflective and poignant ceremony, at a local level, followed many such actions nationally as May is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month.

Family and domestic violence (FDV) is a major national health and welfare issue that can have lifelong impacts for victim-survivors and perpetrators.

It occurs across all ages and backgrounds, but mainly affects women and children.

Based on the 2021–22 Personal Safety Survey (PSS), 1 in 5 (20%) adults have experienced FDV since the age of 15. FDV was more common among women than men:

- over 1 in 4 (27% or 2.7 million) women have experienced FDV since the age of 15.
- over 1 in 8 (12% or 1.1 million) men have experienced FDV since the age of 15 (ABS 2023).

The term FDV describes violence that occurs in two types of relationships – intimate partner relationships and family relationships.

FDV can also occur in the context of coercive control, where a person uses patterns of abusive behaviour over time to exert power and dominance in everyday life, to create fear, control or manipulate others, and deny liberty and autonomy.

FDSV frequently occurs behind closed doors and is often concealed by, and denied by, their perpetrators and sometimes by their victims (AIHW 2019). Intimate partner sexual violence, in particular, is under-reported and often not disclosed (Backhouse and Toivonen 2018).

For victim-survivors of sexual or psychological forms of abuse, it may be more difficult for them to identify the behaviour as abuse and seek support (Hegarty et al. 2022).

The burden of responsibility to disclose violence often falls on the victim-survivor and this can be a key barrier to seeking support.

In addition to the challenges of disclosing violence, barriers to seeking support include dependencies in the relationship for daily care or income, limited access to services, negative experiences with the police and legal systems and concerns about giving evidence against family members.

This is the second year that we have held our vigil in Nimbin.

The Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre,



Photos: Ashoka Joblin



Nimbin CWA, Lismore Women's Health Centre and NORWACS provided support and resources.

Coming together raises awareness of domestic and family violence and coercive control, highlights the support services available, and sends a clear message that violence in our

communities cannot be accepted.

On a cold and dark night, the candles, flowers and names allowed us to hold space for both those lost and our commitment to change.

Additional information supplied by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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