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Lismore farewells two exemplary public figures

by Bob Dooley

Thousands of people turned out on Tuesday 31st March to celebrate the lives of Jenny Dowell OAM and Rhoda Roberts AO at separate funerals in Lismore.

Both women died in March after lengthy battles with cancer.

Jenny Dowell was farewelled at the Lismore Quad, where Dot Orchard officiated, speaking of Jenny's early life, her election as a Lismore Councillor in 2004 and Mayor in 2008, a position she held for eight years.

Ms Orchard said she most admired her "unwavering optimism, even in the time of tough challenges" and her generosity in wanting to help people with kindness, grace and dignity.

In former Deputy Mayor Simon Clough's eulogy, he recalled her being referred to as "Jenny Everywhere" because of the number of meetings she went to - up to six meetings a day for five or sometimes six days a week.

She was a familiar face in Nimbin, attending many events and contributing thoughtfully to meetings of community organisations.

As Dot Orchard remarked, "Jenny's life was a blessing, her memory a treasure." She was 75.



Photos: Sue Stock



Photo: David Lowe



Aunty Rhoda Roberts, a Widjibal Wia-bul woman born in 1959, was farewelled at an overflowing St Carthages Cathedral in a celebration that featured 30 First Nations dancers, hymns and moving songs by Tenzin Choegyol, Troy Cassar Daly and Casey Donovan, among others.

Described as a trailblazer, Rhoda had a long and distinguished career in media and the performing arts, encouraging many artistic and cultural collaborators.

Among the tributes paid

to her was a message from the Governor-General, Sam Mostyn AO, who wrote: "Her leadership across the arts and media landscape was profound and enduring."

"She was history-making, an immense talent, a dynamic leader and an astonishing innovator."

The message was read by Rhoda's daughter Sarah Roberts-Field who spoke about her mother's many firsts, accolades and achievements.

"It wasn't for money, fame or power. It was obligation,

responsibility," she said. "Her energy was so captivating... Her intelligence, memory and knowledge was incredible."

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, hearses took Jenny Dowell to be cremated and Rhoda Roberts to be buried in Lismore.

Our lives have been forever enriched by the contributions of both these remarkable women.

Thanks to David Lowe for his extensive reports on both funerals in the Byron Echo.

Flood-prone house demolitions

↳ Continued from front page

Meanwhile workers on demolition sites report reasons for the haste, including: that the demolishers had no storage hence the waste, or they have only just received the contracts and are under too much pressure to get the contracts filled to salvage. It looks like "manage" is not the right word for the hands-off, let it rip approach of the RA.

Generalised reasons such as "privacy issues" were given to explain why the RA could not say if a house was to be relocated or demolished. Which privacy legislation might that be, we ask? Perhaps the often-touted "commercial in confidence", which since the 22 flood has often reflected a desire to avoid

scrutiny or embarrassment and assist the risk aversion of all government agencies and the RA in particular.

This latest round of destruction is contrasted with the naive rosy glow of RA comms, raising again the thorny issue of transparency and the on-going failure of the RA to give detailed, let alone any, explanations, to unpack any of their programs in detail and of course never at any time to apologise.

People are sad and angry about real things that have happened and continue to happen in their community, we are beyond sad. As Jimmy Willing so neatly put it: "There are not many of us left to witness the destruction happening in North Lismore, but it is tragic. Houses made of timber from a bygone era are

being crushed up and sent to landfill in the middle of a housing crisis!"

Right now the community wants answers, and they have a pretty good idea where to place the blame. A classic quote from Jimmy Willing sums up what a lot of people are feeling:

"It's not just my anecdotal view anymore as the reports are coming in loud and clear now. The RA are not just knocking down the houses they are crushing up the gardens too!"

"They are sending our orchards off to landfill and destroying the trees that mark the births of children and the graves of our dogs. Make no mistake, the Reconstruction Authority has declared war on the people. "RA go home!"

New WWII Resistance novel launched

It was in Nimbin in 2016 that Daniel Soler first began writing *The Iron Cross and the Yellow Star*, which was launched in Katoomba in March.

The novel transports readers to 1942, as the German army swarms into southern France where they occupy the quiet port village of Novella. The SS requisition a grand villa as their headquarters.

Directly across the road, behind the gates of their timber yard, the Rollains lead a double life. Helen, their 'niece', is a gifted pianist hiding a dangerous secret.

SS Captain Wolfgang Mueller is captivated by her music. A perilous connection forms between an officer of the Reich and a woman of



the Resistance.

But the Germans are not the only ones watching. Novella's new Chief of the Gendarmerie, Albert Castagne, is calculating and brutal. Obsessed with purging the village of 'undesirables', he hunts with lethal intent.

The Iron Cross and the Yellow Star is available on Amazon.

Tiny dragons, big lessons in new novel

Tweed Heads author Gill Summerville released his debut YA fantasy novel, *Valon's Adventure* in March.

It is the first in the Dragonhome series, which follows a family of dragons as they navigate the human world.

The tiny dragons form unexpected bonds with children, who are able to see them, while the adults remain unaware of their presence.

As they brave bullies, environmental threats and growing up, the dragons and their human friends learn lessons about empathy and living in the moment, rather than worrying about the future.

Gill has written *Valon's*



Adventure as a story that explores resilience, love and the bonds that are forged when our differences are celebrated.

Valon's Adventure invites readers to rediscover childlike wonder, embrace curiosity and recognise the extraordinary in everyday life.

Valon's Adventure is available through Amazon.

How the Reconstruction Authority has failed

by Chels Hood Withey

The NSW Reconstruction Authority is demolishing taxpayer-bought and government-owned buyback homes across the Northern Rivers.

One of the estimated six demolition companies, Melbourne-based contractor Industrial confirmed it has destroyed 26 homes to date, as the \$880 million Resilient Homes Program limps toward its close, having failed the majority of people it was designed to serve.

"They waited until we went away and they did what they were always going to do: destroy our homes and delete the evidence of their failed Resilient Homes Program," says Laurie Axtens, a Lismore flood-affected resident who will soon be the only person remaining on his street in Lismore's North.

Four years on from the Northern Rivers floods, the NSW RA has settled just 732 home buybacks of the 10,500 homes damaged. Thousands of flood-affected residents remain stuck in a program so convoluted and burdensome that completing it requires navigating builders, architects, Development Applications, council approvals, and grant acquittals, all while managing the on-going trauma of displacement and the demands of daily life.

Many homeowners living in temporary accommodation are now facing eviction. Many more have simply given up.

Rather than delivering resilient homes, the NSW RA built what is its own Northern Rivers executives describe as a "connection agency": a market model that handed out grants and made flood-affected residents jump through exhaustive hoops to spend them.

The result is a bureaucratic nightmare that outsourced every facet of delivery, fragmented accountability across dozens of private contractors, and left residents, RSS workers and community organisations without basic answers about their own cases.

It's a disgusting waste of housing, money and time. What should have already been relocated, retrofitted and raised, homes that should be providing



shelter to hundreds of families, are now being demolished by the NSW RA. What has the NSW RA done in the last four years?

These homes were abandoned. Our community has been torn apart. So many residents are still living in temporary accommodation, about to be evicted. Homeowners still haven't completed their resilience works because the process is arduous and not built for a human being to navigate. Too many are still suffering.

Instead of using the same funds to relocate buyback homes to public land, providing desperately needed public housing during Australia's worst housing crisis, the NSW government is contracting demolition companies to

crush the evidence of a program that never delivered on its promises.

There is still time to stop. The NSW RA must immediately halt demolitions and redirect those resources to relocating buyback homes to public land. These are homes that could house families today.

The Northern Rivers deserve a recovery that actually recovers people. If the NSW RA fails to change course now, it will set the precedent for every community facing climate disaster after us: that when the government says it will rebuild, what it really means is that it will manage a grants program, exhaust the people who need help most, and demolish what it never finished or started recovering.

Save the Joy Love Art Studio

by Jimmy Willing

From my work desk I can hear the noise of the houses coming down as The Reconstruction Authority (RA) intensifies its war on North Lismore.

The whole affair is a huge bungle and a mistake of titanic proportions, but the RA refuses to listen to the people and they continue on with their orgy of mass destruction regardless.

So far the Authority has reconstructed absolutely nothing, while destroying far more of my neighbourhood than the Great Flood ever did, which makes it a contradiction in terms.

This comes with great chagrin to those of us who have been hard at work restoring and saving Lismore.

In their obsession with vacant possession, the RA has now gone into a phase of total war against the poor. Disregarding UN human rights resolutions, it is cutting off the water, evicting people and destroying shelter wholesale in the middle of a housing



crisis.

The direct result is more and more homeless piling up on Lismore's streets.

The demolished houses are not being recycled as they say, rather they are being crushed up and sent to landfill. Built of the grand old timbers of a bygone era, this is just another insult to anyone with an iota of intelligence.

The effect on local arts has been catastrophic. Many of my colleagues have been forced out of town, and there are now very few studios left operating in Lismore's once bustling arts community.

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by Dr Luke Robinson

The Northern Rivers community has a long and proud history of standing up for our precious native forests, from the Terania blockades of 1979, the first forest blockades in Australia, through the many campaigns across our region since.

At the Forest Frontline Environmental Forum at Southern Cross University on Saturday 21st March, we heard about the latest campaign, for the creation of the Richmond River Koala Parks (RRKP). Experts including Dailan Pugh OAM, Dr Steve Phillips, David Milledge, Associate Professor Andrew Brooks and Dr Kristin

The case for Richmond River Koala Parks

den Exter made the compelling case for the establishment a series of new National Park reserves linking Bundjalung National Park on the coast to Border Ranges National Park.

The NSW and Australian governments have committed to protecting at least 30% of important bioregions by 2030, and establishment of the RRKP would go a long way towards achieving this for our own special bioregion.

A network of 56,000 ha of current State Forests would protect one of Australia's biodiversity hotspots, including habitat of over 130 threatened species and critical koala habitat. It would give them a chance to recover from past logging and the recent wildfires, and in particular, protect and restore the large old trees crucial for nesting hollows and food sources.

We also learned that linking the currently fragmented animal populations into one continuous protected sanctuary will help maintain genetic diversity and increase their resilience to threats like a changing climate.

There would be many other benefits too. RRKP would help restore the health of the Richmond River by improving water quality, increasing dry season flows and reducing storm run-off.

It would reduce fire frequency and intensity by allowing forests to regain their natural resilience to fire as they mature. And it would help us address climate change as the recovering forests draw down and store millions of tonnes of CO₂ through natural forest growth.

At this forum, it was evident that we are indeed blessed with many high-qualified and

dedicated experts with decades of research to support the consensus case for protecting koalas, other threatened species and our native forests. The science is clear. We know what we need to do. What is lacking is the political will.

Taxpayers subsidise Forestry Corp

It is for this reason that 1500 people came together in Lismore on Sunday 22nd March to call for action. As part of the Bob Brown Foundation's March for Forests across Australia, we marched past the offices of Federal Nationals MP Kevin Hogan and NSW State Labor MP Janelle Saffin, demanding the immediate end to native forest logging here in NSW.

The creation of the Great Koala National Park last year was a good start, though long overdue (promised by Labor in 2015) and with thousands of hectares already logged under the Minns government's watch.

The danger is now that the NSW Labor government will declare its job done, and let the destruction of our native forests continue apace in the rest of the state, including here in the Richmond catchment.

Indeed, Premier Minns and Janelle Saffin recently met in Lismore with Andrew Hurford, President of Timber NSW and CEO of a major business beneficiary of native forest logging, Hurford Hardwood, to discuss extending the North Coast Wood Supply Agreements beyond 2028, which would result in the decimation of many forests to be included in the RRKP.

Once agreed, if for any reason Forestry Corporation can't meet the supply they

demand – we taxpayers have to compensate them! This would be economic madness.

As taxpayers, we subsidised Forestry Corporation \$32 million in 2024-25 – it has not recorded a profit from native forest logging in more than ten years. This money could be better spent transitioning workers into long-term, sustainable jobs looking after our native forests rather than destroying them.

As former NSW magistrate, Professor David Heilpern has said, Forestry Corporation behaves like a criminal organisation with their repeated breaches of environmental laws. Yet every time they commit a crime, you pay the fine – the latest was \$450,000 for illegal logging in Wild Cattle Creek State Forest.

What will it take for Labor to finally act, disband this dysfunctional, destructive and loss-making organisation, and end native logging in NSW? When will Chris Minns and Janelle Saffin finally listen to the scientists, the economists, our community and many of its own members, and stop doing the bidding of a few narrow sectional interests and donors?

In contrast, for decades the Greens in the Northern Rivers and across Australia have consistently stood with our community, on the frontlines and in our parliaments, in defence of our native forests. With your support, we will continue the fight, and together we will win.

Join our movement at: Australian Greens | A future for all of us

Visit the RRKP website: *Richmond River Koala Parks* to learn more about the campaign and sign the petition to NSW parliament. The RRKP campaign is not aligned to any political party.



by Valerie Thompson

In the Northern Rivers' largest forest protest of recent years, nearly 1500 attended Lismore's rally for Native Forests, despite the heavy rain showers and soaring heat on Sunday.

The colourful and creative event featured a disco flashmob, a choir, livestream footage of a greater glider den, performers including Nidala Barker, Olivia Roseberry and Terri Nicholson and speakers including Uncle Gilbert, Mandy Nolan and Dailan Pugh.

Over 1000 attendees marched through the streets, pausing at the offices of State Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin and Federal MP for Page Kevin Hogan to remember how our representatives have failed to protect native forests.

President of the North East Forest Alliance, Dailan Pugh, expressed concern about the impact of logging on the koala populations in local forests, including Cherry Tree State Forest which was one of very few that escaped the 2019-20 bush fires.

"From my surveys in Cherry Tree State Forest I found koalas to be widespread due to a density of 18 preferred feed trees per hectare," Mr Pugh said. "These are trees over 30cm diameter and 90 years old of small-fruited grey gum, tallowwood and forest red gum."

"The NSW Forestry Corporation are allowed to log some 80% of these preferred feed trees, which across the 737 ha proposed for logging totals over 10,000 mature feed trees, the loss of which will have a massive impact on this koala population for the next century."

Across 14 locations nationwide, over 15,000 people marched in the streets on Sunday as the Bob Brown Foundation mobilised its largest-ever annual call for an end to native forest logging and mining.

"Thousands of good-hearted people voted with their feet today to end native forest logging. C'mon Albo, listen to Australians and act to save the forests. End putting taxpayers' money into this evil and unnecessary industry."

Polls show that voters of every political persuasion want to save what is left of Australia's native forests. The voice for forests is getting louder every day, every month, every year," Bob Brown said.

Jenny Weber, Bob Brown Foundation's campaigns director, said, "Today, we mobilised 15,000 people across this nation in solidarity for forest protection. We marched in Hobart, the capital city of a state that logs critically endangered Swift Parrot breeding habitat."

We marched in Western Australia, in Perth and Margaret River, where the mining companies Alcoa and South32 want to continue clearing forests even though Bauxite mining is now the leading cause of deforestation in the state's southwest.

"In Queensland, we marched to Federal Environment Minister Murray Watt's office, as he stands with the logging and mining industries to keep clearing forests. In six locations across NSW, we marched, including in regional towns on the frontline of logging destruction and in the capital city of Sydney."

"Forests are one of the planet's most powerful tools against the climate and biodiversity crises. We are living in a

time where logging and mining native forests endangers people's lives by making bushfires more severe, exacerbating the heating of the planet and removing habitat for endangered species. It's well past time for native forest destruction to end.

Native forests produce oxygen, store carbon, produce water and bring rain, and they are critical habitat for countless rare and threatened species, our national forest estate must be securely protected," Jenny Weber said.

In NSW, where the Forestry Corporation is illegally logging native forests right across the state, former magistrate David Heilpern spoke at the Bellingen march: "Apart from a March for our forests, this is also a gathering for victims of crime. We know who the criminals are: Forestry Corporation, and we know who the victims are: ancient trees, animals, riparian zones. But also us: the residents of NSW who waste our resources on these criminals and these crimes."

In Adelaide, the prominent Australian band Ocean Alley was represented by band member Mitch Galbraith: "Together, we stand up for those that can't, our unique and valuable flora and fauna, and together, our voice is loud and will be heard. Forests have been here long before our ancestors arrived here, and they belong to the people and culture that were here long before them."

"Native forests are rare, special, and deserve our respect. How dare we denigrate this great land and the culture and people that it has nurtured for tens of thousands of years? Irresponsible and ignorant governments keep failing us."

Aquarius Talks return in May

by Jeni Kendell

On Saturday 9th May, the Nimbin Town Hall will host the second annual Aquarius Talks, a gathering inspired by the spirit of the 1973 Aquarius Festival.

This year's theme, 'Our Forests and People', brings the focus back to something that has always mattered deeply in this region, the protection of forests and the communities that care for them.

The event aims to honour both the forests themselves and the many people who have spent decades defending them. It is also a chance for people to come together, share ideas, and consider what we can actually do from here.

"Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves." – John Muir. This spirit sits at the heart of this year's gathering.

In our country many people have protested. I have seen this first-hand. I was at Terania Creek when the Forestry Corporation took many ancient trees. Only three could fit on a huge truck. I saw 11 people standing across one stump of a mighty Brush Box tree.

A few years later, I went to protest the removal of koala habitat trees near Casino and was struck by the condition of the forest: thin, crowded trees surrounded by dead branches, unmanaged and still marked for logging. It has come to this.

Destruction of the world's forests is a long story, still unfolding. It began 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia and continues today. Throughout history, societies have depended on forests, often depleting them faster than they could recover.

Exploitation of new land has repeatedly pushed people to move on to the next "new place". America's untouched forests once contributed to its allure as the land of opportunity, yet by the late 19th century most of the eastern American forest had

been cleared and the country turned to coal and iron.

Almost 40% of Central America's forests were destroyed between 1950 and 1980. During the same period, Africa lost 23% of its forests and the Himalayan watershed around 40%.

The consequences of deforestation are far-reaching. They include depletion of firewood supplies, severe flooding, accelerated soil loss, encroaching deserts, monoculture plantations, declining soil productivity and reduced crop yields.

Estimates suggest that one-third of the world's arable land has been lost through soil erosion and degradation since 1960.

In many parts of the world, these pressures have reached critical levels. Billions of people rely on wood for cooking and heating, and scarcity can drive further forest destruction, accelerating erosion, climate change and desertification.

Loss of forests also intensifies the greenhouse effect. Many tropical forests are under severe threat, and with them disappear forest-dwelling peoples, plants, animals, foods and medicines.

Beyond environmental impacts, deforestation undermines communities and economies. Forests provide clean water, fertile soils, stable climates and habitats essential for agriculture. They support tourism, recreation and mental wellbeing.

Time and again, this pattern has repeated. Where once people trusted nature to provide, that certainty is no longer guaranteed.

Here in Australia, forests have often been treated as something to clear, mill and burn. Australia remains one of the few developed nations listed as a global deforestation hotspot, with 9.2 million hectares of tree cover lost between 2001 and 2024.

Land clearing continues to expand into natural habitats. Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinction globally and ranks second for biodiversity loss. Of the species listed as threatened, the majority are impacted by habitat destruction.

More than half of NSW's native forests

and woodlands have been cleared since colonisation, with millions of hectares further degraded. In 2023 alone, over 66,000 hectares of native vegetation were cleared in NSW, with agriculture responsible for most of it.

Over the past two centuries, around half of Australia's forests have been cleared, and globally one-third of forests have been lost. On-going pressures include agriculture, logging, bushfires, climate change, mining and urban expansion. Many ecosystems are under strain, and species loss continues.

Some countries are beginning to respond more decisively. Norway, for example, has committed to a zero-deforestation policy in its procurement practices. It raises important questions about what stronger action could look like here.

Protecting forests is central to addressing climate, biodiversity and food security challenges. In Australia, this means placing forests at the centre of conservation and land-use decisions. These are the issues at the heart of this year's Aquarius Talks in Nimbin.

A number of influential environmental voices continue to shape this conversation. Dr Bob Brown has long advocated for the preservation of native forests. He argues that it is time to end public funding for native forest logging and ensure long-term protection of what remains.

Dr Uday Suzuki has also spoken about the urgency of the current moment. He emphasises that while many environmental thresholds have already been crossed, there is still value in collective action, connection and community resilience.

His message is simple. When people come together, even in difficult times, they are better equipped to respond.

This year's Aquarius Talks invites the community to come together, listen and take part in a shared conversation about the future of our forests and the people connected to them.

Join us at Nimbin Town Hall on Saturday 9th May, 10am to 3pm. Entry by donation.

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The world according to the commandments of money

by Bernadine Schwartz

How many times have I heard it said, "It's only money?"

In truth, life doesn't come cheaply, from the moment of conception, right through to our very last breathe, the smell and touch of money is what keeps us alive. We even allow it to decide who shall and shall not eat.

Every ten to fifteen seconds a child under the age of five dies from hunger-related causes globally. That's nearly 50% of all childhood deaths, while we shamelessly steal millions of hectares of fertile land cultivating economic crops; crops that don't feed us, whose underlying purpose is feeding the world's ravenous economy, and coffee is just one of many.

It's the world's second most traded commodity according to www.stats.com with more than 11 million hectares of land taken up growing a crop we drink simply for pleasure.

Usually with coffee comes sugar which wastes 26 million hectares of highly prized farmland on sugar cane, a crop that's responsible for our soaring obesity rates, but combined they help sustain a healthy economy.

Anything is justifiable when it comes to money as it pushes the meaning of the word 'diplomacy'

to its limits. The Human Rights Measurement Initiative has been monitoring countries' human rights performances since 2017, and China then ranked the worst, a nation with a long-held tradition of abuse.

Yet with the world's encouragement, China has been welcomed into the fold of capitalism, producing more than \$4.16 trillion worth of goods in 2024 just for us, while our fellow human is persecuted, tortured, even murdered. But today money doesn't just talk, it screams and it screams louder.

With money comes power and those notorious pillars of the economy have the planet tightly clenched in their hands and they'll never let go.

Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) can be found in most Free Trade Agreements, giving corporations the privilege to challenge any government policy that might threaten future investments.

A third of all cases are from energy and mining corporations battling for metals and minerals all vital for the world's transition to renewables, obstructing climate action, making it redundant.

In 2019, Pakistan was ordered by World Bank arbitrators to pay Australian-owned Tethyan Copper Company a hefty compensation

payment of \$5.9 billion for loss of future profits, interest and legal costs included. This amount is equal to 40% of the country's foreign cash reserves, yet Tethyan had only invested \$150 million.

In 2022, Italy was ordered to pay a UK-based oil company Rockhopper, roughly six times the amount they'd invested, after the government banned all new offshore drilling within 12 nautical miles of the coast.

Mozambique has substantial offshore reserves that come with a risk of \$29 billion in ISDS claims, nearly double the nation's annual revenue, leaving them at the mercy of corporations, and Honduras faces multiple ISDS cases, with one claim alone pushing for roughly \$20 billion, more than five times the country's public expenditure for 2024.

Now the spotlight is shining down on Narsaq in Greenland, where one of the largest undeveloped deposits of rare earth minerals lies beneath uranium deposits.

Greenland banned uranium mining and they're fighting back, but if they lose, they will have to cough up \$11 billion in compensation or lift the ban.

According to the UN Trade and Development, 132 nations are facing ISDS cases and the majority target poorer or middle class nations.

To achieve our clean energy goals, the demand for all these metals and minerals will rise by 300% to 700% by 2040, according to projections from the International Energy Agency.

A report from the WWF in 2025 found 2,419 mines are already active and classified as clean energy mines, however if we're to meet our target, another 293 to 400 new mines are proposed.

Now the world is scraping the bottom of the barrel as the grade of ores decline, resulting in larger scale operations to obtain the same amount of metals.

So when there's nothing left, what next? Revert back to the horse and cart? The definition of renewable energy is power generated from a natural, self-replenishing source, that doesn't deplete over time, yet the environmental destruction to harness them, makes as much sense as a war for peace.

The almighty dollar, the world's coat of arms, whose survival of the fittest is determined by who's the wealthiest and profit comes before a child's life. It's the runaway gravy train effect, and it's too late to be thinking about unpacking our bags, hell is waiting impatiently. We gave money the freedom to play god.

So it's time to put those greedy hands together all you faithful, and get down on your knees and pray.

Amen.

Nimbin Youth hits the ground running in 2026

by Rain Wickham

Nimbin Youth has stepped into 2026 with some exciting new opportunities for our young people.

One of the biggest developments this year is the launch of our 'Alternative Learning Space' through the Nimbin Comskool. This space supports young people in ways that feel right for them, with flexible, creative and practical opportunities to learn and grow.

As part of this, we're beginning a youth-led 'E-Zine' – an online magazine created by young people, for young people. It will showcase local voices, featuring everything from Nimbin fashion and photography to art, stories and personal reflections.

While it's youth-driven, it's something the whole community can enjoy (and yes, everyone's welcome to grab a copy! There will be printed copies) Stay tuned – we can't wait to share more.

We're also proud to be working alongside the Nimbin

Neighbourhood and Information Centre (NNIC) to deliver 'The Village Way', a life skills program designed to help young people navigate our difficult world.

The program covers practical, real-life skills like getting a Tax File Number, understanding Centrelink, reading rental agreements, writing resumes, preparing for job interviews (including mock interviews), working towards a driver's licence and learning about relationships, sexual health and drug harm minimisation.

It's already generating strong interest, and we're excited to see young people stepping forward to be part of it. If your young person is interested – please reach out to me, email: office@nimbinyouth.org.au

Our community continues to grow, with new volunteers joining the Nimbin Youth team. We recently held a relaxed 'Vollie and Chat' evening, where we shared what's involved in volunteering – from the important compliance side of things to the genuinely



A Dungeons and Dragons campaign underway at Nimbin Youth

rewarding experience of supporting young people. If you've been thinking about getting involved, we'd love to hear from you.

Our weekly DND (Dungeons & Dragons) sessions are still going strong, with some of our participants now stepping up as Dungeon Masters themselves. Watching their confidence and

storytelling skills grow has been something special.

And of course, our drop-in days continue to be a hub of food and support. Our famous THC's (tomato, ham and cheese toasties – not what you might think) are still a favourite, alongside fresh fruit and snacks. A heartfelt thank you to the Nimbin Food Co-op for increasing

our store credit – the fresh, organic food makes such a difference and the young people really appreciate it (especially the watermelon, which never lasts long!)

Outside of drop-in, we continue supporting our young people as things come up, and helping out where we can. Working with young people in our community is both a privilege and a responsibility we hold deeply. Every day we see their strength, their creativity and their potential, even when life has been tough.

We are continuing to advocate strongly for funding to keep our doors open and to grow what we know is needed here. The support we've received from local organisations and community members means more than we can say. We are so grateful.

Nimbin is a special place – a village that shows up for its young people with heart. Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this work and for being part of the village that helps raise and support our next generation.



Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

Across Australia, households and businesses are again feeling the pressure of rising fuel, freight and living costs. In regional communities like ours, these pressures are rarely abstract.

They show up quickly at the bowser, in supplier invoices, in grocery bills, and in the weekly challenge of keeping a household or small business on track.

The Federal Government announced on 30th March that it will halve fuel excise for three months from 1st April, a move intended to lower petrol and diesel prices by about 26.3 cents per litre. However, because there is no cap on pump prices, that benefit could easily be dissipated by further increases in global oil, freight and wholesale fuel costs.

Diesel is of particular concern in regional Australia. It powers much of the machinery, freight, farm equipment and transport that keeps local communities functioning. When diesel rises, the effect spreads quietly through the whole supply chain.

It is also worth saying plainly that this situation did not come out of nowhere. While current overseas conflict has sharpened the pressure, Australia has been left exposed by years of weak fuel security, reduced domestic refining capacity and stock levels still below international benchmarks.

This is not just a sudden storm. It is a vulnerability that has been visible for years. For Nimbin, this is not a call for panic. It is a call for steadiness, foresight and practical local thinking.

Practical responses to the situation are combined errands into one town run. Avoid unnecessary half-empty car trips. Keep tyres properly inflated. Delay non-essential long drives.

For businesses, it also means reviewing invoices carefully so freight increases are clearly understood, then deciding whether those costs need to be recovered or whether supplies can be sourced through businesses offering better freight rates and arrangements.

When making a trip to town, let friends or neighbours know, and ask if anyone needs goods picked up. One well-planned run can save fuel, time and money across more than one household.

It also means building a calm buffer, not a bunker. A practical two to three week reserve of pantry basics, medicines, pet food, cleaning supplies and other essentials is sensible. The same goes for critical business inputs. A little cash on hand can also be useful if payment systems go wobbly. This is not about fear. It is about reducing avoidable stress.

One of the strongest protections a village like Nimbin has is local circulation. Buying locally when possible does more than support a shop counter at the moment. It helps local businesses maintain turnover, keep staff employed, and continue providing the services and character that make village life work.

In harder economic times, where people spend money locally it is more likely to keep moving through local wages, local suppliers and local families.



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In harder economic times, where people spend money locally it is more likely to keep moving through local wages, local suppliers and local families.

Buy local produce when it is available. Grow even a small amount of food if you can. Preserve or freeze surplus. Favour goods with a longer shelf life while prices remain manageable. For cafes and other small businesses, it may also mean simplifying menus, reducing waste, and being more selective about stock lines.

Choose local. Experience Nimbin.

Tourism

There is more good news on the tourism front. 'Contained in Nimbin' recently achieved a bronze award in the Self-Contained category at the 2025 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, a strong result that reflects well on both the business and the wider village.

The Chamber also notes that the Fringe Festival, the new community-driven evolution of the former Roots Festival, is now being auspiced by NAFI, which places it in a stronger position for future grant opportunities.

In the lead-up to MardiGrass, the Chamber has also asked Council to ensure proper attention is given to potholes, so that the many visitors arriving in coming weeks can do so safely and enjoyably.

Nimbin has always done some of its best work when people share information, solve problems practically, and support one another. Don't panic. No paralysis. Just a bit more foresight, a bit less waste, and a stronger habit of looking after one another.

Next meeting

The next General Meeting of the Chamber on 26th May is being shaped around sustainable living, buying local, remote work, and identifying additional income streams and areas of opportunity.

The Chamber is also continuing to look at projects that strengthen local economic circulation. These include a self-guided murals walk and a free accommodation directory to improve visitor experience and help keep more value in the village.

That matters because if visitors can find accommodation more easily, stay longer, and engage more deeply with local stories, art and culture, more benefits stay here.

Choose local. Experience Nimbin.

Handicrafts winners

Nimbin CWA doings

by Sue Stock

Handicrafts and sewing have been a feature of activities at the Nimbin CWA this month.

A wonderful Community Sewing Day was held in the Nimbin CWA rooms on 20th March.

Eight people shared their knowledge of sewing. Thanks to everyone who made it very special. The next date is Friday 17th April.

Nimbin branch took part in the CWA Far North Coast Group Handicraft competition. The first prize winners will be further judged at the state conference held in Forster in May.

The successful members were: Karen Ratcliffe with her wirework, Pauline Ahern in paperwork, Tash Fuller in crocheter and Leanne Openshaw with her magnificent quilts.

Thanks to Linda Myerson for her hard work in organising this. Congratulations to all.

Meet our members

Every month or so, we'll hear from one of our members about their CWA journey. This time we'll meet Leanne Openshaw (pictured), a talented quilt maker.

Where do you live? I've lived in Dunoon for less than a year.

Why did you decide to join? My son Timothy passed away and this group had helped him so much that I just wanted to give back.

What do you enjoy most about your membership? I have been made to feel extremely welcome by this group and by the Nimbin community. There is a really nice feel in Nimbin. I love helping out and love the Wednesday lunches. I love sorting out the donations of clothing and bric-a-brac for the op-shop and handing out dry clothes and bedding for those in desperate need.

What do you look forward to? I look forward to becoming more involved. I love quilting and the upcycling of clothes that can be sold at the CWA.

Check out our home-made preserves. With the weather getting cooler, one of our delicious chutneys would accompany your curry very nicely. Lots of mango chutney is available using unsprayed local mangoes.

We are also open on Nimbin market days with coffee, scones with jam and cream available for purchase. The Nimbin CWA rooms are at Figtree House, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin (next to the firehouse on Sibley Street).

Branch meetings are held at 5pm on the 2nd Monday of the month, new members are always welcome. For all general enquiries please phone 0457-363-925 or email: secretary.cwa.nimbin@gmail.com



MardiGrass

Nimbin CWA will be running a street stall outside the Artists Gallery in Cullen Street during MardiGrass selling upcycled, exciting green clothing to wear during MardiGrass. Also available from the rooms.

When are we open?

Nimbin CWA rooms are open on Wednesdays from 10am 'til 4pm. Our cooks provide healthy lunches for only \$5, and the op shop is open with great bargains to be found.

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Curious minds need to know – What is NAFI?

by Nuro Oliver

Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Incorporated (NAFI) is a not-for-profit registered charity and community grassroots organisation founded in 1993, dedicated to preserving, celebrating and fostering the cultural legacy of the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival.

As part of the Nimbin Community Centre, our primary purpose is to advance the arts and protect the 'spirit of Aquarius', which represents alternative lifestyles, environmental activism, and community-based social change.

NAFI's core activities include:

- Facilitating community events: NAFI acts as an umbrella organisation for Aquarius Festival commemorative celebrations including events such as the Aquarius Talks, serving as a hub for community networking.
- Cultural preservation and archiving: Aquarius Archives is a volunteer run working group project that collects, digitises and stores the Northern Rivers historical materials of alternative, sustainable



Jo Kijas leading the oral history workshop

communities and initiatives in the region.

Fostering arts and sustainability: NAFI encourages grassroots, life-affirming, and environmentally conscious ways of living. NAFI auspices community projects such as the Yellow Door Art Studio and new upcoming Nimbin Fringe festival.

Media and community information: NAFI auspices the *Nimbin GoodTimes*; a free community newspaper that shares local stories, history and news.

Community support and collaboration: NAFI maintains relationships with local Aboriginal communities, works on community projects like the Imagine mandala in Allsopp Park, and

fosters dialogue on social, economic and environmental issues.

The NAFI committee is going through a process of handover from founding members to new members to continue the NAFI legacy.

Currently NAFI is promoting a membership drive and invites new community members to join in support of their mission. Please email: aquariusnetworking@gmail.com if you are interested in becoming a NAFI member.

The recent Aquarius Archives oral history training session with historian Jo Kijas was excellent, bringing focus and inspiration to each of the participants' projects.

Valuable insights were gained into approaches to storytelling and community engagement.

Anyone who missed out is

welcome to come in and join our oral history initiative with stories related to Nimbin Aquarius culture. Go to: mail@aquariusarchives.org.au

Our volunteers are open to suggestions for oral history stories and participants, but please keep in mind that we have our hands full and are keen to skill you up to do it yourself.

Aquarius Archives oral history project volunteers will get further training and access to our recording equipment soon. We are always looking for volunteers for all aspects of preserving our local history. Aquarius Archives has tax deductible gift recipient status which enables the community to support our projects in the form of tax-deductible donations.

NAFI's website has had a revamp at: nimbinaquarius.org.au and includes a section for Benny Zables' website with his story and journey of activism. Aquarius Talks will be held on Saturday 9th May in conjunction with Nimbin Environment Centre, with this year's theme, 'Our Forests and People' focussing on forest preservation matters and how we as a community can contribute.

Check the website for the programme, and be a part of the change we need.

Nimbin Fringe calls for artists and creatives

Nimbin is getting ready to come alive in a whole new way, with the inaugural Nimbin Fringe Festival landing from 30th October to 1st November 2026.

Set against the backdrop of our ever-evolving village, this first edition promises a rich and diverse program that reflects the creative spirit and cultural depth of the Northern Rivers.

Nimbin Fringe is a space where emerging and established artists sit side by side, where creativity is nurtured and where audiences can expect a dynamic and engaging experience.

From live music and visual arts to theatre, film, dance and immersive experiences, the festival will transform venues and hidden corners across town into vibrant hubs of expression.

At its heart, the festival builds on the legacy of the 1973 Aquarius Festival, honouring the culture of creativity, community and alternative thinking that helped shape Nimbin into

what it is today. Nimbin Fringe continues that spirit, providing a platform for artistic expression and connection across the region.

Artist applications open

Artist applications are now officially open, and we're calling out to performers, makers, thinkers and dreamers of all kinds to get involved.

Whether you've got a fully formed show or a new idea taking shape, Nimbin Fringe is a place to bring it to life.

Volunteer applications are also open for those wanting to be part of the team behind the scenes – an opportunity to connect, contribute and experience the festival from the inside.

And for the visual artists: the Nimbin Fringe poster competition deadline has been extended to 20th April. Entries and full terms and conditions can be found at: www.nimbinfringe.com.au or by emailing: nimbinfringe@gmail.com

Head to the website for application details and be part of the beginning of something special.

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Delivering for Lismore
Flood Restoration Portfolio

Lismore
City Council

Two concrete culverts on **Tuntable Creek Road** will soon be replaced with bridges as part of Lismore City Council's flood recovery and resilience program. These will be installed near **Arkinstall Road** and **Tuntable Creek Public School**.

The modular bridges will arrive partially assembled and ready for installation. This approach has been selected to minimise traffic disruption, while enabling Council crews and contractors to deliver the work safely and efficiently.

Completion is anticipated in May, subject to weather. Traffic control measures will be in place, with the road remaining open throughout the works.

We appreciate the community's patience and support as this essential work is completed. Visit livetraffic.com for up-to-date road conditions.

Approximate locations of the soon-to-be-upgraded culverts.

Jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Australian Government NSW GOVERNMENT