

Police Presence

I am saddened and disappointed by the excessive police presence in Nimbin of late. I do not share this Orwellian dream of advocating more police as a solution to a drug problem that has already seen the disgraceful expenditure of huge amounts of money on CTC surveillance, police helicopter raids and police, both uniformed and undercover. Conversely and obviously, they have had little or no effect. Education always works better than criminalisation and prohibition.

May I point out that many of the street dealers in Nimbin are disenfranchised and unemployed local youth finding few alternatives to their illegal profession partly due to the lack of government funded alternatives or initiatives. (Work for the dole is not a long term solution, whereas hemp products, eco arts tourism and youth land ownership can be).

Also, both sniffer dogs and the inappropriate searching carried out by police on innocent locals and tourists alike are doing a great deal more harm in Nimbin than the few street dealers, contrary to claims by some local media and certain right wing politicians. This is highlighted by complaints about police searching tourist buses twice in a few hours on 25th February, together with the brutal behavior of some police on the same day while searching people indiscriminately on the street, particularly towards hippy looking people and, shamefully, towards indigenous locals. It definitely feels like a form of cultural genocide, where deviance from the middle

class norm is being targeted. (And let's not forget the prevailing political mood towards Muslims and many refugees).

I have never been able to understand why the war on drugs in this country is so focused on marijuana when statistically violence, health problems and deaths are most likely to be caused by the over-consumption of alcohol. Less than 5% of all drug related fatalities are caused by any illegal drugs and there is no evidence of any from an overdose of marijuana. (Im not advocating smoking anything, as fresh air is always the best thing for lungs and life).

So I would like to suggest that our police and politicians read the Bible – Genesis 1: 29 – and think about who is behind the anti-marijuana laws and about what the real meaning of multi-culturalism is. Finally, I wonder if local (both state and federal) politicians have paid attention to the unfolding events in the Middle East (as in Egypt and Tunisia), for revolution is the festival of the oppressed and we need a regime change to something a little greener and more in touch with all Australians.

Omega Breakspear
Lismore

Balderstone answers his critics

"Ironically, our tolerance has kept the village relatively real too I reckon, yuppies don't like druggies!"

That's the sentence that pushed buttons in a letter I wrote to the *GoodTimes* in December. It was a bit random, sorry yuppies!

What I meant was that Nimbin's more than average

acceptance of everyone as they are has created a kind of outdoor Richmond Clinic in our village. A friend calls it "a freerange psychiatric farm". People find friendship and acceptance here when they have been rejected elsewhere.

This also has, I suspect, kept real estate prices down a bit and stopped a lot of people from living here. Many people do not want their children growing up here as is obvious with the numbers on the school buses to Lismore each morning. And fair enough.

Yuppies of course love drugs as much as everyone else, but can afford them, whereas druggies are often poor and hanging out. The general lowering of tone by druggies in a community does not suit the yuppie image at all, or that's my understanding.

That aside, I agree with many of my critics. Scruffy looking hippies like me are not the right spokespeople for drug law reform. We need clean looking middle aged women in pearls and a twinset, ideally. Or a yuppie! But neither do I think we have stopped law reform, we simply are not that influential.

The volunteer run HEMP Embassy does however offer some support and advice to many potsmokers who continue to be treated like third class citizens. And we remind people that once upon a time, not even long ago, this was the most popular plant on the planet with thousands of uses.

The Embassy meets every Thursday and everyone is welcome, especially new spokespeople for law reform!

Michael Balderstone
Sphinx Rock

Cannabis Progress

Oh Dear! Poor old Michael Balderstone. Didn't he cop a shellacking last month?

A two-column critical deconstruction of his failed life from Adrian, followed up with a short, sharp knee to the knuts from self-confessed yuppie "Name-and-Address-Withheld-by-Request" (Bloody hyphenated names.)

But really, Michael has no-one to blame but himself. Not only did he use the "H" word, but he got it wrong. Yuppies don't hate druggies. Yuppies (just like the rest of society) are druggies. Who do you think are the main consumers of Cocaine, Ecstasy and quality Colombian Caffeine?

Back when Bob Hopkins organised the first May Day March for Marijuana Law Reform, absolutely everything to do with Cannabis Sativa was illegal. Today we have hemp being grown legally in every state in Australia and we have conservative Tassie hemp farmers lobbying the government to remove the ban on the human consumption of hemp seed, which is, incidentally, brimming over with Omega 3.

And we have medical cannabis, available in various forms in the UK, Europe, Canada and nearly one third of the states of the US. It really is only a matter of time till the TGA approves the sale of SativexTM or something similar for the relief of pain and the stimulation of appetite. The fact that the NSW police continue to allow Tony Bower to dispense cannabis tincture to sick people, particularly after a frontpage story in the Northern Star, emphasises this gradual shift



in attitude.

To someone who walked up the street with Bob Hopkins all those years ago, this seems like progress, albeit at a snail's pace. If Adrian Williamson thinks he can get us over the final "cannabis for pleasure" hurdle at a faster pace, then for God's sake Adrian, please do it!

Bob Tissott
Nmbnji

Support for The President

Last month's letters included criticism of the President of the Hemp Embassy for being ineffectual at bringing about drug law reform and making Nimbin the geographical focus for this issue.

I would like to offer support to the President and the Nimbin community for sustaining the energy to keep the counter culture going since the Aquarius festival in 1973.

The core of Nimbin's identity isn't just about cannabis -- it is about saying we don't want to be part of the corporate machine. The courage demonstrated at the Tuntable Creek protests is still alive in Nimbin today and can be seen in the faces of community members everyday. My fear is that driven by monetary gain

– Nimbin will become a boutique town and that the counter culture will just be a slogan on a T-shirt that you can buy.

I support the President – too many people are too passive about the erosion of our individual rights and the basic dignity to be able to live your life the way you want to as long as no harm is done.

If someone else can be more effective than the President in bringing about law reform, go for it – but lead by example not criticism.

Lee Hunter
Nimbin

Hemp Party?

On the question of preference allocations, the Hemp Party registered officer tells us (NGT Letters, Feb 11) that the Party intends to split the votes of above-the-line voters three ways: 1/3 to Labour, 1/3 to the Coalition and 1/3 to the Greens. If the Hemp party can't see the difference between the two major parties and the Greens, they are out of touch with any desire to change.

There was disappointingly no reply to my primary question about the selection procedures for candidates to stand on upper house tickets for the Hemp Party. Perhaps the membership don't get

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Distribution: Angus, Sue, Coralie, Ben, Gabrielle & Warren (Bellingen), Dave (West End), Matt (Glebe).

Bookkeeper: Martha Paitson
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www.nimbingoodtimes.com

NGT is auspiced by the Nimbin Community School Co-operative Ltd.

Next deadline:
Wednesday 30th March

Email: nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

Please limit contributions to 600 words or less.

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an opportunity to nominate for these positions or to vote on who will fill them. Surely competition for such well paid sinecures would be intense amongst members.

If the Greens policies of decriminalisation are seen to be the same as the major parties, as Mr. Askey claims, then his judgement is clouded and, as he admits, he is playing politics, with little regard for truth or the membership of the Party.

Sorry guys, you're just deposit-losers.

David McInnes-King
Larnook

Labor govt failures

The NSW Labor government will get a flogging at the State election on 26th March and any ALP parliamentarians who manage to hang on to their seats will be consigned to the opposition benches for a long, long time. The Iemma/Rees/Kenneally governments have shown nothing but utter contempt for the vast majority of the people of NSW and deserve to be punished at the ballot box.

Unfortunately, the most probable outcome of the election will be a Liberal/National coalition government that will govern this State in exactly the same

anti-democratic, socially-destructive fashion as John Howard governed Australia for eleven dark years of coalition rule at the Federal level.

Huge agribusiness, multinational mining corporations, big media owners who don't even live in this country, and sundry wobbly-chinned, rapacious billionaires will thus benefit from a Barry O'Farrell premiership while the majority of NSW voters will get nothing. Indeed, it's inevitable that we will lose more and more of our precious taxpayer-owned assets as a coalition government privatises anything that is currently publicly owned. All the awful things Howard did to the nation in pursuit of "economic rationalisation", O'Farrell will do to this State.

As the junior partner in a NSW coalition government, the National party under leader Andrew Stoner would be expected to temper these Liberal party excesses while fighting for the good of all people who live in the country electorates they represent. Sadly, anyone who believes that proposition probably still believes that the Labor party is the party

of the workers! In reality the Liberals will tell the Nationals what to do and where to go – Mr. Stoner and his colleagues will comply.

Perhaps the only local policy decision that the Nationals will have any say in, should Thomas George hold the seat of Lismore at the election, will be to promote a boom in coal seam gas exploration throughout the district. Of course, it would only be a coincidence that ex-Howard deputy PMs John Anderson and Mark Vaile are big nobs in different CSG drilling companies that are already active here. It is also quite likely that the Nationals will press hard for a coalition government to approve the construction of a big dam at Byrrell Creek, thus saving face for the hapless Tweed mayor, Rumpelstiltskiner.

So, what can we, the long-suffering ordinary people of NSW, do in the face of a crumbling democratic system that is continually being weakened by the dinosaur parties of Liberal, Labor and Nationals? Here is an open secret that offers us a faint ray of hope in the quest for decent, truly representative government – State elections in NSW are conducted under the optional preferential voting system. This means that every voter need only mark one box on the lower house ballot paper and their vote counts.

If you are voting for a local independent candidate who you trust, or for a Greens candidate, then only vote for that person and do not number any other box on your small ballot paper.

The dinosaur parties have consistently failed to govern for the benefit of the majority of voters over the last thirty years or more. It is time to reject them completely at this State election by just voting for one candidate and not preferencing either Labor, Liberal or National candidates.

Let them all hear, loud and clear, that we bloody-well want our democracy back.

Bruce McQueen,
Mt. Burrell

The Gas Rush

Watch Gaslands USA... watch ABC 4 Corners in OZ... and what you see is one

and the same, a devious push on behalf of devious people, intent for the almighty dollar by intentionally lowering the pressure of, and poisoning, in Australia's case, the well of Australia's water, the Great Artesian Basin. In the local sense, The Clarence Moreton Basin.

Not giving people anything other than a miniscule amount of the whole picture held tightly to the corporate chest, in order to fool them into signing a government sanctioned and "legally" rubber stamped license that allows total access to so called private land, and access to plunder so called mineral wealth. What an absolute sham. It would be laughable if it weren't so criminal and its consequences so deadly.

Mining companies pay not a cent for the water they suck that is held in coal seams. Australian people, farmers included, are asked to pay for everything and are then taxed to pay for restoration of that which has already been irrevocably ruined. Federal Minister Burke advocates putting the produced water back into these busted coal seams, with scant regard for the connectivity of underground aquifers throughout the land, our own Clarence Moreton Basin Front and Centre. Will this produced salty and toxin-bearing flammable water then flow out of our kitchen taps?

We are expected to swallow the public utterances of coal seam gas mining companies with assurances that they know what they are doing and, "we angle our drilling so as to avoid aquifers." More pap! Current seismic testing practices as employed by coal seam gas mining companies are a totally inadequate representation of what lies below the surface of the land, and fail in every sense to portray the interconnectivity of water aquifers. In reality coal seam gas miners are guessing, and they certainly are not sharing any information with affected people under the guise of "commercial in confidence." Instead, glossy brochures and slick PR spokeswomen seek to assure us, but any lawyer not on the payroll of a mining company will tell you, assurances are not binding!

Just try and sue a coal seam gas mining company before the fract! Try legally binding fully paid up insurance.

The "coal seam gas rush" we are experiencing requires not only a moratorium with a limited time reference, but a total ban of test drilling and consequential fracturing of the very subsurface layers that carry the clean and potable water we as human beings and the myriad of life forms depend on.

Make your voice heard, now is the time

Ian Gaillard
Keerrong

Federal issues

Will someone please tell the Leader of the Opposition that the word 'poignant' carries a silent 'g'? It's one thing to hear his rhetoric, and embarrassing that the man who would be Australia's Prime Minister cannot get his pronunciation right.

He knows what he knows, and that's obviously the extent of it.

Meanwhile, like children who know no better, Ms Gillard continues to propagate his mud slinging with her own sarcasm, while neither mention the shambles the Education System is in, and how those children who attend Public Schools are disadvantaged due to lack of funding, facilities and Government apathy.

While I'm here, I'd like to ask all those mothers, fathers, lovers, husbands, sisters, brothers, children and friends, how many 20-year olds have to die in Afghanistan before Australia really knows why we are there, and demands a referendum?

Roslyn Parry
Nimbin

Fashionable Focus

Congratulations on such an interesting local paper. Even though I live in Mullumbimby, I always read your paper because it is so interesting.

I particularly enjoyed Christina Chester's Fashion Focus. How fabulous. If the women's magazines employed her, I reckon they would sell a lot more magazines. Very different and refreshing. Thanks guys.

Magenta Appel-Pye

Notices

FOR RENT

One bedroom granny flat, \$200 per week, in quiet area of Nimbin village. Suit working person. Phone: 6689-0517.

FOR RENT

Quiet person(s) needed to rent new 2 bedroom cabin \$230/wk no animals, no children (neg) shared 2 acres, Blue Knob. Phone 6689-7257

REWARD

Stolen Caravan – Jaco, Reg 6WB531, Nimbin Lismore Road. Phone 0411-188-656.

CHOOKS

+ Free to a good home 6 healthy older chooks and one rooster need a new home. Still laying the odd egg.
+ Muskovvy drakes for sale \$10 each. 3 months old, need secure housing at night. Contact Rikki 0410-340-512.

AGM

Tunttable Falls Early Childhood Centre, Wednesday 16th March, 1pm at Tunttable Falls Preschool. Phone 6689-1179 for more information.

TRIVIA NIGHT

Tunttable Falls Preschool major fundraiser of the year, will be held at 6pm on Saturday 26th March at Nimbin Town Hall. Tickets \$20, which includes a delicious meal, entertainment, trivial fun, and prizes – and surprises!

MARDIGRASS BILLETTS

Anyone interested in providing accommodation to artists and guests over the MardiGrass weekend, please contact Essie on: essie-thomas@hotmail.com or leave a message in the Hemp Embassy.

WILDLIFE CARERS COURSE

Sunday 27th March 9am to 4pm at Wollongbar \$30. To book with NRWC, ring Jo (after 9am) on 6624-7778 or email jo_shep@yahoo.com

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North Coast: helping rebuild flood affected Australia

by Justine Elliot, MP

I would like to thank the many local families, businesses, and community groups that have supported the effort to rebuild Australia's flood affected regions.

I encourage the community to get behind the Gillard Government's comprehensive response to rebuild flood-affected regions across Australia.

Prime Minister Gillard announced that an estimated \$5.5 billion was needed to rebuild flood-affected regions with the vast majority going on rebuilding essential public and community infrastructure destroyed or damaged by the natural disaster.

Two-thirds of that funding will be delivered through savings from within the government's budget with the other third to be provided



by a modest and progressive one-year levy.

Importantly the flood levy won't be paid by people directly affected by the floods or by those on incomes of less than \$50,000.

The decisions taken by the government were necessary because of the incredible scale of this disaster, and our determination to rebuild flood affected regions while keeping the budget strong.

The Prime Minister's announcement recognised the

remarkable groundswell of community support for the rebuilding effort.

This extraordinary disaster required an extraordinary response and that is exactly what you are seeing from the government.

Just like our community here on the North Coast, the Government is getting in and doing what needs to be done after these devastating floods.

People here have always helped out their mates in times of need and the Prime Minister's announcement is about continuing this at a national level.

The levy is based on an individual's ability to pay:

- Anyone earning under \$50,000 will not pay the levy.
- People earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will pay 0.5 per cent of taxable income in excess of \$50,000.
- People earning over

\$100,000 will pay 0.5 per cent of taxable income in excess of \$50,000 and 1 per cent of taxable income in excess of \$100,000.

Supporting senior Australians to stay in the workforce

Recently legislation was introduced into Parliament by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin to help support older Australians on the age pension to stay connected to the workforce through a new, more generous Work Bonus.

This delivers on our election commitment to help age pensioners who work earn more before their pension is affected.

The new Work Bonus is set to commence on 1 July this year and will encourage older Australians to continue contributing their skills and

knowledge by remaining in the workforce.

Under the new rules age pensioners will be able to earn up to \$250 a fortnight without it being assessed as income under the income test.

Pensioners will also be able to build up any unused amount of their \$250 fortnightly bonus in an 'income bank' to a total of \$6,500.

The 'income bank' can be used to exempt future earnings from the pension income test, so that a pensioner could earn up to \$6500 a year extra without it affecting their pension. This could be from regular work each fortnight or, for example, over a six week period before Christmas.

Any unused amount of the income bank can be carried forward across years.

The new Work Bonus is a win for senior Australians, who will get more incentive to

work; it is a win for business, which will find it easier to tap into the skills of older workers; and it is a win for the Australian economy.

These changes further improve the existing Work Bonus, which was introduced as part of the Australian Government's Secure and Sustainable Pension Reforms on 20 September 2009.

As part of the historic pension reforms in September 2009, the Government delivered significant pension increases and improved indexation. For pensioners on the maximum rate, these reforms have delivered increases of \$115 a fortnight for singles and \$97 a fortnight for couples combined.

Member for Richmond
107 Minjungbal Drive
Tweed Heads South
Phone 1300-720-675

Flood Levy

by Janelle Saffin, MP

The Government's flood levy has been debated in Parliament this session, with many speakers on both sides.

The levy only applies to incomes above \$50,000 and the law will mean that approximately 60 per cent of taxpayers will pay less than a dollar a week.

Someone on \$80,000 is being asked to sacrifice \$2.88 a week, less than the price of a cappuccino and much less (ten times less) than the tax cuts someone on \$80,000 received over the last three years.

I have received many messages supporting the levy from people across my electorate of Page.

I support it for the following reasons:

• **Firstly, it is just the right thing to do. Australians dig deep for each other in hard times.**

Over \$6 billion is needed and as quickly as possible to help rebuild Queensland's essential infrastructure—roads, bridges and rail. This is damage on a scale that we have not seen the likes of anywhere in Australia.

Some of the funds will go to flood affected areas in NSW and other states.

• **Levies are not new.**

I remember eight that were agreed to in the previous Federal Government for what the Parliament agreed were extraordinary circumstances, with six being implemented.



Janelle's Page

Expert Panel

It is quite an honour that Prime Minister Julia Gillard has appointed me to the expert panel for constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians.

The panel is co-chaired by Indigenous advocate Patrick Dodson and Mark Leibler (who is also the co-chair of Reconciliation Australia).

There are 14 other non-parliamentary members of the panel and three other members of parliament—Independent Rob Oakeshott, Greens Senator Rachel Siewart and the Indigenous Liberal member for Hasluck Ken Wyatt.

We met for the first time in February and our brief is to report back to parliament by the end of the year with options for how Indigenous Australians should be recognised in the Constitution.

The six levies were: the dairy adjustment package, the stevedoring levy for redundancy costs on the waterfront, the aircraft noise levy, the sugar levy, the air passenger ticket levy to meet the costs of the entitlements for Ansett employees, and the levy for the gun back scheme.

• **Treasury designs the levies and they are transparent.**

As Commsec Chief Economist Craig James has said, "This is the right levy for the times—modest in size, temporary, progressive and applying to those on higher incomes."

• **The levy will not affect our**

ability to make personal donations.

We are a generous nation, and our generosity will continue. The personal donations are for people who have lost their homes, furniture, and more. The levy is for rebuilding critical infrastructure.

Mr Abbott is being silly saying it is a tax on mates

and other nonsense. It is mates helping mates.

To my thinking, Mr Abbott's behaviour on the flood levy is way out of line and out of step with community sentiment.

It is also hypocritical considering Mr Abbott proposed a levy on business to the tune of \$2.5 million for his maternity scheme

that would extend to parents who are millionaires, and considering that he was a Minister in the previous Coalition Government that introduced six levies.

Member for Page
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From the Mayor's desk

by Jenny Dowell
Jenny.Dowell@lismore.nsw.gov.au

In this season of storms, I do hope everyone is safe and well in Nimbin and surrounds.

On Sunday February 20, in 37 degree heat, a hundred people gathered to thank members of our emergency services and support organisations for their wonderful work in times of natural disaster, accident or distress. The Police, SES, Ambulance, Fire, Rescue, Surf Life Savers, Hospital Trauma teams, Red Cross, Salvos and others came together for a public thanksgiving. Many are volunteers but all are professionals. In the line of their duties they experience sights, smells and sounds that most of us can barely imagine yet they keep on helping us in our time of need. Thank you all!

GM Recruitment

As readers are aware, Paul O'Sullivan, Council's General Manager, is retiring on June 30 after nine years exemplary service. Advertisements for the recruitment of a new General Manager will have started appearing by the time NGT hits the streets and will close on March 21. The Recruitment Panel (Crs Dowell, Clough, Battista, Graham and Yarnall) will convene to shortlist candidates and conduct interviews. The whole Council is expected to interview a couple of preferred candidates in a final approval process and extraordinary Meeting in early May. Strict confidentiality protocols require that all enquiries will be handled by the consultant who is facilitating the process, Stephen Blackadder of Blackadder Associates.

Skatepark change and progress

Recent wet weather has lead to further unavoidable delays in the construction of the new skatepark. A separate report in this issue will give more details but at this stage, we would expect the facility to be open to skaters in the Easter school holidays, if not before.

Nimbin Village Park

Congratulations to the people of Nimbin who have a vision for a new community park in the village. The Friends of Nimbin Village Park represent a wide range of interests in Nimbin and see the need for a community precinct linking existing village sites and providing an area for recreation.

Cr Smith gained majority support for Council to work with the Friends on planning for the Park, assist with grant applications, consider a budget

allocation and include the Park in the forthcoming Sport and Recreation Plan. No dollars involved but it's a great start.

Internal Audit

Council also supported Cr Yarnall's motion to establish an internal audit committee with an independent internal auditor to provide Council and the community with assurance over internal controls and risk management.

Tulsi Lane

Council received a request to name a new road in a rural residential subdivision off Gungas Rd as Tulsi Lane. Tulsi is a Hindu word and the name of Indian basil. Council is required to follow the Geographic Names Board guidelines and to advertise the proposed name for 28 days. If no objections are received the name will be adopted. If there are objections, the matter comes back to Council for determination.

Freedom Ride

To commemorate the original Freedom Ride of 1965, 42 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants arrived in Lismore on February 22. I had the great pleasure of welcoming this group and to compare their reception in 2011 to that of 1965. The younger ones loved their session at Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre (GSAC) and seeing film footage of the original Freedom Ride.

Frank Roberts

The Roberts name is well-respected in local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. It was very sad to hear of the unexpected death of Mr Frank Roberts, a proud Bundjalung man, in Armidale on February 7. Frank was the first Aboriginal Olympian when, aged 16, he represented Australia in boxing at the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. Frank, born at Cubawee on the outskirts of Lismore, was honoured by the Mayor of Armidale- Dumaresq with the Australia Day 2011 Citizen's Award for his leadership of young people and his contribution to the community. Many local Bundjalung people attended Frank Roberts' State Funeral on February 16 in Armidale, his home for the past 40 years.

Judicial Visit

Also in February, the Judicial Commission of NSW visited Lismore as part of its Aboriginal Cultural Awareness tour.

Representatives from the Bundjalung Elders Council, the Lismore Aboriginal Community Justice Group, Police, Circle Sentencing and others met with the 19 judges and Magistrates to discuss legal issues affecting Aboriginal people. The commitment of the judiciary to meet with locals is very pleasing.

RAP

While on Aboriginal matters, Council is progressing its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and has had a visit by Kerrie Nelson, RAP Advisor to Government at Reconciliation Australia. Kerrie met with the RAP implementation committee and has provided invaluable assistance as we progress this important Plan aimed at Closing the Gap in Aboriginal life



expectancy through practical reconciliation measures.

NSW Election Priorities

The NSW Local Government and Shires Associations (LGSA) has launched its Election Priorities 2011. The priorities follow the six key themes of improved financial viability, local land use planning, stronger support for communities, greater natural environment

protection, infrastructure provision and maintenance and better local governance. Action from the State Government on these priorities will enable us to build and maintain our community by strengthening local services such as roads, libraries, waste and youth and senior services.

To view the LGSA's NSW Election Priorities 2011, visit www.lgsa.org.au/election2011

100 years of IWD

March 8 is the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. Council will be marking the event with an informal luncheon at Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre.

It is a time to reflect on women's achievements and the work still to be done to achieve equality including equal representation. What better time for all the women out there to start thinking of nominating for the September 8, 2012 elections.

Simon says...



by Simon Clough
Deputy Mayor of Lismore

News on the climate change front is pretty sobering.

The respected journal "Nature" has linked climate change with serious flooding in the northern hemisphere and the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) in Boulder, Colorado states thawing permafrost is threatening to overwhelm attempts to keep the planet from getting too hot for human survival.

Perhaps because of this information and my own rather gloomy North Yorkshire heritage I was very excited to visit Northern Rivers Food Links funded projects this week. Northern Rivers Food Links is a \$2m project based on cooperation of the seven Northern Rivers Councils

and Rous Water to secure a sustainable food future for the region.

We visited Food Links projects in the north of the region. The initial project was a community garden in a retirement home. It was inspiring to see the level of community cohesion and engagement the project has created around the raised garden beds near the communities centre. Burringbar Hall was the site of the second project.

Food Links has funded the kitchen to bring it up to commercial standard so that local producers can value add to the produce. I was particularly excited by the community's "Farmers Feasts", where local farmers donate their produce and local chefs cook. With each course, the food producers are introduced to the guests.

It struck me as a great way to increase local food awareness, build stronger connections between urban and rural dwellers and have a great time. The people of Burringbar use the "feasts" to fund the costs of their beautiful hall.

We also saw uplifting projects at the Mullum community garden and the project at the House with No Steps which aims to have local food

distributed locally rather than through Sydney. How radical is that! Unfortunately we didn't get a chance to visit the Nimbin project.

One of the highlights of the "Food Links" bus trip was experiencing the passion and commitment of the "Food Links" team. I would be hard pressed to find four people more dedicated to creating community and food security anywhere.

I need to explain myself for voting against the motion to introduce energy efficient streetlighting. I have been a vigorous supporter of Council's reducing its carbon emissions since elected to Council as a representative of the Our Sustainable Future party. In fact it was my motion on 9th March last year that stirred Country Energy into action regarding energy efficient lighting.

I voted against the motion (knowing that all other Councillors would support it) as a protest. My protest was because the \$280,000 that can be expected in savings from the new streetlighting will go into Council's general revenue rather than into Council's carbon reduction revolving loan fund.

The revolving loan fund was designed to fund projects such as putting solar photo voltaic on

public buildings where there is a reasonable repayment period. I believe that the energy efficient street lighting should have been considered as part of this revolving fund. Considering that Council's 2008 emissions were already nearly double the emissions target for 2012, Lismore City Council needs to be spending all energy efficiency dividends on its committed policy of reducing carbon emissions.

This is why I protested by voting against the motion, mind you Trish described it as a "big dummy spit". Nonetheless, I'm delighted that Council is reducing its carbon emissions by nearly 900 tonnes.

Council's workload is building fast with major decisions on the McLeans Ridges development and the Tourist Caravan Park coming up at the next meeting. There are also a series of workshops on the Local Environment Plan, preparation of the annual budget (get those submissions ready!) and ongoing work on appointing Council's new General Manager, with advertisements going out this weekend.

Wishing you all a wonderful autumn.

Contact Simon at simonclough@internode.on.net or by phoning 6624 2894 or 0428 886217.

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Mardi Grass Mind Candy

This year the Nimbin Mardi Grass is playing host to a series of panel discussions to be held in the Town Hall from midday to 6pm on Saturday 30th April. We'll present an afternoon of debate, discussion, and the occasional stoned rave, focusing on the big issues: the legal, spiritual, cultural and political aspects of plant life.

For this reason we've assembled a cast of academics, intellectuals, professionals, politicians, public servants, activists, career bullshit artists and just plain ol' troublemakers to stir the pot (as it were).

Mardi Grass Mind Candy will feature an array of pragmatic visionaries including international guest speakers, Dr Robert Melamede, CEO and President of Cannabis Science, Inc., and Alison Myrden, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition LEAP, as well as Australian drug law reform luminaries, Sandra Kanck, SA spokesperson for Families and Friends of Drug Law Reform, Prof Paul Wilson, Chair of Criminology, Bond University, and Dr Alex Wodak, President of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation. Check the Mardi Grass website

as this panel explores the warps and wefts of this most Holy Herb.

Ancient legend maintains that marihuana was the first plant to grow on the grave of King Solomon the Wise. Among the Brahmins of northern India the Cannabis sacrament, or Bhang Nama, is regarded with pragmatism as a substance that makes one devotional. Like the god Shiva, one who uses Cannabis can divest themselves of the perishable body and pass directly into reunion with the spirit of the universe. In Tibetan Tantric practice Cannabis aids in achieving deep states of meditation and heightened awareness. For Rastafari, ganja is a Biblical sacrament that purifies and heals, promoting right thought and right action.

The panel will also compare the contemporary interest in spiritual exploration using other well known entheogens like ayahuasca.

1 - 2pm Police Force or Police Service?

Police are on the frontline of the war on drugs. Increasingly, police and other law enforcement workers around the world are speaking out against prohibition. Some are concerned about risks to police

years ago. Their motto is "Culpam Poena Premit Comes", which means "Punishment follows close on guilt". Should the police judge and punish, or should this remain with the courts and corrective services? And what are we to make of the many commissions and reports that document individual and institutionalised corruption in the police force?

Police choices and policing behaviours matter. So what choices are our police making? This panel will discuss all this and more, focusing on what choices are available to police, both individually and as an institution.

The panel will include a speaker from Law Enforcement Against Prohibition [LEAP].

2 - 3pm Bong On Aussie, Bong On ~ Did Cannabis Culture Get Dumbed Down?

Cannabis use in the West dates back at least as far the 19th century and for most of that time was the province of artists, poets, musicians, intellectuals and the bohemian underclass that is invariably attracted to the artistic fringes. Even with the initial mass wave of pot use in the 1960s, marijuana still maintained a certain elitist credibility... "This will get you high"... "This will turn your head around"... "This will make you hipper, holier & wiser"... but sometime in the 1970s it turned into "This will get you shit-faced".

Why did Baudelaire's Club des Hashishin of the 1840s and Ginsberg's "best minds of my generation" turn into Cheech & Chong and Beavis & Butthead? Is this a good or bad thing? Is anyone still getting "high" or are we all just getting "wasted"?

3 - 4pm The Unbroken Chain ~ A Hidden History of the Drug Wars

The British Empire was founded on the back of the opium trade and to this day the trade in so-called licit and illicit drugs is one of the largest money spinners in the world. With the 20th century adoption of the US "war on drugs" model, the trade in opium became an even larger source of money and as the sun set on the British Empire it dawned on the American one.

Since WW11, opium production has faithfully traced a geographical trail of US political hotspots and military engagements from Asia to Afghanistan. A simple equation of guns for drugs has allowed dictators to flourish, illegal wars to be fought and huge profits to be netted.

Paranoid as it may sound, the main orchestrators and beneficiaries of



this seem to have been the CIA.

In the last 40 years, other drugs have also been the basis for empires... cocaine, amphetamines, marijuana... even good old LSD. Somewhere near the heart of these empires has always been a consortium of career criminals, corrupt cops and shadowy intelligence operatives. From the CIA-funded opium armies in Laos to Ron Stark helping to flood the world with acid, from Nugan Hand to Mark Standen, our panel examines this history and asks the eternal question... "Cui bono?" "Who benefits?"

5 - 6pm Legislating for Legoland?

Drug policy grows in a field of tensions, sown by politicians who are keen to distract us, fed on the bright light of media attention, then trained along byzantine trellises by bureaucrats so that it shades the road that's paved with good intentions...

So what can we do about it?

In this panel, we'll look at a current example of drug policy in action. In February this year, the Australian federal Attorney-General's department released a discussion paper and sought comments on a proposal to address criminal profits by adding an unknown number of plant species to the drug schedules in the Criminal Code Act. The proposal attracted a groundswell of passionate concern. Although

GetUp! decided not to take up the issue, hundreds of people are submitting comments to the consultation process, helped by a number of websites that explained the issues and offered template submissions. Here are some:

<http://opendecisions.net/opendecisions/>
www.gardenfreedom.com/
www.happyhigherherbs.com/Herb-Freedom

We'll look at what worked and what didn't work, and we'll reflect on what else we can do to influence the drug policy debate in Australia. Join us for an afternoon joint and a good natter in the Town Hall on 30th April.

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MOB MEETINGS

MardiGrass 2011 meetings are held every Friday evening at the HEMP Embassy from 5pm (enter through the HEMP Bar) and everyone is welcome.

As are new ideas, performers, volunteers for Jungle Patrol or the myriad other jobs we need help with. If you can't make the meeting write a message in the MardiGrass book in the Embassy, phone or email us at www.nimbinmardigrass.com

This year's MardiGrass is on the weekend of April 30 and May 1, the weekend after Easter and the Bluesfest.



for a full listing of our other magnificent speakers.

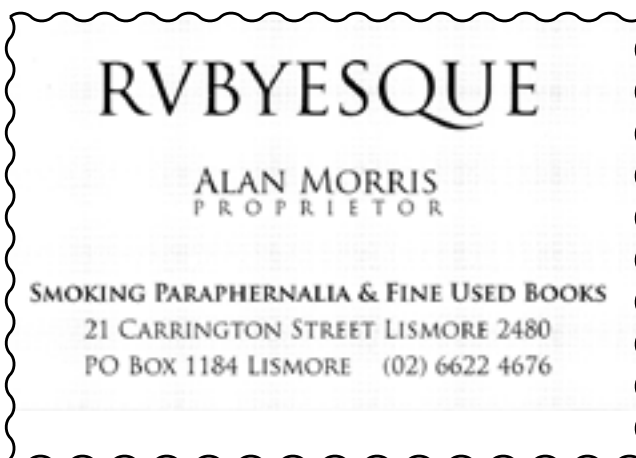
Whilst we recognise the ultimate futility of spending too much time trying to talk about what is essentially a non-verbal experience (getting high), we reckon there's also quite a few pot-related topics that do need some discussion:

Midday - 1pm The Green Goddess

The religious and cultural history of the Cannabis plant presents an extraordinarily rich tapestry. Cannabis spirituality spans time and space, from the Ancient Scythians of central Asia, to the Cora shamans of Mexico, to here and now. Join us on a flying shuttle,

integrity -- prohibition inevitably results in corruption. Some are concerned about pressures on police effectiveness, when scarce police resources are spent fighting "victimless crimes", often with little community support. Others are concerned about the decline in respect for law enforcement that comes with prohibition. Others yet are concerned about the other harms that prohibition causes, when criminals gangs fight among themselves for the vast profits that are possible by selling drugs, often to our kids, that are usually cut or fake and therefore more dangerous than what they pretend to be.

The NSW Police Force was the NSW Police Service until a few



Research goes psycho

by Bob Tissott

Cannabis use may cause the early onset of psychosis by 2.7 years, according to a recent university study.

The research was conducted by the University of NSW under the leadership of doctor Mathew Large and published in the Archives of Psychiatry, a US journal. The findings were reported in the mainstream media with claims that "cannabis causes psychosis". But what did Dr. Large's study really show?

First, he conducted a meta-analysis, which is a fancy word for comparing a lot of other people's work. The inherent downfall with meta-analysis is researcher bias. Researchers tend to cherry-pick, either consciously or subconsciously, studies that will support their beliefs and hypotheses. This study selected 81 of 443 articles dealing with psychosis and substance abuse.

Next, let's look at who was studied. Every person included in this analysis had a diagnosed psychotic disorder and these people were divided into two groups, drug users and non-drug users. In an interview with Nim-FM, Dr. Large revealed that in order to be included in the drug user group, a person had to be already receiving treatment for a drug abuse problem prior to the onset of psychosis. The vast majority of the "user group" had been diagnosed with a Drug Abuse Disorder. All the rest, regardless of their drug input,

were regarded as non-users.

Finally let's check our terminology. The study refers to "early onset", but exactly when is the onset of psychosis? This analysis decided to use the date on which a person was diagnosed by a medical professional as the date of onset of psychosis.

"So what does all this mean?" I hear you ask. Well to put it simply, and bearing in mind that a previous study by NDARC (National Drug and Alcohol Research Council) showed conclusively that cannabis did not cause psychosis, we are left with this: "A chronic drug user who is already receiving medical treatment for this problem AND who will eventually develop a psychotic disorder, will have their psychosis diagnosed earlier than others who are not already in the medical system."

Funny, put that way it sounds like a good thing. Interestingly enough, in order to deal with the fact that tobacco use was widespread among both groups, the following sentence was included in the report. "It is conceivable that the apparent association between cannabis and psychosis is in fact related to a neurotoxin in tobacco, which is almost always mixed with cannabis."

A study in Sweden looking at the effect of population pressures on psychosis found that inner-city dwellers had nearly three times the risk of developing psychosis as people living in a rural environment. They also found that immigrants



ran twice the risk of native-born members of the population, and that refugees ran three times the risk. Pity any poor refugees re-housed in a tiny inner-city flat - a potential six times the risk of a psychotic disorder! Another study looked at ethnicity and psychosis and found that Afro-Caribbeans had the highest rates in the world.

The current level of psychosis in the global population is about one percent, with about half of that number suffering from schizophrenia. This figure has been pretty stable for the past 30 or so years. Prior to that it was slightly higher, peaking in the late 50s and early 60s. This peak has been attributed to poor pre-natal and childhood nutrition during the war years, coupled with the stress of the

Cold War and the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

It was also at this time that cannabis use began to spread in western countries. As cannabis use increased so the global level of psychosis fell. A statistical irrelevance, or the known anti-psychotic CBDs in cannabis doing their job? I'll leave that one for you to decide.

Independence questioned

The Nimbin Hemp Embassy said the research is a reminder that 90% of research outcomes match the expectations of their source of finance.

If cannabis caused schizophrenia there would be a strong statistical correlation with the rise of cannabis use since the 1960s, said Embassy president Michael Balderstone, but schizophrenia rates have remained steady while cannabis use has soared.

"Even if pot were the cause of these overstated problems, wouldn't it be better to regulate the supply and have some quality control, rather than this black-market system? Take the fear out of the equation?"

Vice-President Alan Salt said that in many cases those classed as suffering from drug-induced psychosis were using other drugs besides cannabis, usually stimulants, but claim they were only using cannabis. "People are often reluctant to admit the full extent of their drug use to family or authorities," he said.

This distorts the results, he says. "Organisations like the NCPIC depend on these kinds of 'outcomes' for funding. If you can deliver these findings you will get funding from these bodies who in turn are funded

by the government."

He also pointed to the problem of alcohol-related psychosis, which spontaneously clears with discontinuation of alcohol use and may resume during repeated alcohol exposure. "This is a situation not receiving the kind of repetitive publicity that cannabis does. It is accepted and pretty much ignored. Psychosis associated with stimulant use is an increasing problem, but there is little research evidence about the nature of the problem and its management."

And another doctor says that the Australian media are addicted to what sociologists call "moral panics" about marijuana.

Cannabis researcher John Jiggins, who wrote the history of cannabis prohibition in Australia, *Marijuana Australiana*, says claims that cannabis causes schizophrenia are "Reefer Madness and tabloid science".

"There are many academic papers that show no relationship between psychosis and cannabis use, but these are never reported - while researchers who support Reefer Madness are given acres of newsprint."

Dr Jiggins says Dr Large is "the current poster boy of tabloid science". Critics of his hypothesis were never mentioned, said Dr Jiggins.

He believes Dr Large's paper was deliberately biased because there was only one candidate, cannabis, under examination. "This was not proof," said Dr Jiggins, "but rather a lazy cheat, where cannabis had to be the guilty party because all the other suspects were absent."

STREET SHUFFLE

Journal of the North Coast's longest serving covert

Undacuva lost in the forest

by Undacuvva

The acacias are ringbarked for a hundred metres around the feral hippy camp where I've been enjoying myself for the last month. From this eagle's nest mountain retreat they are first to see the choppers, but don't notice their kids chewing the wattle bark.

I've never met kids like this before. Born in the forest and reared in the campfire smoke, they are sharp as cockspur and tough as bracken. Some mothers go down the mountain and attempt to join the mainstream but they seem to return quickly. The kids can't handle classrooms but they are all expert on their solar powered laptops.

The wattle chewing should never have been mentioned in Unda reports because now the Feds want to ban acacias, along with any cactus which may give you a spiritual experience.

I asked the Boss if he liked Walt Disney's characters and cartoons.

"Of course," he gave me a trying look.

"You know he got them from peyote visions," I started to tell him. "On a mescaline trip he saw all these cartoon characters and came back and started drawing them. Soon....." but he was walking away, stopped listening. Waste of breath on my part. This is why I know how alienated you hippies feel.

"Unless you've been there...." is a favourite Unda saying we comfort each other with when the Boss just doesn't believe our tales of life beyond the blue line.

But in Canberra they believe everything, just in case of insurance! They believed the dmt and mescal stories and in their inimitable method of control they want all plants that may help you get a bit of living magic, simply banned. No matter that it's the Nation's emblem!

Pipe, one of the older hippies in the tribe, spent years with the desert blackfellas who mixed pituri and acacia. "Every plant has a purpose," he says at least once a day, as he



stuffs the little wooden pipe he's named after full of the day's mix.

I've seen him pinch leaves and collect bark and seeds from countless trees and he often says every day needs it's own special mix. Four of us walked for two days to meet an old aboriginal fellow from Mount Lindsay way who Pipe had befriended. The two of them talked plants the whole time we trekked through the bush and it looked true that every plant had uses we know little about.

The old fellow thought it was hysterically funny about outlawing the acacias. "That should keep the chopper crew busy. They'll

need teams with chainsaws. At flowering season they should be easy to find." More mad laughter around the campfire.

He reckoned when the whitefellas first arrived there are stories of the locals offering them what was probably a dmt mix. Of course the foreigners were never going to eat from the handful of what to them looked like dirt and ash. If only they had said yes, taken the risk, the land of Oz would have gone in a whole other direction!

While Pipe and his small band of dedicated apprentices research the hidden secrets of the bush, the women have been weaving their giant mull plants into the trees. I've never seen plants so tall, up to twenty feet and more, wound around branches and on upward, they're trained like vines. And every few feet is a tiny cluster of blue or yellow flowers, carefully sewn around branches and the stalk. Now I can see them they're everywhere, but for two whole days I didn't notice a single bud despite being surrounded. Never ever have I seen such cleverness. As for the buds these vines grow? I'll have a lot of trouble leaving this piece of paradise.

Feb 2011: HipiLeaks exclusive from CCC (Canberra Control Centre) to All Commanders. The flux of natural disasters has savagely depleted our police numbers as they are dispatched interstate or overseas. Assaults and robberies may have to wait but the annual cannabis eradication raids must not be reduced in any way.

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