

Janelle's Page

Janelle Saffin MP

In its last week of Parliament for 2012, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party at its Caucus meeting endorsed a motion in support of establishing an Office of Animal Welfare.

The motion accords with the Australian Labor Party's platform adopted at its 2011 National Conference.

This is something I have long supported – an independent office to develop and enforce animal welfare standards at a national level, and I know it has the strong

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support of many in our local community.

The purpose of the Office of Animal Welfare is to develop and review domestic animal welfare standards, harmonise domestic laws, monitor and report on surveillance and enforcement of domestic and live animal export regulation, and other appropriate activities.

The Caucus Live Animal

Export Working Group, of which I am a member, will now develop a model for the Office of Animal Welfare and report back to the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party by the end of February 2013.

The members of the working group have successfully lobbied the Federal Agriculture Minister, Senator Joe Ludwig, as he agreed to this motion as well, and it becomes Government policy.

CSG and methane emissions

The recent Southern Cross University report on fugitive methane emissions in QLD around CSG mining sites led many local people to ask me if these fugitive methane

emissions are captured as part of the greenhouse emissions and reportable and measurable.

The answer is yes:

- Fugitive emissions, including those from coal seam gas, are transparently included and published each year in our National Greenhouse Gas Inventory.
- Fugitive emissions from coal seam gas are also subject to the carbon price, providing a strong incentive for them to be minimised.
- The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCCEE) actively monitors international developments with respect to the estimation of emissions from all sources, including



coal seam gas.

- The methods for coal seam gas are designed to be appropriate to Australian conditions, comply with international guidelines and are subject to international expert review each year under the Kyoto Protocol.
- Updates to the methods for the measurement of emissions are regularly undertaken for the national inventory and subsequently

for the methods used by companies under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) scheme.

- The measurement methods for coal seam gas are being reviewed by DCCEE as part of annual review of emissions estimation methods.
- The Government welcomes studies of emissions from coal seam gas extraction in Australia in order to better inform national and company emission estimation methods.
- The DCCEE will take all relevant evidence and analysis into account in developing any changes to reporting under the NGER scheme.

NDIS coming to the North Coast

Justine Elliot welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement of the full roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme across New South Wales by 2018-19.

"This is great for people with disability, their families and carers on the North Coast. It means that a National Disability Insurance Scheme will be operating here on the ground by 2018.

"Finally, people with disability in our community will get the care and support we all know they deserve," said Justine.

About 140,000 people across the state with permanent and significant disability will have access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme by mid-2018. Under the scheme, people with a disability here will:

- work with local people with their families and carers to identify their plans and goals for the future;
- be assessed to receive individualised care and support packages;
- be assisted by local coordinators to help manage and deliver their support; and
- access a system they can easily navigate and will link them to mainstream and community services.

Justine said, "For local people with a disability, this means more control over their lives, more certainty they'll get the care and support they need, and more

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opportunities for them to be involved in our community.

"I've been lobbying really hard for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to come to our area because I know local people with disability have waited long enough for change.

We can finally start saying goodbye to the cruel lottery that says the level of care you receive depends on what your disability is, how you acquired it and where you live."

Justine also paid tribute to the local disability advocates who have campaigned for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

"People with disability, their families, carers and advocates have been making phone calls, sending emails and knocking on doors to push the case for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

"They've told us their stories of trying to work with a broken disability care and support system, and they've told us it needs to change.

"I've heard them loud and clear and I've taken their message to Canberra. Today, we can see that all our hard

work has paid off," said Justine.

Today's agreement builds on the agreement to launch in the Hunter region of NSW from the middle of next-year. Other eligible New South Wales residents will start entering the scheme in 2016, and by July 2018, all eligible residents will be covered by the NDIS.

Under the agreement:

- The Commonwealth will provide funding of \$3.32 billion in 2018 – 51.4 per cent of the funding needed. This will cover the administration of the scheme and contribute to the cost of individual care and support packages and other supports for people with disability, their carers and their families.
 - New South Wales will provide around \$3.13 billion in 2018 – 48.6 per cent of the funding needed. This will contribute to the cost of individual packages and other supports for people with disability, their carers and their families.
 - The full scheme costs will be reviewed by the Productivity Commission in 2018-19 to inform COAG agreement on final scheme funding arrangements.
- An NDIS will also be launched in South Australia, Tasmania, the Barwon region of Victoria and the ACT from the middle of next year.

Elliot calls on Nationals to stop coal seam gas mining on the North Coast

Local Federal MP Justine Elliot called on the North Coast National Party state parliamentarians to speak out and stop coal seam gas (CSG) mining and exploration in our area.

Justine said, "It's time to draw a line in the sand on this important environmental issue.

"We know the community's view. It is clear. Our community does not want Coal Seam Gas mining, and it's up to the state's National Party MPs to do their job, to stand up, and stop this.

"I call on the National Party State MPs to tell NSW State Planning Minister Hazzard and the O'Farrell Government that our community needs a moratorium on CSG on the North Coast.

"The ball is totally in their court: the state government regulates and licences coal seam gas mining and they can stop it dead.

"As your Federal MP, as a



Justine Elliot and Coralie Summerton in Nimbin

local resident and a mother, I share the community's deep concerns about the impact of CSG in our area and I want action on this issue."

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An easy Northern Rivers Transport survey can now be completed online at www.rdanorthernrivers.org.au

Sustain Northern Rivers, a collaboration of 27 regional organisations, is conducting the survey, gathering information about how people currently travel within the region and what stops them getting to where they want to go.

The results will be available on the Regional Development

Northern Rivers Transport Survey

SUSTAIN Northern Rivers

Australia – Northern Rivers website, shared with SNR member organisations and given to Transport for NSW to inform their planning for

the region.

The survey will close on 28th February 2013.

To discuss this survey further, or access hard

copy surveys, please contact Simone Gould, RDA administration: rda@rdanorthernrivers.org.au or phone 6622-4011

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Tina Fuller (B. AppSc - Optometry) At Nimbin Community Centre

From the Mayor's desk



by Jenny Dowell

Happy New Year to all *Nimbin GoodTimes* readers!

The new year, 2013 is a very special year. It marks the 40th anniversary of the Aquarius Festival and the rebirth of Nimbin as the home of sustainability and diversity. As the year unfolds, there will be many opportunities to reflect on the past four decades and how the village and the region have changed as a result of that influx of university students in 1973.

In just one example in the year ahead, the Lismore Regional Gallery is hosting an exhibition on the unique and quirky housing designs that have

dotted the hills and valleys of the region as a result of the new settlers' arrival.

2012

The old year ended for Council with several important decisions that reflect the issues of the past year and the year ahead. Three of the Notices of Motion from Councillors were on CSG, which continues to worry our community and unite us as we endeavour to protect our beautiful land, water and air.

Nimbin Water Supply

Council voted unanimously (Crs Meineke, Battista and Smith absent) in support of the upgrade of Nimbin Water Supply. The proposal's first stage involves the construction of a new pump station, pipeline and reservoir to provide rural customers along Gungas Road with water from the D.E. Williams dam in the village.

The water in the dam will be aerated and mixed

to improve quality. Stage 2 includes further community consultation on ways of further improving water quality at the dam to benefit all customers of the supply.

Reconciliation Action Plan

In an important step for Council, we officially adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to help close the gap through relationships, respect and opportunities. As part of the Plan, Council is working towards an increase in employment of Aboriginal staff and are delighted that several trainees will commence in the new year.

Smoke-Free Areas

Council continues to lead the way in smoke free areas. In 2004, nine years before State legislation that comes in on January 7, 2013, we introduced smoke-free children's playgrounds. We have since introduced smoke free swimming pools and bus stops and, as of January, our parks, gardens and passive

recreation areas and the four main streets of the CBD 'block' will be smoke-free.

We recognize that smoking is particularly difficult to quit so the introduction of smoke free areas will be accompanied by signage, education and awareness building and the installation of smoking posts with butt bins in our City fringe carparks. The policy will be reviewed in 12 months.

While Nimbin is not included in the Smoke-Free policy at this stage, state legislation will apply in 2015.

City Hall

As NORPA subscribers will be aware, City Hall has closed for six months of major renovations. Council has allocated a further \$200,000 to allow Bennett Constructions to complete State 2 of the proposed works which will improve stage access for props and production crews.

In the new year we will monitor expenditure to determine whether we provide an additional

\$200,000 for improved seating and lighting. The whole project is valued at approximately \$6million with the majority of the funding coming from the federal government.

Computer Giveaway

Each year Council replaces a proportion of its computers and, rather than selling them for a small amount of money, we opt to give them to community organisations. This year we've donated 75 computers to 43 groups including hall committees.

Nimbin organisations that have benefitted include Mousetrap Media for *Nimbin News Quarterly*, Nimbin Environment Centre, Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre and others such as Youth Connections NC that provide services in Nimbin and Lismore.

Nimbin Youth Films

Youth Connections and Darmin Cameron were the organisers of the recent Nimbin Youth Film competition.

What an event! The 14 films I was privileged to see at the Nimbin Bush Theatre were outstanding. Including animation, documentary, drama, comedy, the films ranged in length from one minute to about 30 minutes and every one was worthy of being shown on the big screen.

Congratulations to the young film makers especially Ari McKinlay for her stunning film 'Imagine This', available for readers to view on YouTube, to Journey and Jamie for 'Apocalypse' and Bhodi for 'Bhodi's Life'.

Congratulations too to Shaniah, Ziggy, Bindu, Djinn, Lizzie, Shad, Sam, Lily and Maja, Chelsea and Logan and the Rotary Park film crew – my dizziness from wobbly cam is now abating ;-)

Best wishes again to all readers and I hope your summer holidays are rejuvenating.

Contact via email: Jenny.Dowell@lismore.nsw.gov.au or phone 0402-651-394, or Twitter @Mayorjd.



by Simon Clough

Deputy Mayor, Lismore City Council

I hope everyone had an equally enjoyable Christmas as Trish and I did. We spent a very pleasant day with Trish's family at Uki. We just drove back through Nimbin and saw this fantastic 'thank you' sign for Lismore City Council's new road. It's not often that Council gets thanks for its road activities. It felt great.

We also called into the School of Arts to see the Tibetan monks doing their amazing sand mandala. It was a revelation to see the streets of Nimbin on Boxing Day full of

people. I doubt if they were the traditional Boxing Day bargain hunters!

In the end, Christmas came just in time this year. Lismore Council decided that it wanted absolutely everything done before Christmas. I counted over 20 hours of Council related meetings in one week just before the break.

Coal Seam Gas (CSG) has been pretty dominant in the last month. Firstly there was Thomas George's 'educational' meeting with Brad Hazzard, Minister for Planning, and a number of his bureaucrats. The thousand-strong crowd must have chanted 'No CSG' for 7-8 minutes while they filed into the hall.

Thomas George and Brad Hazzard looked like two little bunnies caught in a very powerful spotlight, wondering what the hell to do. What followed was a rowdy meeting with the anti-CSG crowd emphatically exerting its power. Some people complained that the crowd was too unruly. I saw many occasions where a local person (often with a PhD) asked questions that the bureaucrats had no answer for, or were howled down when they said things that were patently silly or just spin.



I attended Hazzard's Casino meeting six months ago. It was polite and well behaved. Mr Hazzard treated us to a bravura performance with spin, arrogance and deception

leaving many feeling totally disempowered and devastated. When I compare this with the sense of power that many seemed to experience from the recent meeting I have no doubt which was the more successful for the CSG cause.

I spent a day at the Glenugie CSG blockade last week and it was tremendously inspiring to see the commitment of the blockaders. I spent most of the day giving massages to some pretty tired people.

Lismore Council has also been very busy on the CSG front with three motions going before the last meeting of Council for the year. I was responsible for two motions. The first was to install signs at all the gateways to Lismore, including the airport, declaring that 87% of the community opposes CSG. The second motion asked the Northern NSW Local Health District to carry out a Health Impact Assessment on the possible impacts of Coal Seam Gas (CSG) production on local residents.

Cr Vanessa Ekins put forward a motion to ask the regional organisation of councils for \$90,000 over three years to work with the university to do baseline water studies that will be able to determine

if there are any negative impacts on water should CSG go ahead. The health and water studies should be a requirement of state government approval but of course that is not going to happen so we have to take up these issues ourselves.

A recently leaked report from the Office of Environment and Heritage assessing shooting in National Parks by amateur hunters concluded that park users and workers were at a high risk of being killed or injured (no surprises there!). Lismore Council through a motion by previous Councillor Dave Yarnall had condemned this outrageous idea.

I'm deeply concerned that the Shooters and Fishers Party that has brought us these crazy shooting proposals will next manage to manipulate this state government into allowing logging in National Parks. Should that happen I suspect there will be a huge response in the Northern Rivers.

Wishing you all a healthy and fruitful new year, with a relaxing break before all the 'fun' starts again.

You can contact me on 0428-886-217 or: simondough@internode.on.net or Cr Simon Clough on Facebook or my blog: www.crsimonclough.wordpress.com

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT

Details of Development Applications recently lodged with Lismore City Council and on public exhibition are available for viewing online via Council's DA Tracking facility at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and searching for "currently advertised DAs".

Development applications and Statement of Environmental Effects may be inspected online at any time, or at Council's Corporate Centre, in Goonellabah, during normal business hours, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm. Staff are available to discuss applications in office hours. Please call 1300 87 83 87 to make an appointment.

It is highly recommended that people intending to make a submission review Council's detailed information about "making a submission" by searching Council's website.

Lismore City Council has received the following Development Applications (and/or Applications for Modifications to existing consents) for consideration.

DA NO	LOCATION	DP LOT	APPLICANT	DESCRIPTION	CLOSING DATE
12/0379	12 Cecil Street NIMBIN	LOT: 3 DP: 1096006	MardiGrass Organising Body	Temporary Event –	21/01/2013
	41 Cullen Street NIMBIN	DP 127200 lot 1		MardiGrass Festival	
	45 Cullen Street NIMBIN	LOT: 2 DP: 1096006		including camping	
	47 Cullen Street NIMBIN	DP 726841 lot 1		and parking from	
	51 Cullen Street NIMBIN	DP 122292 lot 1		3 May 2013 to	
	51A Cullen Street NIMBIN	DP 310019 lot 3		5 May 2013	
	7 Alternative Way NIMBIN	DP 858241 lot 53			
	40 Cecil Street NIMBIN	DP 1013043 lot 65			



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Cannabis wins 'war'

by James Moylan
National Campaign Director, HEMP

In the US, the War on Cannabis is over. Common-sense and compassion have won.

Last week, in a full page advertisement in the New York Times, the Drug Policy Alliance of America publicly declared the war on cannabis over. "80 years after the end of prohibition," it proclaimed in large friendly print, "prohibition is finally coming to an end".

Unlike in Australia, more than half of the US population who want to smoke cannabis can currently buy it legally or purchase it in a regime where the potential penalties are minor and civil. In nineteen US States any adult can walk into any one of thousands of reputable 'dispensaries', display their Medicinal Cannabis identity card, and purchase their weed. They can even order it on the web and get it delivered to their front door. Medicinal cannabis, as an industry, has arrived.

In America, medicinal cannabis is no longer 'a big deal'. The momentum has rather swung behind full legalisation. Right now in Colorado and Washington State anyone over 21 can grow and smoke pot for recreational purposes without fear of even a minor civil penalty. California has indicated it will soon join this list. Several other states also see this as an opportunity they intend to embrace.

So we encounter the stark divide between the US and Australia. In the US local politicians acknowledge

that cannabis prohibition has failed utterly. They see re-legalisation as an opportunity to repair damage and restore trust. In Australia our politicians still wear blinkers. Innocent Aussies continue to suffer for no good purpose.

This change in the mindset of the average American politician comes as a result of fifteen years of incremental change and education. For the American public a growing familiarity with the facts relating to cannabis has changed everything. Now that anyone can buy cannabis publicly from a dispensary it has become impossible to continue demonising cannabis.

In fact, other outcomes become apparent. Illegal growers become licensed farmers. Tiny dispensaries evolve into large gleaming shopfronts. Back-alley dealers disappear. Kids in school begin finding it harder to buy pot. Fewer kids seek out pot. Police officers find talking to children easier. Local municipalities begin building schools as less people go to gaol. Fewer arrests are made and councils and states enjoy access to a new stream of revenue.

All these positive outcomes are based on a realisation that drug use is a medical and not a criminal matter. In Canada, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Guatemala, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and Uruguay, as well as in the United States, legislatures have undertaken assessments and have determined that the complete outlawing of cannabis is simply unwarranted. It was a mistake. Yet politicians in our



country remain entirely unwilling to provide Australian cannabis users with the same respect!

Pot smokers in Australia are still treated as criminals. They are hunted down and gaoled. Police fly over properties in helicopters filled with paramilitary troopers. Armed police kick down doors and terrorise peaceable law-abiding voters. Citizens are oppressed, children disaffected, and our exchequer is drained: all for no apparent social or individual benefit - in fact quite the reverse. Suffering is inflicted for no apparent reason or social good.

The HEMP Party is devoted solely to the re-legalisation of HEMP in all its forms. We ask for your assistance. Along with the Drug Policy Alliance of the United States, we also strive for the day when drug policies are no longer motivated by ignorance, fear and prejudice but rather by science, compassion, fiscal prudence and human rights, with education and treatment available for everyone.

It is time to end the War on Cannabis in Australia. It is time for common-sense and compassion to win here at home.

Join us at: www.australianhempparty.com

Totally not into bagging Canberra, but...

Reflections of a refugee

by Chris Aitchison

I have spent most of my 38 years in Canberra, and while I feel well qualified to pass critical comment on the city and the way of life enjoyed therein, I promised myself, upon undertaking to write a regular column for the *GoodTimes*, that I would not use 'Reflections' as a platform for Canberra-bashing.

For a start, denigrating Canberra each month would make for a very negative column, and nobody can tolerate a perpetually negative columnist for very long. (With the possible exception of clinical psychologists, for whom habitually negative people are their bread and butter. And the English.)

Secondly, Canberra is too easy a target for cynicism: the mere mention of our nation's capital outside of the ACT is certain to solicit remarks ranging in nature from snide to the outright hostile. Nobody, it seems, appreciates Canberra except for Canberrans. (Although that too is doubtful in view of Canberra's long weekend routine: every time Canberrans enjoy more than two consecutive days off, the city virtually empties, and there is a 170 kilometre-long traffic jam all the way

to Batemans Bay as every man, woman, and child with the means bolts down the coast for a night or two.)

What's more, Canberra is so far removed from the experience of most people who don't live there that if I was going to write about Canberra every month, I might as well write about life on Mars; *GoodTimes* readers would possibly relate more easily to life there than to life in Canberra. In any case, I figured that if the *GoodTimes*' readership wanted a dose of Canberra-bashing, they could pick up any one of our major national newspapers.

From my observations (OK, I will indulge just a little, just this once...), it is as though Canberrans try to view the rest of Australia through the reflective face of a one-way mirror. Those on the outside who take the time to look in almost invariably perceive conspicuous affluence and privilege, reflected in enviably high incomes and education levels, as well as in near-pristine public infrastructure and roads that have better surfaces than most billiards tables.

From the other side of that mirror, however, Canberrans conceive of life 'in the regions' naively and self-referentially, viewing their access to privilege as average, at best. I would

not care to count the number of times I have heard public servants moan about how much more money they would make if only they had their present level of responsibility 'in the private sector'. (You know, the private sector? That homogeneous over-paid collective of non-government employees?)

I could go on for volumes - buy me a beer at the hotel one day if you doubt that! - but as I said, I will refrain from stooping to Canberra-bashing. I have, of course, ventured a little of my take on Canberra-think for the purpose of making a point: while parliamentarians frequently come and go, the vast majority of the people who form the executive arm of government live and work in Canberra.

From this peculiar and insular vantage point, they make decisions that are national in reach. So do not expect that these decisions will reflect your interests, since most Canberrans can only guess (and guess badly, at that) at what your interests are. The challenges before us are therefore ours, as a community, to resolve or face off.

If you are savvy, then by all means lobby Canberra, but do not count on its support. Take matters into your own hands, and be, in yourself and in the collective, the change you want to see.



by Marilyn Scott

Sitting here writing this, we're still a few days away from 2013, the year not quite over yet. Tomorrow a full moon in Cancer, power packed... our home, our family, our roots, our ancestral heritage... all up for a bit of a shake, an apt finale to 2012. Well, we're old pro's now, aren't we? It's been that kind of year.

By the time you read this we will have already made the leap... the past behind, the future ahead... a brand New Year... what kind of future will we create?

'The Year of Peace' were the words that came to me when I pondered the meaning of 2013. Well, it's up to me to make it that way... my intentions and focus are incredibly important now. We have more understanding about the nature of Life... in so many ways... but also, that we are all One... single cells of the one great Life Force. Our Bodies are separate... but our Essence is joined... we can no longer deny what we already know, what happens to one happens to all.

So what can I do to truly contribute to creating the world we all know is possible? Being heart-centred would be a great start... promoting kindness, compassion and care...

trusting, accepting... dignity and sharing... really knowing that I'm totally cared for; coming from my strength in all my endeavours.

It takes a bit more to come from one's strength, more awareness and more intention, as habits are formed from unconscious memories. But it's certainly time to chuck all those antiquated tapes... just becomes boring, listening to the same old song.

It takes effort, it takes courage... it takes really wanting to... wanting to change the things that no longer serve me. They take up energy, they go against the grain... they're a pain in the butt... time's well overdue.

So whilst I sit in this space between these symbolic years... yes, maybe a calendar we've created... but the symbolism is there. We all sit in a place of letting go of the past... not only welcoming the future... but being a part of creating a new world. Yes, 2012 was a biggy, but let's make 2013 the most fantastic, beautiful, awesome, magickal, sensational, stupendous year of everything super wonderful: Peace, Love, Dignity, Evolution, Evolvement... and Prosperity of the most wholesome kind (you can add to the list)...

Lotsa luv to you all... and have a blast.

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HEMP HEADLINES

NSW Government inquiry on medical use of cannabis

The NSW Legislative Council has commenced an inquiry into the safety and efficacy of cannabis for medical purposes. The committee will examine if, and how, cannabis should be supplied for medical use, the legal implications of cannabis use for medical purposes, as well as any other related issues. Interested in making a submission? Deadline is 15th February. More information: australianhempparty.com/1148/inquiry-medical-cannabis

John Jarratt's Xmas carol for Schapelle Corby to Julia Gillard and Australia [youtube.com]

Australian actor John Jarrett has recorded an emotive Christmas ballad in the hope of putting the focus of the Australian public and the prime minister back onto Schapelle Corby. Sung to the tune of John Lennon's masterpiece *Happy Xmas (War Is Over)*, the *Wolf Creek* star pleads for the prime minister to do more to have Corby released.

A big business in getting high [New York Times]

Rihanna, 24, is perhaps the most visible marijuana devotee among a number of young female pop stars, but she is not alone.

Lady Gaga, 26, is becoming increasingly vocal in her praise of the green stuff to her Little Monsters, smoking it onstage in Amsterdam, and promising concertgoers that she would try to persuade Oprah and President Obama on the "medical wonders of marijuana." On Halloween, she dressed up as Princess High, the Cannabis Queen. (Rihanna was the Bride of Mary Jane.)

"During the Reagan era, this sort of stuff would get you banned from radio," said a senior critic for *Rolling Stone*. "Being a pop star, transgression is good for business. And at this particular moment in American culture, saying you smoke weed is a pretty



Now that states in the USA have started legalizing recreational marijuana, will President Obama continue the federal government's war on weed? Illustration by Victor Juhasz courtesy Rolling Stone

safe way to transgress. If marijuana gets legalized to the point where it can actually be marketed, then these ladies are really in a good position to be on the front line of endorsement deals."

Outrageous HSBC settlement proves the Drug War is a joke [Rolling Stone]

Assistant Attorney General and longtime Bill Clinton pal Lanny Breuer, this week signed off on a settlement deal with the British banking giant HSBC that is the ultimate insult to every ordinary person who's ever had his life altered by a drugs charge.

Despite the fact that HSBC admitted to laundering billions of dollars for Colombian and Mexican drug cartels and violating a host of important banking laws, Breuer and his Justice Department elected not to pursue criminal prosecutions of the bank, opting instead for a "record" financial settlement of \$1.9 billion, which as one analyst noted is about five weeks of income for the bank.

Consider drugs decriminalisation system, UK MPs say [BBC]

The UK government is being urged by MPs to closely consider a system of drugs decriminalisation used in Portugal. The

Home Affairs Committee said it was impressed with the approach to cutting drug use where people found with small amounts are not always prosecuted. It also asks ministers to monitor the effects of cannabis legalisation in other parts of the world.

Some take Cannabis illicitly, Israelis take it seriously [ipsnews.net]

At the Hadarim nursing home, cannabis is on the menu of medical treatments – 19 patients out of 36 use medical cannabis. "Though we know how to extend life, the pain is great. In geriatrics, the future doesn't matter any longer. What matters is the now – how to add quality of life to longevity," explains Head Nurse Inbal Sikorin.

Sucked from a syringe, peppered in a yoghurt, administered three times a day in half-gramme doses, cannabis dramatically reduces the need for medication, say doctors, nurses and patients. "Why use painkillers? I feel great with cannabis," says Rivka Haloup, 85, who suffers from acute arthritis.

Croatia decriminalizes drug use [idpc.net]

The Croatian parliament approved a bill on 14th December that decriminalizes the possession of small amounts of illicit drugs.

Medicinal cannabis available in Ireland in the next year [independent.ie]

The legal use of cannabis in medicines is to be introduced next year. The *Irish Independent* has learned that the Department of Health is bringing in legislation to legalise medicinal cannabis. The move follows applications from drugs companies to sell cannabis-based medicines in Ireland. However, a spokesperson for the department stressed that the change would not apply to recreational use of the drug.

Email: head@hempembassy.net to receive our 'weekly global drug news summary'. Web links to these stories and others at: www.hempembassy.net or tune in Fridays at noon to the Hemp Hour on Nim-FM 102.3.

Dodgy swab tests bring down hemp food industry



Australian Ministers have voted against lifting the Australia-only ban on the consumption of low THC hemp seed foods. The decision did not reject the proposal but paves the way for a review of submissions and all evidence supplied.

Although hemp seed foods are sold all round the world, Australian ministers refused to accept the advice and extensive approval notice prepared by Foods Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) over the past 10 years.

Vitahemp Australia director, and president of the Northern River Hemp Association, Andrew Kavasilas said, "We anticipated a review would be called."

In May 2012, Mr Kavasilas appeared in a *Landline* episode in which he seemed certain police opposition would trigger a review.

FSANZ found hemp seed food products are available in all OECD countries and although commercial cultivation of hemp is not permitted in the USA, hemp seed food imports are in the \$100's of millions.

Mr Kavasilas said, "We know a domestic market already exists, but the export market is key to that evolution. If we can't get domestic approval, Australian producers may additionally not be in a position to export any processed lines."

"The overwhelming support for hemp seed farming underlines its importance to broader hemp industries. There are now many questions to answer and claims to be substantiated by police who provided all the opposition based on the assumption that hemp food consumption would interfere with saliva testing swabs," Mr Kavasilas added.

"It also appears that Australia is the only country that employs oral fluid testing despite all evidence pointing to unreliability and forensic issues."

STREET SHUFFLE

Journal of the North Coast's longest serving covert

by Undacuva

Operation Snaplock

Whoever told Sydney that counting empty Glad snaplock bag boxes from the bins was the way to measure the pot trade in a community, is an idiot. For weeks I've had to go through the rubbish in the early hours every night, plus collect all the loose packets lying around. The stupid thing is, there's hundreds of them. To be precise, I found 712 in one month. That's packets of bags, not bags! The Boss is no star at maths but he did get what they were driving at. The computer announced with utter confidence: "\$10,680,000 per month turnover from 712 ounces marijuana."

"But most deals I buy are



wrapped in newspaper," I tell him.

"Are you saying the computer is wrong again, Bethany?" He's irritated, suddenly excited he has the stats to get some of the new Goulburn recruits.

I know he doesn't understand. "How do you know each bag held an ounce, Boss? Maybe there were some twents." He looks totally flustered now, no idea what I'm

talking about.

Between the cameras and the drones there's not much they can't find out, and since I refuse to spend all day in front of computer screens, they've moved me to SS (Statistical Support), and can you believe it, first assignment: "Collect and count disposed of Sandwich Bag packets for one month from your village".

"Most people just buy 20 or 50 dollar deals Boss, these numbers are crazy. Besides half the bags are lying around in the mud, filthy and unused." I showed him a bagfull I'd collected last night from behind a well-known tourist attraction (WKTA). Finally he undastood, and that was the end of 'Operation Snaplock'.

The Boss now thinks Drones are replacing Undas like weed is replacing grog in Colorado, after Christmas at his sister's. She's got three teenage boys he hadn't seen in years, two of them now smoking cones in his sister's house, and almost in front of her. Apparently they'd rather smoke pot than drink

booze, and she agreed to it. They stay at home more, and every time they went out drinking someone would end up in a fight. Besides, one's an apprentice tradie and he says they all use drugs. And on the job.

"They took the piss out of me all afternoon," says the Boss, sheepishly. "Told me there are better drugs than booze and our generation has to step aside now we've made such a mess of things. It was hard to disagree. Their turn now, they said. Even told me I was part of the problem. Worst thing, my sister was on their side".

I could see he's begrudgingly starting to agree with some hippie thinking, which is making the whole Force office just a trifle edgy.

Then he tells me there's a CSG drilling rig moving into his neighbour's property. He knows all too well they can go kilometres sideways with their new flexible drills, as he was listening intently to the questions and answers at the riotous Lismore meeting when

we were there protecting Thomas and his mates. The questions were much better than the answers, anybody could see that. So that's why he left that meeting in such a bad mood.

He's off to a, wait for it, a 'Secret Conference' in the States. I know Big Pharma and the correctional centres are offering holidays and new cars to the Top Cops like the end of the world is nigh, so I'm not sure the Boss's sudden trip is fully legit. Without speaking, I left by the back door and emerged from the sewer lane swigging on a bottle of port. Count the homeless is the new mission.

The official figures from the AISH say numbers are up 24%. Biggest rise ever. As I'm a regular in their camp, it's easy for me to get a count, they think. Well hello. When's a couchsurfer a homeless? After how many houses? And what about my mates sleeping along the creeks? Dozens of them. And what about Pipe's tribe, not a home amongst them. Gimme a break.

Do you want to re-legalise & regulate Cannabis as they have in Washington State and Colorado?

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Koala Kolumn

by Lorraine Vass

Although the very hot summer first predicted may not now eventuate, dry hot spells and fire can happen at any time.

Both are significant threats to koalas. Poorly planned hazard reduction burns and wildfire, for example, have the potential to wipe out local populations. Unlike feathered species, koalas can't take flight. Their instinct is not to move away from fire, but to bolt higher up the tree they're in. This is fine if the fire doesn't reach the canopy, but if it does, the koala has nowhere to go. Any koala not killed by the flames may well starve if canopy scorch is widespread.

Frequently-occurring high intensity fires within areas occupied by resident koala populations knocks out a proportion of the breeding population at a rate faster than the time it takes for the loss to be replaced by successive koala generations. The long-term viability of such populations becomes very fragile indeed.

Better understanding of the devastating impact of fire on the remnant Tweed Coast koala population has prompted meetings between Tweed Shire Council, the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to consider strategies and protocols for managing fires in koala habitat.

As a result NPWS have identified koala core habitat and corridor mapping in their Fire Management Strategies. These maps have been supplied to local RFS brigades. The mapping will be reviewed to include other known koala habitat.

Where fires are reported within koala habitat areas the fire containment strategy will now consider the impact on koalas. Attempts will be made to avoid habitat or minimise scorch height (intensity) within habitat areas.

Better containment options within koala habitat areas will be investigated; utilising fire trails etc. may provide more options to contain and minimise the size of fires. There has also been agreement that two RFS units will be despatched to every callout (dual response) in koala hotspots so that the chances of quickly knocking the fire down and containing it will be improved.

Ecological burning within Cudgen Nature Reserve is proposed. This will also help avoid large incidents where much of the Reserve (and koala habitat) is subject to fire. Any burning will be planned for low intensity.

The fire in the Cudgen Nature Reserve back in September was a good example of how this is working. RFS and NPWS agreed on a strategy to let the fire burn slowly south to Blacks Creek and Cudgen Creek, which meant that intensity and crown scorch were low. Any koalas present would have had a far better chance for survival. Previously the option of back-burning from the south may have been considered as it would have contained the fire more quickly. The higher intensity would have likely resulted in mortality for wildlife in the area.

Of course, these strategies are only possible



Cute Kal is one of six koalas currently in care. Ring 6622-1233 to book a tour of the Koala Care Centre over the holidays.

if the weather conditions are favourable, however the new awareness of koala habitat on the Tweed Coast is certainly making an impact. In the days following the September fire NPWS rangers repeatedly inspected the burnt out area for koalas and other wildlife. No koalas injured or otherwise, were reported. The dual response by RFS units is also containing many other ignitions to small areas where in the past they may have got away and burnt more habitat.

Understanding koala ecology and threats are the first step. It only took Koala ecologist, Steve Phillips to summarise some of the issues and threat to koalas from fires, for the Group Captains and local RFS Captains to come on board. Discussion of possible solutions and their implementation followed. While there's a long way to go, we applaud the interested response of the fire teams and NPWS to take account of the locality's koala habitat and the koalas that still occupy it.

Normally almost all a koala's water intake comes from the leaves it eats. Eucalyptus leaves are efficient living storage systems for water and lingering morning dew adds to leaf freshness. However, hot temperatures, lack of rain and drying winds desiccate the leaves and thin canopies. Thirsty koalas must find water elsewhere.

If you are fortunate enough to live with koalas you can take a few simple precautions which will help thirsty animals get through long dry-spells. Leaving bowls of water at the base of trees known to be used by koalas is a good start. Dusk to dawn is acknowledged as their prime active time but koalas move around during the day as well. If they are thirsty their keen sense of smell will lead them to garden ponds and even swimming pools. Standard pool fencing isn't always an effective deterrent for koalas. While they can swim, getting out of a smooth-sided pool unaided is usually beyond them because their claws have no purchase. Providing a rope or some other means of escape could prevent unforeseen calamity.

Happy koala spotting in 2013.

To report a koala in trouble, or a sighting, please ring Friends of the Koala's 24/7 Rescue Hotline: (02) 6622-1233. For information about koalas, their food trees, how you can assist koala conservation visit: www.friendsofthekoala.org or email: info@friendsofthekoala.org or phone 6622-1233. You can also follow us on Facebook. To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat, phone the 24/7 Office of Environment & Heritage Enviro Line: 13-15-55.



Protesters at Glenugie Photo: David Lowe

by Philippe Dupuy, President

Undeniably this has been a year that has seen people come together regardless of creed to fight greed, to reject seamless consumption and to revalue the important things in life.

Information forum on the impact of communication towers in the region

Briget, a building biologist from Brisbane, gave an interesting and informative talk about the impact of electro magnetic radiation emanating from mobile phone towers, mobile phones, cordless phones etc.

The meeting was well attended and a group of people discussed how to progress this further. Contact Phil at NEC for further information.

Glenugie campaign

So far actions by concerned members of NR community have been successful. Debbie Whitley's courageous decision to lock on has inspired others to fight back.

On Monday 17/12/ 12 the Roma truck delivering the generator for Metgasco was slowed down and eventually forced to turn back by clever and resolute tactics. As yet the rig and other equipment remain locked inside their compound at Casino.

This was a great battle win in the long war against the spread of CSG mining in this region. A vigil is being kept right through the Christmas break by dedicated community members to warn those at Glenugie to be ready.

Interestingly, Metgasco has called a truce until 3rd January. This in itself is an admission of how disruptive to the community their operations are.

Community Watch van

The van was launched last month and has received a fair amount of publicity. It is proving to be a very effective weapon in struggle.

The van is the result of NEC and other GAG groups combined efforts. It has drawn Metgasco's fury with ongoing patrols which has put Metgasco on the defensive. So far it has exposed the company's lack of care and professionalism in many aspects of their operations. The van's vigilant watch is providing continuity in our opposition to CSG companies. It is also keeping an eye out on illegal activities as well as legal but dubious practices, which then can be highlighted and actioned on.

Some of the van's achievements so far



Dying kangaroo trapped in Metgasco's new 'produced water' holding pond at Pollocks Road near Casino, in December.

Photo: Aaron Barsony

have been observing Metgasco's workers, providing information to residents in the area, checking existing well sites and some of the holding ponds. A wallaby, which was trapped in one of the ponds and rescued, but which later died, has highlighted the lack of care with which CSG companies operate. This latest incident is prompting us to write to Metgasco for authorisation to visit other ponds not as easily accessible to check for wildlife.

Aside from donations we need volunteers to help with the patrols. Please check Community Watch van on Facebook or call Philippe on 0401-237-903.

Brad Hazzard visit

The attempt by Thomas George to once again show CSG as a viable industry was thwarted at the Lismore city hall. More than a thousand community members took control of the meeting and made it clear to the minister that CSG is totally unacceptable to this community.

Although there is an argument that the crowd should have given Brad's team a chance to answer the pointed and relevant questions from the audience, it is obvious that Brad Hazzard's team would have used the occasion to promulgate the same spin. The message I got from this meeting was that we are determined to stop this dangerous industry dead in its tracks and that is empowering.

In this New Year the battle for a CSG-free Northern Rivers will intensify. We need to be resolute more than ever to rid our region of this plague. Please contact NEC and other GAG groups to find out how you can assist. We need your participation in whatever way you can. Together we will win this fight.

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by Triny Roe

Land management, Caring for Country – what ever you call it, there are many systems and approaches. The choices you make will depend on what you want to do with your patch and what you have to begin with. Perhaps you need to make a living from your block and farm intensively, or maybe you just want to live in a peaceful green environment, rich with vegetation and wildlife. Maybe your land is old cattle pasture and mostly grass and other herbaceous plants, or it perhaps totally overrun with lantana, camphor and privet. But what to do and how do you find out what's best for your particular situation?

There is a plethora of information out there – it can come from books, neighbours, Landcare groups, government bodies, courses, workshops and field days. No single system will suit every situation. Sometimes ideas from a number of different ideologies can be used but they all rely on an understanding and knowledge of the various plants already present or intended to be introduced.

The Bradley Method of bush regeneration was pioneered by two sisters, Joan and Eileen Bradley in the 1960s and 70s. They restored many significant bushland areas around Sydney, helping the bush to help itself.

Joan and Eileen advocated hand weeding, starting work on the least affected areas and creating minimal disturbance to the soil. As competition is reduced the natives have a chance to flourish, creating an environment unsuitable for the weeds. The Bradley Method cautions against over-clearing. The rate of clearing should match the natives' regeneration speed. It's a slow process, involving both work time and waiting time.

Permaculture style of land management uses systems' ecology. It focuses on the relationships of elements and how different plants work together and with the landscape and man-made features. It's about understanding the nature

of each species and how they behave and interact.

Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren coined the term Permaculture in the 1970s. This was permanent agriculture to create sustainable productive ecosystems. It was a practice of developing food forest gardens using a mix of tree species, ground cover, cropping and lots of mulch.

Alanna Moore takes permaculture to another level. As well as working with the natural energies and elements such as sunshine, rain and the soil, she incorporates geomancy and spirituality. Alanna communicates with the devas or earth spirits of the land and dowses for ley lines and underground water courses.

Natural sequence farming is the work of Peter Andrews. He reads the land to understand it and promotes growing everything, including weeds, which can be slashed and mulched to improve levels of organic matter in the soil. This in turn enhances productivity. Plants can also ameliorate salinity problems. Peter bought a run-down horse stud in the mid 1970s and, putting into practice his theories, transformed it into a healthy productive property.

Aboriginal land management before 1788 consisted of the deliberate use of fire and knowledge of the various plants' life cycles to ensure a plentiful food supply. Bill Gammage studied written reports by early settlers and explorers and 19th Century landscape paintings. He demonstrates how the Aborigines created the park-like estates so frequently commented upon by the new arrivals.

If you're interested in learning more about plants, weeds and aspects of land management, books by all the people mentioned here are available in the Lismore Library. Landcare groups exist in many areas and always welcome new members. Far North Coast Weeds can help identify weed species. Properly pressed and dried plant specimens can be posted to the NSW Herbarium for identification.

Squat vs. sit

There's a soaking rain falling and last month's earth cracks are starting to heal up. We're all still here, the Mayans got it wrong but it still feels like we got a second chance. It's the day after Christmas, and sloth-like movements are in order. Bellies are still full from yesterday's feasting, the expanded gut linings slowly shrinking back as we digest a crazy concoction of food found in one place, only at Christmas. The leftovers are in the fridge, a soggy salad and some tofu that will be a welcome relief for lunch. Funny how the healthy stuff always gets passed over.

The composting toilets of the world will be getting a good feed today too. Many of us will spend a little more time than usual, contracting our muscles and pushing out xmas by-product. How we go about our daily business on the loo may not interest

many, but if you'd like to avoid bowel cancer it may be worth paying attention here. Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in Australia. A healthy diet and plenty of exercise will alleviate the possibility of getting this form of cancer, but shitting effectively will also help. The position of the anal canal whilst squatting is the best one for evacuating everything. The canal is open, relaxed and the bowel is compressed by the raising of the legs.

Getting it all out at the right time of day is also important. If we leave bits of shit floating around in our rectums/bowels all day, the chance that they will cause a cellular mutation resulting in a cancer is much higher. Since most of the digestive processes occur when we are sleeping, mornings are the best time to crap. Of course, as we get older or have led inactive lives, squatting is not an option. To simulate squatting, a foot-stool that



View from the loo

by Stuart McConville

raises your legs in front of your standard toilet pedestal can be used. Pooh Solutions can make you one! The simulated squat will align your anal canal better than sitting, and help with stubborn bowel movements. In an ageing people, Haemorrhoids can be avoided and better overall health maintained. Below are 7 good reasons to squat.

- Makes elimination faster, easier and more complete. This helps prevent "faecal stagnation," a prime factor in colon cancer, appendicitis and inflammatory bowel disease.
- Protects the nerves

- that control the prostate, bladder and uterus from becoming stretched and damaged.
- Securely seals the ileocecal valve, between the colon and the small intestine. In the conventional sitting position, this valve is unsupported and often leaks during evacuation, contaminating the small intestine.
- Relaxes the puborectalis muscle which normally chokes the rectum in order to maintain continence.
- Uses the thighs to support the colon and prevent straining. Chronic straining on the toilet can cause hernias, diverticulosis, and pelvic organ prolapse.
- A highly effective, non-invasive treatment for hemorrhoids, as shown by published clinical research.
- For pregnant women, squatting avoids pressure on the uterus when using the toilet. Daily squatting helps prepare one for a more natural delivery.

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Biodiversity conservation and soil organic matter

by Geoff Dawe

It is fundamental for any human culture, in accord with the rest of nature to return organic matter to soil. Decreasing soil organic matter is a current feature of Western society and this in itself is a threat to this civilization, never mind the other major threats causing an environment crisis.

In agriculture with artificial fertilizers, in urban areas with W.C.'s and "green waste" trucked off site, in forestry with export of logs, in public lands with a tendency toward "cold" burns, and in biodiversity conservation with a focus of life on top of soil rather than soil itself – in all the human dealings with soil in our culture – organic matter return to soil is neglected. The reticence in returning organic matter to soil could be seen as pathological in the sense of being extreme, excessive or markedly abnormal.

Some people show more excitement at having Billy goat weed or Mist weed in place of Crofton weed because the former are easier to control in that they are not as intrusive. Crofton weed has a relatively thick stem and is able to produce that thicker stem from its ability



to colonise comparatively moist sites. In a culture that did not have a pathological resistance to increasing soil organic matter, the existence of stronger growing weeds, rather than weaker, the existence of woody weed plants like Crofton weed with thicker stems, would be celebrated.

David Holmgren, one of the founders of Permaculture says in the Permaculture International Journal (1997), "Revegetation with perennial and in particular woody vegetation has been an almost universal element in the response to rural land degradation." Crofton is already here as a woody plant. It does not have to be planted. It therefore saves energy in rural regeneration. The poisoning of it purely on the basis of it being exotic can be seen as the right hand not knowing what the left hand is

doing; that there is extensive rural soil degradation and there is therefore mostly not the luxury to determine what species will live on top of it.

Current attitudes and ways of dealing with weeds is based in a cultural tendency to use invasion as a primary means of seeing to Western culture's short-term comfort, and as a result it does not take much for the culture's consciousness to feel invaded. The eradication of weeds as a primary response to biodiversity conservation, is not based in science or an ecological perspective, but in an invasive reaction. If this were not true it would be common knowledge that many native animals interact with exotic plants.

Susan Laurie reports in her article, 'Finding Animals Amongst the Weeds: An Audit System' (2001) that a total of 225 bird species have been recorded in interactions with 482 weed species, with most of the birds visiting primarily for food rather than for other reasons such as nesting or sanctuary. 43 mammals were also reported interacting with 55 weed species, primarily also for food. Apparently the incidence of native insects visiting exotic plants is yet to be studied.

Susan says also, "... in some cases the conservation of a species hinges on the existence of weeds. This appears to be the case of the southern brown bandicoot in South Australia that utilise Blackberry and gorse for protection."

Since Western culture has an abnormal reticence in returning organic matter to soil, it has a responsibility to reorganise itself so that in all disciplines in contact with soil, a primary requirement is that organic matter is returned to it. In the doing of that, there is a side-effect: the extension of habitat.



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