

# Cop culture of impunity must end

by Warwick Fry

Reading the 1500-odd page transcript of the recently released hearing of the Police Integrity Commission (PIC), investigating the behaviour of the Ballina police, is enthralling and discomfoting at the same time.

Enthralling because it reads like a John Grisham novel, discomfoting because of the emerging story of crudity, stupidity, and the blatantly obvious in the obstructions the Ballina Police put in the way of an enquiry into the brutal bashing almost two years ago of Aboriginal man Corey Barker.

It indicates a presumption of impunity. It indicates that the Ballina Police must have been getting away with this behaviour for so long now that they assume they barely have to go through the motions of confecting a cover-up.

Young Corey Barker must have felt very vulnerable when he and a friend came across plain-clothed Ballina police

interceding in a drunken argument and (according to his and other witnesses' statements) throwing a woman violently to the ground. Corey was still on parole on a charge of assaulting police from the year before.

Nevertheless he reached into his pocket, tossing aside a plastic drink container for his mobile phone to get pictures of the incident. He was quickly grabbed, arrested, and thrown into the paddy-wagon. The only other person arrested was the woman, who was later released, and treated in hospital.

Barker's beating in the backrooms of Ballina Police station has been the subject of several media reports. These reports have been spun around the subject of the CCTV footage and the police practice of copying each other's statements, and showed convincingly that Barker was the victim, not the perpetrator, of the assault that he was charged with.

Ballina officers' attempts to

claim the footage was damaged were foiled by Magistrate Heilpern's insistence that the damaged footage be repaired by the police's own forensic experts, and attempts by police barristers to prevent the footage being made public through an ABC application to the court were also thwarted.

But this, although it busted the police case against Barker (the charges were dropped with costs awarded against the police and compensation claims pending) is missing the real story. Of particular interest were the attempts by police, tendered in evidence, to make Barker tell them the PIN to unlock his mobile phone – and that his phone was not recorded in the property docket of confiscated possessions.

And that is a significant part of the real story – the abuse of police powers, the assumption by police that because they apply the law they are somehow above it. The widely-reported PIC phone tap of one



of the officers bragging to his copper mate that "I got away with it" was really icing on the cake for the anti-corrupt-coppers brigade, and facebook was full of vitriol for a nano-second. But it's not going away.

So far, there's been a wall of silence to media enquiries to the Richmond Area Commander, the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the PIC enquiry, the Police Commissioner and the NSW Minister for Police on the outcome of the enquiry. No

with evidence and contempt of court involving the six officers involved, all of whom are clearly identifiable on the CCTV video.

His honour may well decide to advance the process of cleaning up the long-running procedural irregularities at the Ballina police station, and throughout the Richmond LAC, something that successive police administrations have refused to address.

And while the story of police fumbling a cover-up of yet another bashing of an Aboriginal youth in custody does not have the clout of a major corruption scandal, of the kind that triggered the Fitzgerald Inquiry, it should.

There is something fundamentally flawed in the training police receive, their command structure, and their culture of covering for each other no matter what.

Until that is changed, the international best practice model of community policing will remain a pipe dream in NSW.

## Police pull a fast one

Police claim they don't create roadblocks – but they operate from a stationary checkpoint and pull over all vehicles, which is a roadblock to all intents and purposes.

When they erect these roadblocks, on all three road entrances to the Nimbin valley for six hours on two successive days, they may be accompanied by the Roads and Traffic Authority or Department of Immigration employees, checking vehicles' roadworthiness and occupants' visas.

Human rights lawyers and civil libertarians regards these roadblocks as illegal and unethical.

Australian and international law states that police can only detain members of the public if they have reasonable grounds for believing that a crime has been, or is about to be, committed.

When they stop all vehicles passing, it is not credible that they believe that every one of the hundreds of vehicles detained harbours criminals. Moreover, under the "reasonable suspicion" test, the police officer stopping each vehicle must have had reasonable suspicion before each vehicle was pulled.

Such police actions breach the fundamental principle



that everyone has the right to use the roads as and when they choose, without being stopped and interrogated. Under the applicable law, police cannot go "fishing" by using one law to apprehend you, and then search your vehicle and charge you under a different law.

These roadblocks have caused much distress and inconvenience to Nimbin people, not to mention economic cost due to loss of business. On the most recent roadblock, police deployed more than 50 officers from several commands, including the dog squad and the Tactical Response Unit from Sydney.

The operation took at least 300 hours of police time, and cost several hundred thousands of dollars.

And what were the results? Ten people were charged with possessing illicit drugs, 18 were cautioned

for possession of small quantities of cannabis, and one person was charged with "drug supply" (*Northern Star* 28/2/2011, p.6).

These roadblocks are not cost-effective as an enforcement measure, and are a waste of taxpayers' money, staff and resources. If you are charged with an offence when stopped at a roadblock, contact Nimbin's Blockbusters Service. Please fill out our questionnaire and leave it with your name and any details you wish to include, with any of the workers at the HEMP Embassy or HEMP Bar.

If the police take you to court, we believe that we can help you to defeat charges against you, without large legal costs.

Contact the HEMP Embassy or Blockbusters for more advice, email: [grairvine@gmail.com](mailto:grairvine@gmail.com) or call 6689-1666.

### In their own words...

A police chopper did the rounds on 2nd April and on the morning of Wednesday 3rd April, the Special Puglisi Nimbin drug squad raided, first near Websters Creek, then on their way back, the cops in battle gear on trail bikes whipped down Rainbow Lane, their favourite fishing spot, hoping for a surprise catch.

No luck there, but the dog soon arrived and unearthed a bag or two under the woodchips and another up a tree. Meanwhile the village's mental health wing sprang to life and they rode off to plenty of cheering, leaving the wasps nest on the street well agitated for the day!

Isn't this "War on Drugs" actually a fight over the profits from pain relief to our fellow humans? The sickest business of all?

– Story and photo by onlooker



### Thanks

For assistance in producing this MardiGrass feature, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of all the photographers who sent us their shots: Omega Breakspear, Darmin Cameron, PAC, Simon Fraser, Andy Gough, Garry Mimlich, Paris Naday, Fabien Prevost, Michael Smith and Diana Tissott.

Thanks also to the many other people without whose assistance in so many ways, we could not have done it. – Ed.



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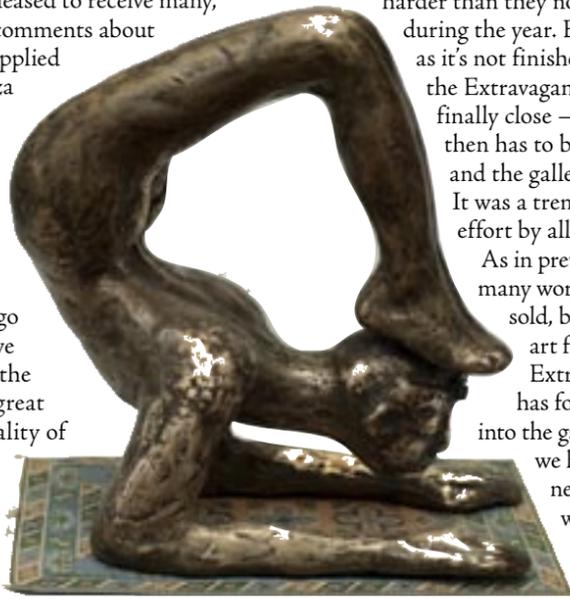
# Autumn Art Show leaves town

by Peter Ptschelinzew

Well, it's over for another year. The Nimbin Artists Gallery's Autumn Arts Extravaganza has been packed up and all Artists Gallery members have breathed a sigh of relief and can now fully enjoy the spectacular – as I write – autumn weather.

We've been pleased to receive many, many positive comments about the great art supplied by Extravaganza artists, mostly local, and for the exhibition generally.

Without going on about it – actually I will go on about it – we want to thank the artists for the great variety and quality of their work. There's no exhibition without them.



And there's also no exhibition without all of the volunteers who help us set up the exhibition, curate and hang the work, man/woman/person the desks during the exhibition, and finally help us pack it all up again.

And, as opposed to the Royal We, I want to thank and give a plug to the gallery members who have worked even harder than they normally do during the year. Especially as it's not finished when the Extravaganza's doors finally close – everything then has to be cleaned up and the gallery rehung. It was a tremendous effort by all.

As in previous years, many works have been sold, but some art from the Extravaganza has found its way into the gallery and we have some new work as well. I look forward to seeing you.

# Get felt up!



Felt-making workshops will be held in the Creative Learning Centre at Black Sheep Farm outside Nimbin in June and July.

Most textile fibres process the ability to matt to some extent, but animal fibres are the only fibres that can be satisfactorily felted. Animal fibres are made of proteins, which are covered with overlapping scales. When wet, the scales on the fibres open up, causing the fibres to lock onto each other.

Sheep's wool is one of the easiest animal fibres to use in hand felting because of its unique ability to entangle and produce a matted or felted fabric. The fleece is often quite dirty, with locks of varying length on different parts of the body.

Individual locks that are washed, but still intact and not brushed out, are valuable. They are used for embellishments and sometimes dyed for doll hair.

Felt is a fantastic medium for many people to explore their own creativity. "Nuno" felting, in particular, has the effect of stunning the maker with its beautiful texture and explosion of colours.

It is an excellent adventure into felt making for beginners and more experienced felters covering both traditional and more modern techniques, including flat and nuno felting.

"When you make felt for the first time, it seems like some sort of magic has happened right before your eyes. When you make felt for the tenth time, it still feels like magic. And when you make felt for the hundredth time, its magic seems even more powerful, because you know that this is no fluke, that you are involved in a dance, a dialogue..."

For more information about the felting classes, phone Suzanne on 6689-1095 or go to: [www.blacksheepfarm.com.au](http://www.blacksheepfarm.com.au)



# Thinking-and living-outside the box



S Sorrensen, Erwin Webber, and Richard Leplastrier were speakers at the exhibition's opening Forum

The early 1970s was a watershed period for the Northern Rivers region, a time in which new settlers transformed towns, the landscape, ways of thinking – and domestic living arrangements.

The *Not Quite Square* exhibition, held to mark the 40th anniversary of the Aquarius Festival, looks at owner-built houses from this period through newly commissioned work and archived material.

Many of these houses still seem "outside the square", and at the time of their initial construction they were wholly radical.

Documents in this exhibition detail the lengths that owner-builders went to in pushing the envelope, and the work they did in changing legislation to allow for broader design acceptance.

This project honours the work of people who have been instrumental in this movement, and one of particular note is the late Col James.

This visionary architect was crucial in encouraging students from Sydney University and the University of NSW to "recycle" the town of Nimbin, and in supporting the legislation of intentional communities such as Bodhi Farm and Tunttable Falls.

The exhibition will travel to Sydney University in September, as a way to acknowledge the contribution students, particularly architecture students, have played in this region.

# Aquarius Lives at Blue Knob Gallery



by Stephen Wright

I always imagine that when the students and their friends set up camp in Nimbin in 1973 – like an early version of Occupy – they didn't really know what they were doing. I mean this in the sense that they couldn't see the full extent of what they were unleashing. Activism and self-determination have probably been their biggest legacy, and it's in the Nimbin community itself where the legacy is to be looked for.

Blue Knob Hall Gallery is very much an aspect of this. Over a decade a small group of very dedicated volunteers have transformed the once-neglected Blue Knob Hall into a vibrant artist's space, café and gallery with an excellent and well-patronised market. The gallery's new exhibition is plugging into

the Aquarius celebrations in its usual lively way, and like all Blue Knob Hall Gallery exhibitions, it covers a huge range of styles and media that are continually surprising and always thoughtfully displayed.

Blue Knob regular Fiona Shadwell's textiles are often a stand-out and she has a wide variety of work on display that as always demonstrate a great mastery of craft and a well-inhabited imagination. Blue Knob stalwart Robin Moore's painting "Take a Deep Breath" (pictured) – constructed like a re-visiting of the work of Kyogle's Karma Phuntsok – is a deft reminder that technique and admonition are often a hallmark of the work displayed at Blue Knob Hall Gallery.

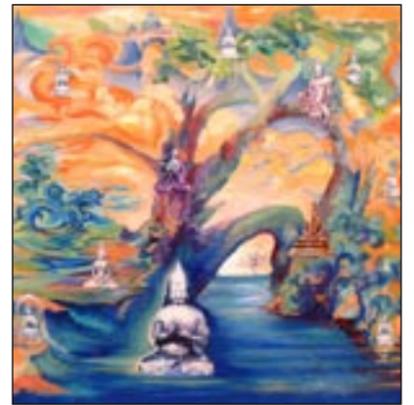
Blue Knob Hall Gallery's space often allows it to show quite large works, especially ceramics, but it's worth

remembering when you're there to check in the corners and so on, for the smaller pieces, the lithographs and drawings, which are often well-executed and maintain a simplicity that is worth appreciating.

## The Opening

Paul Joseph was invited to open the *Aquarius Lives* exhibition at Blue Knob Hall Gallery on Friday 19th April, and made it one of the most entertaining openings experienced at Blue Knob. Paul talked about the verse that helped make him and the song an icon of the Aquarius Festival. The 'May the long time sunshine ...' verse

had its own birth and history, and those who were there for the evening were told about some of the most memorable experiences this song has given him, despite having performed it too many times to count. Some truly beautiful moments were recounted, and his storytelling had the guests enthralled.



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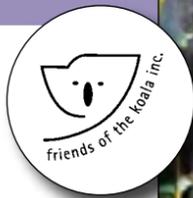
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# Koala Kolumn

by Lorraine Vass



The Byron community will be introduced to Council's Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) very soon.

Just over a year ago the results of the Koala Habitat Study were discussed at a public workshop in Mullumbimby. Providing the scientific basis for the CKPoM, the Study examined current and past koala distribution, preferred feed trees, areas occupied by koalas, threats and key linkage areas.

Somewhat surprisingly a just-viable coastal koala population of some 240 animals was identified. The study area's highly fragmented habitat, the barrier presented by the Pacific Motorway, the cleared hinterland and the significant human population growth since the mid-1970s were all factors working against koala survival in the study area. In mid-2012 Biolink Ecological Consultant were appointed to prepare the Draft Plan.

As elsewhere in the Northern Rivers the greater proportion of remaining koala habitat in Byron is found on private land, thus controls vary subject to differing legislative requirements. Future viability will depend pretty much on how the community receives the Draft Plan and commits to on-going responsibility for sustainably managing the coastal koala population.

Keep up with the latest on Byron's koalas on the Council's website: [www.byron.nsw.gov.au/koalas-in-byron-shire](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/koalas-in-byron-shire)

Like Lismore's approved plan and those of Tweed (in preparation), Ballina and Richmond Valley (both yet to commence), Byron's Draft CKPoM is defined under State Environmental Planning Policy No 44 – Koala Habitat Protection (SEPP 44).

While local government is beavering away preparing koala management plans, often with funding assistance from the Office of Environment & Heritage, the Department of Planning & Infrastructure is introducing a new planning system. Just in the past few weeks the White Paper and Exposure Bills have been released for public comment. We were already on notice that the SEPPs including SEPP 44 would be repealed and converted into plain-English and 'easy to apply' NSW Planning Policies.

Sure enough, the White Paper's Chapter 5 (p.71) briefly outlines how the existing SEPPs will be integrated into the new planning framework. Using SEPP 44 as a case study we learn that the proposed strategic Environment and Conservation NSW Planning Policy "will encourage the proper conservation and management of areas of natural vegetation that provide habitat for koalas to ensure a permanent free living population over the present range and reverse the current trend of koala population decline". The Policy will be prepared by the Department of Planning & Infrastructure, state agencies and local councils in consultation with the community and stakeholders. We are assured that it will be underpinned by current evidence and research. NSW Planning Policies will be endorsed by the whole of government.

Determining whether the Policy applies and



**Orphan Diego came into care in July 2011. At 280gms he was all ears. Only his head and shoulders were furred. 20 months later Diego was soft-released at Homesleigh (March 2013).**

identifying if there is potential koala habitat in the region will be undertaken in developing the Regional Growth Plans. If there is core koala habitat then a plan of management will be included in the Sub regional Delivery Plan. The relevant parts of Local Plans will specify specific land-use or development controls applying in identified areas, e.g. core koala habitat will be included within the Environmental Protection and Hazard Management Zone or special provisions will be applied to control the development of the specified land.

Research into koala ecology and biology has come on in leaps and bounds since SEPP 44's introduction in 1996. Thankfully there is still opportunity during this exhibition period for advocating a more holistic treatment of koala conservation than relying merely on SEPP 44's core koala habitat, which appears to be the intention.

The Planning White Paper, draft legislation FAQs and Fact Sheets can be downloaded at: [www.planning.nsw.gov.au/a-new-planning-system-for-nsw](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/a-new-planning-system-for-nsw) It's not easy reading, but basically what is being proposed is that within five years, 80% of development applications will not require community consultation. Neighbours will simply be notified of the development but have no right to object or to raise concerns. Community participation will have occurred at the strategic planning level, to some degree in formulating the Planning Policies and in developing the Sub regional Delivery and Local Plans.

That's all very well, but the reality is that engaging communities on strategic issues, even to a limited extent is a massive and expensive undertaking. Most of us are motivated only when a development proposal is put before us and it directly impacts on us. Submissions on the White Paper are due on 28th June, so get cracking.

### Happy koala spotting.

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](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org) or email: [info@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto: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.



by Philippe Dupuy, President NEC

Well, it's been a very busy month. No sooner had Metgasco suspended their operations than the government gas mouthpieces were in town trying to convince people that we have never had it so good. These agents of misinformation with their naturally flawed and baseless arguments that we will run out of gas and will pay more for our energy had doubtless a hard task ahead of them. Because if we are about to run out of gas, why were they planning to export it?

Also, currently our gas is four times cheaper than overseas prices so if we export and compete on the international market, the price can only go up as the market rebalances itself and prices adjust to an overseas market. On top of that, getting people to accept that drilling under their house, having mining trucks ruin the already pot-holed roads and poisoning water as the only way forward is insane.

As expected, those government stooges (ironically three of them) could not handle the heat, and they have stopped coming down.

The government, our government who is supposed to protect and help us, is now scheming for a new way to force CSG on us.

But we are ready and waiting, there is resistance everywhere and this time around we will defend and protect our patch with even more determination and resilience. They can no doubt beat us if we are few in number but together we will wear them out and send them packing. This land as other lands is precious and is what keeps us alive. We will cover all bases and safeguard it from the rapacity of the few.

We must continue to inform and educate the large number of people who are still unaware or undecided; the enemy is the 1% that constantly and incessantly searches for ways of enriching themselves. It is the Rhineharts, Palmers and Forresters, along with the Murdochs and Rothschilds and their lackeys that suck the wealth of the Earth, compete with each other and wreak havoc on the planet. However rich and powerful they are, they will not be able to resist the tsunami of conscience and awareness that is coming.

In the year of the 40th anniversary of Aquarius our struggle will be mightier than the French revolution or any other. There will be no need for violence or desperate



Volunteers Roger and Dominique

acts, the sheer power of numbers will be enough, The determination of the Rainbow Tribe of the Northern Rivers is mightier than the sword. We will watch the statues in their temple of greed crumble and fall.

The No Fracking Way Cabaret was a great success enjoyed by all. NEC wishes to thank the organisers for their hard work. Over \$2000 was collected which will go towards helping the Simmos with their court cases.

### Casino Environment Centre

As part of the fight against greed, GAG groups and NEC have set up shop in Casino.

Already its creation has been invaluable in helping to counter misinformation from the gas agents. It is also endeavouring to promote local markets by stocking their produce and products.

CEC is also looking to help rehabilitate and protect local wetlands through federal funding. Volunteers are needed so come join the fight to protect our fragile environment. There is a plan for volunteers to skill share and have fun in the process. Come to the launch of CEC on Friday 10th May, 4-6pm at 137 Barker St, Casino.

May will be full of activities, with the Aquarius 40-year anniversary events happening all through Nimbin and Lovemore. Check out the calendar at: [www.aquarius2013.nimbin.nsw.au](http://www.aquarius2013.nimbin.nsw.au)

World Environment Day is happening on Sunday 2nd June at Knox Park in Murwillumbah 10am-3pm. Come down and check out the stalls and music and catch up with friends.

### Djanbung Gardens open day

The permaculture students at Djanbung Gardens (pictured), in Nimbin's Cecil Street, will be putting on a fun-filled day next month, with an open day on Saturday 8th June.

There will be food, tours, presentations and workshops about sustainable living issues, stalls selling seedlings and produce, music and other fun activities.

Gates will open at 10am and the Garden Café will be selling local organic food and refreshments.

The open day, a tradition since 2005, is a great opportunity for the students at the Permaculture College to share their



knowledge and skills with the community.

For more information, phone 6689-1755, or visit: [www.permaculture.com.au](http://www.permaculture.com.au)

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# From seed... to weed!

by Triny Roe

It's hard work keeping up with weeds. No matter how many you slash, pull out, dig up, chop down and even poison, they just keep coming.

New plants constantly germinate from previous infestations, or from new seed carried onto your property in mulch, stock feed, soil, on shoes and clothing, vehicles, animals, birds, wind and water.

Weeds mean different things to different people. Indeed the word "weeds" covers a huge range of plants with a variety of characteristics and habits. Some weeds are only a minor nuisance, such as bindi-eyes, which appear for only a brief period with their annoying prickles. Others live for many years and have the capacity to out-compete, and sometimes kill and eventually replace, native vegetation.

Generally, weeds are plants which impact adversely in some way on the natural environment, agricultural activities, our gardens and lifestyle, and our income. They are plants that can tolerate a range of habitats from rich to poor soils, moist to dry areas. Weed plants seed profusely, germinate readily and grow rampantly.

The seed bank in the soil has a remarkable longevity. Hard coated seeds can remain viable in dry storage for hundreds of years. An experiment was started in 1879 where seeds of 23 species were buried in jars of moist sand to mimic conditions in the soil. One of these, *Verbascum blattaria*, moth mullein, a persistent weed in North America, was still able to germinate in 2000.

Luckily this plant doesn't seem to be a listed weed in Australia, though its cousin, *V. Thapsus*, common mullein, is. Many weed species in Australia can germinate after years in the soil: one year of seed, seven years of weeds! Reducing or eliminating seed set is important for long-term weed eradication programs.

A simple management technique is monitoring. If you see a strange plant, don't just watch and wonder. Get it identified. If it's an aggressive species, this could save you a lot of work in the long run.

Removing one woody weed plant when it's small is a lot easier than trying to clear a thicket of them in a year or two.

Keep an eye out on areas where stock are fed or where new soil, mulch or other landscaping materials have been introduced. A load of firewood can carry plant material and seeds clinging to the logs.

When buying plants from markets and roadside stalls, ensure weed species aren't also present in the pot – or that the plant being sold isn't a weed itself.

Contractors' vehicles can easily transport weed seeds and vegetative material. Check that your mower person cleans their equipment between jobs. Clean your own mower to avoid spreading weeds around your own property. Earth and road works are an opportunity for weeds to colonise the disturbed area. If seed isn't already present, the machinery can introduce it.

There's not much you can do about wind and water transported seeds except hope your neighbours do their bit. Water can move seeds overland as well as along waterways. Birds, animals and people can carry seed to otherwise unconnected locations, so there is always opportunities for new appearances.

Managing weed populations in rural areas is important. Learn more about the various plants and their habits. Join a local Landcare group, or start your own. Happy weeding.



## Toilet humour

The morning sunshine filters through the shade-cloth east wall of my outside loo, warming the seat, reducing the rude awakening. Firetail finches are fluttering about, stealing insect morsels from amongst the spiky fingerlimes where they build their messy nests.

I look across at the western galvanized iron toilet wall and read the old "directions for use" blurb I painted on years ago. It's almost funny, in its sincere imploring of guests / woofers to use the facility as designed, with sawdust and lid closed. Since then, I have installed a urinal for the girls, and discerning men... (some actually don't piss on the grass) and have a couple of great caricatures of a dog squatting on one side (complete with that guilty look) and cocking its hind leg happily and proudly, on the other. It's great practical use of toilet humour, and everyone gets the message. A bit of a laugh has everything moving nicely, all the better if it's a belly laugh.

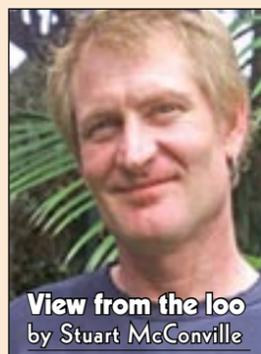
A far cry from my experience yesterday of an Exeloo, Tweed Shire's automated public loo systems that are clinical in their attempt to make one feel relaxed. To get changed after

sailing, I had to press a button to open a sliding door, much like an elevator. I felt like I was moving across

into another dimension. Piped music filled the white tiled and stainless fitted interior, ceramic surfaces gleaming (some not so gleaming too!) back my reflection in the fluoro lit land of hygiene and necessity.

My sterile alert went off, Urrghhh, I need to get out of here. Quickly getting changed, dancing into my shorts to the tunes so readily provided, I picked up my gear and headed back to the door. The button was pushed. Nothing happened. I pushed it again, still nothing. The music started to sound sinister.

A quick moment of panic and a thought that this might be a fitting end for me, and I punched the hard stainless button with my thumb. The



View from the loo  
by Stuart McConville

sound of the electric motor and sliding door was a relief. The real world opened up before me, and I lurched back into the sunlight. As the door slid closed automatically, I heard the toilet flushing itself behind me. This got me to thinking, how would one know if the flush had actually worked?

An old toilet rhyme came to mind: "There was a chap who took a bog, whose turd the toilet did clog, the offender remained hushed, cos it couldn't be flushed, and left a great f#@%ing log. Please set an example and don't leave your stool sample!"

How very embarrassing if your deposit never left the cashier's desk and the next unknowing victim of the Exeloo had to walk in and out the door half a dozen times to remove it from their projected landing site.

On a lighter note, I'd like to encourage readers to send in their favourite toilet graffiti, just for a laugh. We'll print the best ones at the end of my article each month and draw a winner at the end of the year. The prize is \$300 worth of consultancy by yours truly, to assist you with re-using all your by-products as wisely as possible.

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## Biodiversity conservation and the limitations of broadacre farming

by Geoff Dawe

Bana grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) is an exotic tall grass resembling a small bamboo that loves moisture and sun.

It is therefore native, or naturalising in this area. It is a strong rooter into soil, harder to remove with a mattock than the native *Lomandra* species that are often found anchoring soil on the edge of watercourses.

In areas that are devoid of trees and that are sloping, it is an ideal impediment to soil movement until forest returns. Some canes readily fall over after reaching heights of four or five metres. The canes are similar to sugar cane in that they readily root at each node, so each node on a fallen cane potentially forms another clump.

Bana grass can quite readily take over whole areas of land because it not only roots at

the nodes but seeds off. The ensuing grass clumps can colonise so thickly that many years may pass before the seeds of trees find conditions right for their germination.

And so begins the process of Bana grass supplantation, for Bana grass, like Lantana, cannot survive in conditions of heavy shade.

Bana grass can be used as mulch. In a dry time, the canes are cut into lengths of about 15cms with a sharp machete and left to dry. Once dry, they are bundled into small heaps. Any sprouting pieces are placed on top of the pile with roots uppermost. After another period of drying, the bundles are carted to the area that is to be mulched.

Much hysteria currently accompanies the idea of use of Bana grass as a mulch because of the fear of re-sprouting. It is possible that a 15cm length will still root in the garden, but in a regularly

worked garden, it can be readily removed as soon as it is spotted.

A gardening agriculture in a post-industrial 2013 society is not an economic proposition. This point of view was first put forward by Paul Roberts in his book *The End of Food: The Coming Crisis in the World Food Industry*. A sustainable gardening agriculture therefore begins in heart energy, sometimes described as love.

Krishnamurti and others have said that the means is the end result. The aphorism "violence begets violence" comes from that wisdom. That which begins in love, ends in love. Heart energy; that which begins in love precipitates a non-economic gardening culture.

Triple bottom line sustainability theory can be envisioned as a three-legged stool with the legs separately labelled economic, environment and social. When the legs are of equal length, the society is sustainable.

In Western society with an over-emphasis on the economic, the economic leg has been inordinately lengthened, overturning the stool and warning of unsustainability.

Movement toward sustainability therefore involves a reduced emphasis on the economic and/or an increased emphasis on the social and environmental. A gardening culture beginning in heart energy, rather than in the economic, is movement toward sustainability.



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Djanbung students gather near Jarlanbah's forest remnant for an afternoon of non-herbicide bush regeneration. Photo: Jade River

by David Menzies

Jarlanbah Permaculture Hamlet and Djanbung Gardens are back on a poison-free footing after the first of three collaborative bush regeneration trials.

The trial was land care in the true sense with no toxic compounds used. Five activities to promote regeneration of riparian forest and enhance the work of previous native tree plantings were trialled. They were:

1. Exotic grasses control: Use of selected clean and minimal chemical-affected cardboards as a mulch/cover.

2. Careful pulling down and disposing of exotic vines and seed. (In this instance Araujia sericifera, Moth Vine / False Choko.)

3. The culling of a large Camphor laurel by skinning a tree at its base and adding rough mulch up base of trunk. It is a large camphor, heavy with seeds which drop near a creek. Native bush food tree plantings nearby will replace it as food source to lorikeets in years to come.

4. Encouraging natural groundcovers: "Skin grafting" the forest floor, using spade-sized scoops of low spreading native ground covers to fill in where there is a lack of low spreading native ground covers, beneath developing canopy and in areas just cleared of exotic grass.

5. Additional native tree plantings.

The trials have been organised as a response to concerns about an escalation in chemical herbicide application in recent years on parts of the hamlet.

At the inaugural non-herbicide regen trail in April, about 15 students, and an Erda institute teacher/coordinator, Caroline Todd, were present, along with the trial manager Peah, who has lived at Jarlanbah since 2000, and studies Environmental Science at Southern Cross University in Lismore.

Peah believes that conventional Landcare practices had gone off in the wrong direction with herbicide overuse. What began as small-scale herbicide applications on invasive exotic plants had by around 2010 become the expedient method in dealing with weeds.

Financial reasons – the need for high success rates in reforestation plantings – appear to be a motivating factor, the requirements of grants policy or job security. "Success" rates pegged so high are unfriendly to natural attributes of rainforests and wildlife.

Peah discovered that new non-exotic species now became targets for destruction. To his dismay the native rainforest climbing plants of subtropical

Northern NSW that had been growing in an area of about a hectare near his residence were mysteriously falling to the ground, dried out and lifeless.

Apparently it had become standard practice by a few bush regenerators to kill off native vines so that they don't interfere with seedlings. But the mature vines were not hampering regrowth of the forest as they had already reached the canopy and had no need to smother the young seedlings.

Antechinus, bandicoot, bearded dragon, echidna, goanna and snakes would not normally include glyphosate-affected terrain as foraging ground. Arboreal creatures, like the Mountain Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus cunninghamii*) love to eat fungi, leaves and fallen fruit.

Gliders share a diet of nectar, pollen and leaves with flying foxes, butterflies and many insects and would arrive at their food sources only to find brittle or limp, poison-affected leaves or flowers.

Jarlanbah has areas dedicated to sustainable farming therefore it is a no-brainer that chemicals be prevented from use in the hamlet's catchment because infiltration of waterways via runoff invalidates any certified or "fed in trust" organic produce. Chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides do not belong in organic farming systems.

The momentum required for change towards non-herbicide land care trials came because parents spoke out in concern about effects on children's health, as herbicide spraying and drizzling occurred without warning at times, or they were not aware of when and how to avoid contact with spray drift or residue on plants.

Two more non-herbicide forest regen trials with Djanbung students' help are penned into the calendar for May and June. From the all positive and happy response from students at the first activity afternoon, Peah is confident at least one main aim of sharing ideas, seeing results and learning is being achieved.

Peah acknowledges Byron Shire Chemical Free Landcare group and Friends of Wollumbin, for spearheading and demonstrating successful chemical free bush regen at model sites such as Byangum on the Tweed River south of Murwillumbah.

Koalas perched in trees at Tregagle last month were looking down on a new planting of 400 trees.

Jim Kinkead, of Tregagle Landcare, said, "As the trees grow, koalas will have more food and increased habitat."

Weeds can also be a problem for koalas, he added. "As well as planting trees, weeds such as lantana have been controlled. Before this work, koalas were blocked from getting to food trees by weeds."

Friends of the Koala, Tregagle Landcare Group and EnviTE Environment are working together to restore primary koala habitat, which is critical to the local survival of the koala at Tregagle.

The project has been funded by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program.

Mark Wilson, from Friends of the Koala, said koalas were quite fussy about what leaves they will eat.

"The trees we grew for this project were propagated from seeds collected from local trees known to be preferred by



koalas, particularly Forest Red Gum and Tallowwood," Mr Wilson said.

A field day was held at Tregagle on May 1 with a demonstration of koala food tree planting and bush regeneration works to improve koala habitat.

The project is implementing recommendations of the award-winning Lismore City Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for South-East Lismore. "Koalas are now a threatened species," Mr Wilson said. "We need to improve and extend habitat if koalas are going to survive in the Lismore area."

## Greens MP calls Humphries' bluff

Country Greens MP, Jeremy Buckingham, has responded to a media release by Nationals MP Kevin Humphries, accusing Mr Humphries of lazy politics and misleading the media and community.

"Everyone knows the National Party is too close to the mining and gas industry, with senior Nationals like John Anderson and Mark Vaile sitting on the boards of coal and gas companies," he said.

"The Greens are pleased to stand up to protect farmers, land, water and regional communities, and are filling the void left by a failing National Party."

Mr Buckingham said Kevin Humphries was afraid of political competition, and "had been spinning lies about the Greens".

"Humphries has never been the sharpest pencil in the box," he said, "but misleading his constituents is lazy and disrespectful."

Kevin Humphries says the Greens intended to extend National Parks onto prime agricultural land. Mr Buckingham said the Australian Greens agriculture policy states Government policy "should not compromise the primacy of sustainable food and fibre production" and would protect prime agricultural land, water and infrastructure.

Accusations that the Greens would remove

the Diesel Fuel Rebate were also refuted by Mr Buckingham, who said the Greens would keep the rebate for agriculture – but remove it for mining companies.

Other claims that the Greens support a return to death duties, don't support irrigation or broad scale farming and want a total end to the forest products industry were also rebuffed.

Mr Buckingham said the Greens would support efficient irrigation and agricultural systems as well as sustainable wood products industry as long as natural ecosystems were maintained or enhanced.

He said wood products industry that created long-term skilled jobs and social sustainability in regional communities was respected.

Mr Buckingham said, "It's time the National Party dropped the lazy clichés, and there was a genuine policy debate about the future of country Australia."

"The Greens have policies for successful and robust regional communities and economies based on sustainable agriculture."

He said the Nationals were "stuck in the past, towing along behind their Liberal Party masters".

"MPs like Kevin Humphries need to lift their game," he said.

## Tall, woolly and handsome

Mangowood Farm at Lillian Rock is one of many alpaca farms inviting people to find out more about these creatures this month.

Mangowood owners Bruce Porter and Barb Ransby say this year's National Alpaca Week is a fun show-and-tell about the Australian alpaca story.

"It is fabulous to pat an alpaca and learn about its luxuriously soft, cashmere-like fleece," Ms Ransby said.

"Australia is achieving world record prices for fine fleece bales and our stud animals are in high demand internationally, often



fetching tens of thousands of dollars.

"They are also beautiful, clever companions, so come along and see what happens when an alpaca looks you in the eye – it can be love."

Mangowood Farm, at 104 Gabal Road, Lillian Rock, will be open for visits on Saturday 11th May and Sunday 12th May, from 10am to 3pm.

Learn all about alpacas, see the crias (baby alpaca), and

browse and buy products made from alpaca fleece.

For further information call 6689-7443 or visit: [www.mangowoodfarmalpacas.com.au](http://www.mangowoodfarmalpacas.com.au)

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## Ideal weather for gardening at Tuntable Falls Primary School

by Thomas Rose

Due to the magical fact that the Earth's tilt of 23.4 degrees provides us with different seasons during her journey around the Sun, our nights are now getting cooler, although the days are still mostly warm and sunny.

This is ideal weather for gardening and we are delighting in the growth of the bush beans, that produce lots of crunchy beans for several weeks to come, providing that one keeps planting every two weeks or so.

The rosellas are close to harvest and our children are looking forward to a whole day of harvesting, processing, cooking and bottling to make rosella jam, after nurturing the plant from seed to a six-foot tall bush.

The zucchinis are still producing heaps, and together with the last pumpkins and a huge variety of different types of lettuce

and many different herbs we have produce delicious and healthy lunches at school – exclusively grown by the children in our own garden!

The garlic that we planted about 6 weeks ago is well on its way; as the children came back after their holiday their faces were full of awe and surprise: "...How tall my garlic has grown?"

At the moment we are preparing garden beds for leeks and onions, soon to be planted. After we hoed the cover crops into the soil, we worked in some compost and covered the bed with mulch. We are leaving the garden bed for a few weeks to 'digest' while we let the bacteria and worms do the work for us, to make the soil fertile for planting.

A garden is such a wonderful and rewarding space for children to be in, to work in, to play in and to feel nurtured by all those sensory experiences and encounters



with nature at first hand.

After a year of the starting the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen & Garden adventure, our children are truly permeated with the idea of growing food, caring for their environment and learning at the same time.

How lucky and privileged is anybody who has the opportunity to be in a productive garden?

If you feel interested in participating in our school garden as a helper or volunteer please contact the school on 6689-1423.

Happy gardening for all!

### What to plant in May:

Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Cabbage, Lettuce (winter varieties), Onion, Pea, Potato, Radish, Shallot, Silverbeet

## GM – coming to a plate near you

by James Arachne

The genetic modification of food continues by big business, supported by governments.

Australian scientists have genetically modified bananas to stack them with extra vitamins and iron. In March this year, they started sharing that technology with Indian scientists.

What makes this development really significant is that India is the world's largest producer of bananas, and this technology hasn't been used or tested in Australia.

GE is irreversible technology, and it is dangerous to tamper with a fruit that is an affordable food source for a large segment of the society.

Blue Knob Farmers Market recently hosted a talk by Jessica Harrison, a GM food activist.

Jessica has been involved in the UK and Australia with education, lobbying and activist work 1999. She co-founded MADGE (Mothers Are Demystifying Genetic Engineering) in 2007 and works with other groups such as GM Crop Watch (which aims to monitor where GM crops are being planted in Australia) and Gene Ethics.

"I was concerned that GM ingredients could be in my family's diet, unlabelled," she said. "I became part of the social movement that rejected GM. 'Trial' crops of canola and maize were pulled up, supermarket trolleys were loaded with food that could contain GM and dumped, and the big food companies competed to exclude GM ingredients from their brands.

"The UK is still GM free, and comprehensive GM labelling laws have been passed."

Health concerns and the risks of GM contamination of the food chain through "outcrossing" – when a GM plant crossbreeds with a related non-GM plant – worry her.

"Outcrossing has been proven to occur in field studies. The unrecallable nature of GM plants released into the environment also concerns me. No one can instruct a bee to only visit GM free flowers."

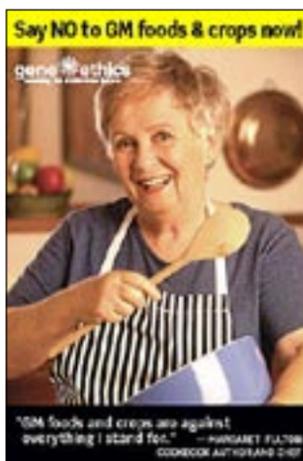
The risks to humans of consuming GM are hard to study, because it is very difficult to monitor consumption of GM products without comprehensive labelling.

Animal feeding studies have shown immune responses, enlarged livers, infertility and cancerous growths. Further research is needed, but scientists and laboratories without links to the GM industry are few.

"Last week the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) published research showing that 60% of GM crops contain a viral gene fragment from the Cauliflower Mosaic Virus," Jessica said. "The protein may be a human toxin. Authors of the report called for a total recall of GM products containing these fragments."

There has been no response from food safety authorities so far.

GM has been authorised by two government bodies in Australia: the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). OGTR has



allowed commercial release of GM canola and GM cotton and FSANZ has approved over 50 GM varieties of corn, canola, sugar beet, cotton, potato, rice, lucerne and soy to be included in processed foods.

"FSANZ has never rejected a GM application, and does no testing, merely 'assessing' data supplied by the GM companies," she said. "The lesson here is to avoid processed foods, or become a 'food detective' and contact the company

to ask if there are ANY GM products included in their products."

Australian law does require labelling of GM ingredients. Most GM ingredients, such as soy and corn, are deemed "refined" so they escape labelling through loopholes in the law.

GM canola, grown in southern NSW, Victoria and Western Australia, is approximately 8% of the total canola crop. GM cotton is supposed to be 80% of the total cotton crop. (Cottonseeds are crushed to produce oil that is sold cheaply to fast food outlets)

South Australia and Tasmania are GM-free states.

Jessica advises people to read the True Food Guide for known GM brands: [www.truefood.org.au/truefoodguide](http://www.truefood.org.au/truefoodguide)

Petitions calling for Lismore, Tweed and Kyogle Councils to declare their shires GM free zones are at the Nimbin Environment Centre and Blue Knob Farmers Market.

For more info from Jessica, email: [gmcropwatch@gmail.com](mailto:gmcropwatch@gmail.com)

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## Blue Knob Farmer's Market



by Jim Arachne

Welcome Winter with a lively 'called' Bush Dance, plus heaps of yummy food – music by local group *Bandicoot* at the Blue Knob Hall on Saturday 1st June. This is a fundraiser for the Blue Knob Gallery, an artist run exhibition space. We'll start with a sumptuous winter banquet in the early evening, then the live bush band will warm up and dancing will begin once its fully dark.

Our second Pumpkin Festival will feature lots of pumpkins, pumpkin carving during the Sat morning Farmers Market, a pumpkin carriage race and lots more fun.

For full details and times of both these events please see our *Facebook page* or join the Market newsletter by sending an email request to Jim at: [uloborid8@gmail.com](mailto:uloborid8@gmail.com)

### Marie is leaving the Backyarders Table

Way back on Saturday 19th March 2011 we had an idea to launch a new stall – the Backyarders' Table – a stall to sell surplus produce from local backyards. There was also the intention that the table could act as a 'trial run' for backyard growers who wanted to test the idea of having their own stall.

The first Backyarders Table was pretty small; some potted herbs, turmeric and a few other items. Marie Cameron took the project on and under her expert guidance it took off. The Table hasn't missed a market in the two years since and has now grown to over a dozen backyard producers selling a wide range of produce each Saturday. Income from the Table ranges between \$200 and \$400.

Unfortunately, Marie has decided that after more than two years it's time for her to move on. The Market committee would like to publicly express its gratitude to Marie for her many hundreds of hours of volunteer work in staffing, coordinating and developing this unique and important project. Thanks Marie!

### Talks at Blue Knob Market for May

#### • Sat 18 May 10am – Play Mouth Organ, Chris Sullivan

Self-sufficiency doesn't end with food production but extends into our whole social life. Reducing our, often passive, dependency on Hollywood or mega-recording companies like EMI or Warner for entertainment can begin with learning to provide our own – and what more versatile, portable and easy to play instrument than the mouth organ! Sometimes described as 'a band in a waistcoat pocket', mouth organs are played all over the world.

Chris is a multi-instrumental performer and has been playing mouth organ for 40 years. His presentation is part demonstration, part tutorial. It will be ideal if you can bring along a mouth organ in the key of C. If you don't have one yet but are thinking about learning or just want to hear one close up then most certainly come along as well! Chris says, "If you can breathe, you can play!"

#### • Sat 25 May 10am - A Beginners Guide to Electric Fencing, Jenny Creasy

Electric fences are sometimes very useful substitutes for permanent fencing, enabling rapid stock rotation and much cheaper fence solutions. Jenny will focus on solar-powered electric fences and cover initial set-up, types to use, best sites for this fencing, what electric fencing can and cannot do, size of energizers to use, plus answers your questions.

Jenny has lots of experience using electric fences to contain her escapologist goatherd as well as her poultry.

The Blue Knob Farmers Market runs Saturdays, rain, hail or shine, 8.30am-12noon, corner of Blue Knob and Lillian Rock Roads, 8km from Nimbin in the grounds of the Blue Knob Gallery.

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