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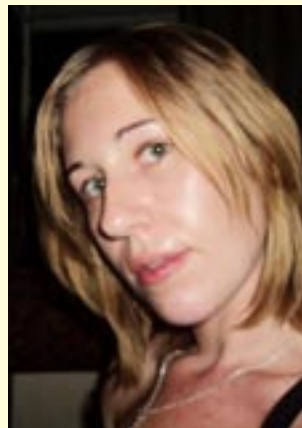
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Obituaries

Requiescat in pace



Freja Harper

23/9/1983 – 9/5/2014

Daughter of Martyn and Dianne, Mother of Kai.

I have danced out in the rain, and taken the wind to my breast, and my cheek, like a child to the face of the Earth I have pressed.

The family wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation the many expressions of love, concern and kindness shown to them during this difficult time.

In loving memory



Asinate ("Nettie") Kerr

20/11/1952 – 15/05/2014

Late of North Efate and Nimbin, Australia

Beloved wife of Gary Kerr and much loved Mum of Moana, Scott, Lorna (Dec), Richard and Christina, Lorna Taimane and Nathan; adored Meme to Kalan and Liam.

Her funeral was held 19/05/2014 in Vanuatu.

The family wishes to thank the doctors, staff and paramedics of Vila Central Hospital, and thanks the Nimbin Community for all your love and support.

In memoriam



John Brunson ("Smoulder")

8/3/1940 – 31/5/2014

Throughout the 18 years I have known Smoulder, the entirety of my existence, he has always been the one with a positive attitude.

Although blunt, he was the one you could always count on if you were having a bad day in town that could only be improved by an attempt by Smoulder at tripping you over with his cane, or just simply sitting down in the blister and having a good chat.

What inspired me so much about Smoulder is that his physical disadvantage built so many boundaries and walls that would have stumped a person with no such disadvantages, but he crossed them all like they were hurdles and he the marathon runner.

He never let his Cerebral Palsy get in the way of achieving his goals and took anyone's words of discouragement and pessimism as further challenges to conquer. He truly did love the community and the feeling was undoubtedly mutual.

The first time I met Smoulder I was just a kid in the pool, naturally curious – although I never did grow out of that phase – and he greeted me like any grumpy old man greets an annoying young child, with a simple "Go away". Since then, I have learnt to take Smoulder's remarks with an attitude of humour, knowing that they are made with the best of wishes.

He was a much-loved member of the Nimbin community and his sense of humour and take on life will forever be missed. I think it is safe to speak on the behalf of the community as a whole when I say that as a marathon runner jumping the hurdles of life, Smoulder has finished with a blue ribbon.

– Grace Balderstone

The oldest of four children, Smoulder leaves behind two brothers, a sister and brother-in-law. His funeral is planned for the week starting 8th June.

New push for medical cannabis

by Michael Balderstone

It's ironic that, because of a \$3000 bottle of wine, we have a new Premier in NSW who says he will consider medical cannabis.

Committed Christian Mike Baird says if supply and prescription can be sorted, he will respond with support for the new bill inspired by 24-year old Dan Haslam's post-chemo nausea control and pain relief, using the hippies' favourite vegetable, after all else failed.

Dan's parents have helped him to get heard by his local MP, who in turn got to the Premier. Dan's dad also happens to be the ex-Tamworth drug squad chief, so it's a big turnaround.

Prescription seems easy, the doctor's job surely? Supply has always been the sticking point for the polities, who no doubt cannot entertain the thought that the hippies might, God forbid, get in the medical line-up. It's a serious problem for them that all the pot experts are criminals!

And just where is the line between medical and recreational, as it's called? Isn't relaxing with a joint or a bottle of Grange medicinal? I could argue it was. My father so loved and looked forward to relaxing with his two whiskies every evening, it was clearly 'medicinal'.

But Cannabis, most ancient of the healing herbs used by man, will only be considered for the terminally ill, this time round. Aren't we all terminal?

An obvious option for supply is to import the gear from America, where over twenty States now have legalised medicinal use, or Israel where eight licensed farms across the country grow to supply 12,000 patients.

Or we could license some of our own growers in NSW, who have decades of experience. Or Mr Baird could hire



them: these local underground experts could work for him and the government grow the crop themselves.

The Canadian government grew their own in an old disused mine shaft with massive security, terrified it would be raided. They grew a great crop with local advice, but then got paranoid, kicked out the experts and ignorantly ground the lot into a powder before mailing it out to their registered medical users. It was appalling, and everyone returned to the black market for their supplies. Finally someone realised they had ground up the whole plant, stalks and all, ruining the crop of course.

Uruguay's brave model, created after the nation brought in experts from around the planet and discussed it for a year, aims to undermine the black market but everyone who wants their supply at \$1 gram has to register. Six plants per person or you can grow in a group, or you can buy up to 40 grams a month.

At Nimbin's HEMP Embassy, we are inundated with requests for help these days since the word got out about the plant's abilities. Compassion clubs and support networks have sprung up across Australia, with old age citizens who have never consciously broken a law in their life, now in organised crime. Others are importing the product themselves from overseas.

Largely internet-driven, thousands of people are now talking about how their suffering reduced, or their ailments were even cured, using pot.

We could legalise the entire industry overnight with the stroke of a pen, introducing regulations for quality control, licensing growers and dispensaries, employing tens of thousands of people many of whom are currently unemployed.

The joke is, it's all happening today right now in Australia anyway. It's been growing and finding its way illegally for fifty years now, at the same time filling our jails and running our Police Force ragged, while creating widespread disrespect for laws and authority in general. What have we got to lose?

No doubt that's all too bold and beautiful for our leaders so meanwhile, while we work out which path to follow, I suggest Mr Baird imports some oil from the States, like thousands of Aussie sufferers are already doing, because it's about one third of the cost compared to buying weed in the black market and making your own medicine here.

The time is ripe to make an appointment with your local NSW MP and go talk to them about why you (or your friend!) uses cannabis, how the law affects your life, and how it could change if you were allowed to grow your own or buy it from a dispensary legally.

Commemoration at the station

by Garth Kindred

On May 15th the Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) hosted a commemoration at Lismore station. It was the 120th anniversary of the opening of the Lismore-Tweed line and it marked 10 years since the last train passed through the station. Guest speakers included mayor Jenny Dowell, Trains On Our Tracks (TOOT) president Karin Kolbe, Byron councillor Basil Cameron and Greens MLC Dr Mehreen Faruqi.

Jenny Dowell presented the case from the NOROC mayors' perspective. They recently voted unanimously in supporting rail trails as a way of keeping the rail corridor in public hands. They believe that, in the absence of any significant government funding to reinstate the rail line, rail trails presented some great opportunities for tourism and small business operators.

Karin Kolbe said that while the campaign to get back trains had developed into a long one, we should not give up on it. Other large transport solutions like the Alstonville bypass had taken 30 years to come to fruition. It might take some time yet before we have trains back but Karin is confident it will happen.

Basil Cameron pointed out that community public transport needs remain, irrespective of the government's willingness to fund its development. The need for public transport is increasing in the Northern Rivers with a growing and an ageing population. We should stand up for what is needed and not be fobbed off with arguments that it will never happen, it costs too much or there is no money available.

Mehreen Faruqi stated the position of the Greens, being the only party now to champion the re-instatement of the Casino-Murwillumbah line. The Greens support a comprehensive public transport policy as a way of addressing climate change and social equity issues. In getting cars, trucks and buses off the roads, trains greatly reduce fuel consumption and carbon pollution, not to mention reducing the road toll (which is highest in northern NSW). The federal budget increase in the fuel excise will only make public transport more attractive. NSW lags way behind in developing rail infrastructure while things go full steam ahead in QLD and Victoria.



Greens, TOOT, NR Railway Action Group and others joining forces to promote trains and oppose the rail-trail plans.

NRRAG challenges NOROC

NRRAG members are currently writing many letters – to NOROC, all local Councillors, the Transport Minister and Minister for the North Coast as well as to local media trying to point out the short sightedness of the rail trail plan which just caters to the wants of a minority of self-interested recreationists as opposed to supporting our real need for public transport solutions in the Northern Rivers.

NRRAG rejects the NOROC position for several reasons. Firstly it represents a flawed democratic process at the regional level. The mayors have arrogantly taken it upon themselves to decide in favour of rail trails before the ARUP feasibility study is released and without going through the process of proper debate with their respective councils. They are certainly not considering the views of a majority of their constituents. A *Northern Star* poll in February revealed 70% were in favour of getting a regular train service in preference to rail trails. If the majority views can be considered and used in defence of our region against CSG then why aren't they being considered in relation to trains?

Clearly a properly conducted independent survey should be undertaken before NOROC makes any future representations in favour of rail trails on behalf of our Northern Rivers region.

Another major objection is that the NOROC mayors seem to be trying to hoodwink the public. In a press release we read that NOROC supports "the development of a rail trail along the corridor of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line as a

way of ensuring the land remains in public hands". The truth is that the rail corridor is perfectly safe under current legislation and only an Act of Parliament (e.g. a Rail Trail's Bill) will compromise the protected status of the railway.

Our NOROC mayors have, it seems, joined our State Nationals reps, Thomas George and Don Page, in turning their backs on the community's call for public transport. Bike or horse riding from town to town is certainly not an option for most people who would use a train to get to work or to uni each day. We need our political leaders to stand up on behalf of the people for the greater public good and not pander to a minority group of self-interested recreationist and small business operators. There are ultimately many more tourist dollars and jobs to be created through having a proper transport system.

While NOROC claims that "improvement in public transport systems across the Northern Rivers is a priority", the Mayoral decision spells the beginning of the end for the rail corridor and a decade long campaign to bring back the trains. We all know that after many millions of dollars are spent ripping up the tracks and bridges and installing fences and decking on the remaining bridges (or building purpose built ones) that it will be almost impossible for any future government to say "away with all that, we'll put the tracks back!"

For further information, please see & Like the Northern Rivers Railway Action Group's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/nrrag



Lantern Parade 20th anniversary

Locals are advised to get in quick for Lismore Lantern Parade finale tickets, as online ticketing facilities are attracting visitors nationwide.

Tickets have been on sale for only a few days, but already hundreds of seats have been sold for the 20th anniversary Fiery Finale on Saturday 21st June.

Organiser Jyllie Jackson said the introduction of an online booking system was attracting buyers from around the country and she expects another capacity event this year. "It's our 20th anniversary, and it is going to be huge," she said.

With efficient new ticket reading facilities and more entry gates at Oakes Oval for the big night, LightnUp Inc will be well-equipped to deal with what is tipped to be the biggest and best Lismore Lantern Festival in history.

"I'd encourage locals to buy their tickets early and grab the spot they want sooner rather than later," Jyllie said. "One tourism company is bringing a busload from South Australia who will be in the grandstand for the Fiery Finale of one of Australia's biggest (and most flammable) community events."

The 20th anniversary Lismore Lantern Festival includes a market and carnivale street party in the heart of Lismore, enchanted window displays, and the much-loved lantern parade through the CBD. The Fiery Finale is the culmination of the winter celebration with music, lanterns, fire dancing, the burning of a larger-than-life lantern sculpture and a spectacular fireworks display.

Tickets for the Lismore Lantern Festival Fiery Finale on Saturday, 21st June are now on sale. Visit: www.lanternparade.com and book your tickets online. A wide variety of ticketing options are available including grandstand tickets, which are expected to sell fast, and Lantern Parade Packages, which combine accommodation, finale tickets, workshops and dinner.

Return bus transfers are also available from Grafton, Ballina, Alstonville, Byron, Bangalow, Nimbin and Kyogle.

The Nimbin bus will depart Nimbin bus stop at 4pm, arriving Oakes Oval 4.30pm; and depart Oakes Oval at 8.30pm to arrive at Nimbin bus stop at 9pm. Cost: Adults \$12, children \$7. Book online at: www.lanternparade.com



Sea Shepherd fundraiser

Thanks to all who attended and enjoyed Tuntable Falls community's curry night in May, a fundraiser for Sea Shepherd. The night raised \$1132 from the food alone, plus approximately \$800 from merchandise. Look for lots of beautiful little people wearing Sea Shepherd hats and hoodies.



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Bentley is everybody's victory

The peaceful resolution of the Bentley blockade was a great win for people power. I have been asked so many times since, what was the main thing that I thought secured the victory. In so many ways, that is the wrong question because the answer is that it was every little action along the way.

We were always up against enormous odds. The mining industry has worked itself into a position of influence over all major political parties and as a result over all of our parliaments over many decades. There is endemic corruption throughout Australia that gives this industry privileged access to decision makers. If our democracy had been functioning properly the situation at Bentley would never have eventuated. The massive rallies and the 87% vote against gasfields in 2012 should have been the political death knell for the industry in this region straight away. But where there's vested interests and corrupt linkages involved, then democracy takes a back seat.

When I think about the



by Aidan Ricketts

battle of Bentley, I imagine a giant set of scales. On the one side was the mining industry and all of its embedded links with government, its huge financial resources and its international backers, and on the other side were the people of the Northern Rivers, courageous and uncompromising. All of the actions small and large of every person along the way were like drops of water pouring into a giant bucket. Slowly but surely the bucket became heavier and heavier until the scales reached their tipping point.

The battle of Bentley is of historic significance. It is one of the only instances in Australian history where an entire regional community has taken a stand and faced up to the combined forces of the corporate state. The power of non-violence was very much on display. The Bentley blockade provided a safe welcoming place where ordinary people could come and experience (often for the first time in their lives) the empowerment of taking

part in a community protest. And where they could learn about non-violent protest, blockade installations and meet other protectors. It was also a place of great healing for the community. During those months, farmers, townspeople, indigenous elders and communities and environmentalists lived together and forged new and hopefully lasting alliances for the region's future.

The region's resistance extended well beyond the protest site itself, as business owners began to refuse to contract with Metgasco, the RFS and caterers resisted supporting a policing operation and the Lismore council threatened to refuse transport permits for Metgasco's equipment. It was a community wide outbreak of non-compliance. Most significant of all though, was the reluctance shown by the police, to be used against the people in this situation. The fact that the Police Association publicly criticised a code-named operation (Operation Stapler) before it had been confirmed, spoke volumes about the resistance that was brewing among police. By the time security forces become reluctant to move against a movement, it is a sure sign that the ground has shifted.

In the week leading up to the expected confrontation, the state government was effectively in a checkmate situation. To have gone ahead with a massive police operation was going to generate global attention. The battle of Bentley was a

seminal battle for the anti-fracking movement both nationally and internationally. So many people believed that if anyone could resist the frackers, it was the Northern Rivers. The government and industry had hoped that they could smash the Northern Rivers and that other communities would lose hope.

The outcome has been the opposite. Other communities have been empowered and congratulations have flowed from around the world.

The outcome at Bentley has not changed the underlying problem of mining industry domination of our parliaments but it is a very historic crack in that wall. The task now is for communities across the nation to get in there with their elbows and crow bars and widen that crack up until all communities regain the democratic right to say NO to the invasion of their way of life by unsustainable industries.

Metgasco has said they intend to return but that remains to be seen. In the mean time our community must celebrate, consolidate and prepare ourselves for the future. We have powerfully disrupted the hegemony of mining interests in this state, but there is so much more to be achieved. Ultimately it is the responsibility of us all to care for country. We have done this in the past by fighting for the forests, we are doing it now by resisting invasive industrial gasfields and we will be called upon to do it again no doubt.





Senator Scott Ludlum



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Go forth gently (Reflections on the aftermath of Bentley)

by Ruth Rosenhek

Well thanks all around, to the Traditional Owners of this land, to Gasfield Free Northern Rivers, to Knitting Nannas, to mums and dads and children, locals and travellers, farmers, business people, hippies and ferals, freaks and queers, gay and straight, young and old, all the individuals who showed up in common cause. To simmos and buddies who spent hours on the frontline in rainy weather and hot dry afternoons, to police liaisons and traffic, safety/security and first aid, to the kitchen that cooked with love, to the coordinators, the infrastructure people, black wallabies, to the info desk and meet and greet... and then beyond us to the local police who showed us some care and showed that they care, and to any politicians out there who actually listened and took a stand (before the decision was made).

And then to Metgasco and the politicians who approved the Rosella Exploration project. We thank you for creating such a grave situation, a true crisis for the Northern Rivers that gave us the opportunity and impetus to join together, heads and hearts and hands, to stand up for our rights, to stand up for clean water and to protect country. The seriousness of the threat that you have posed to our region brought us out into new territory, taking time out from our jobs and our families, spending time on the land away from the comfort of showers and computers, TVs, gardens and kitchens.

And now victorious, it is time to leave dear sweet Bentley. This incredible experience of community comes to an end much like the end of a great festival or party; yet no, those words cannot adequately describe what happened here. What happened here was a beautiful dream come true as a plethora of people came together in common cause and loved each other as best we could as we

worked together to protect the land, the water, the region for our children and our children's children's children's future. As Antoine de Saint Exupery said in the Little Prince, "Love consists of gazing outward together in the same direction." And this we did well. We hunkered down at Bentley. We put aside our lives outside of here, we squeezed them as much as possible into a manageable box and somehow we found the time and energy to create an inspiring engaged presence that grew from one day to the next.

We leave here now filled through and through with joy, relief and gratitude. Still, we may find ourselves experiencing a range of other emotions including sadness and anger, loss and pain. We may find ourselves experiencing a range of emotions in the days to come. Many of us are depleted energetically, we have been hyper alert, hyper vigilant, for many days on end, awaiting a potentially traumatic event to take place. Were the police going to ambush us from this gate or that, in the middle of the night or the wee hours of a rainy morning? Many of us have been in fight-or-flight mode for many days, weeks and even months on end. This has an impact on our adrenal glands, on our emotional and psychological wellbeing as we were amped up without the time to slow down and to truly relax in the comfort of knowing that our home is protected. We may find that our dreams are still filled with anxiety or that we are a bit more easily startled or upset than usual. We may feel a bit flat or directionless. We may find that we are again facing problems that had faded away during the course of our strong and passionate activism.

So it is important that we take some time for self care now, be that sleep, reading, gardening, friends, cuppas at the café, videos, walks in nature, the beach, surfing, sport... time with children and family and so on. We must go gently gently from Bentley in the next few days, gently forth, gentle with ourselves, with a curiosity about what

comes next. It can be a bit of a bumpy ride to integrate back into our family lives, our homes, our jobs. Perhaps we are going home to people who were not there to share in our experience and we must bridge to them, be patient as we work to reconnect with loved ones. For we are no longer the same and we will never be the same.

We have begun to get to know each other and now we know what we can do together; the power of people is enlivening. As Martin Luther King stated, "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community". So we will continue to meet, and many of us will continue to work together, as much work still remains to be done both here in the Northern Rivers where we will not stop until the Northern Rivers is declared gasfield free and we will continue to work to halt this destructive industry in the Pilliga and Gloucester, throughout NSW and even then we will not stop until we have no further unconventional gas drilling projects being developed in Australia.

Must we wait 10 or 15 years to see the true impacts of these practices? No, we will work together and we will know that this gives us the great opportunity to continue to forge the gorgeous social tapestry that was woven during our days at Bentley. We will continue to meet up with each other, with that glimmer of recognition in our eyes. When I see you in the street and you see me, let us continue to give each other a hug as we have done here so many times in days gone by. Let us continue to chat about our work together and to smile together as we reminisce and scheme, strategise for how to keep country well protected and keep water clean and work for the wellbeing of all people and all species.

We showed up. We showed up at Bentley. And it feels darn good. I am deeply grateful to one and all.

Much gratitude to the local custodians who welcomed us to country every day and helped us to find our way.

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Room A12, a small room (13m²) in Acacia House, will become available in July. This room currently houses Nimbin Optical, and is one of the few rooms in the community centre with street frontage.

This room would make a perfect office, shop, craft room or storage space. It is a lovely light room with windows looking out to Cullen Street. Great location and good security. Rent is \$253.57 (including GST) per month for non-profit rentals, and \$404 (including GST) for commercial/retail rentals. You will need to pay bonds of 1 months rent + electricity bond + key deposit.

If you are interested in renting this room, please direct a written Expression of Interest to the Nimbin Community Centre Management Committee at 81 Cullen Street Nimbin, or email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au You will need to provide two rental references.

For further information on what to include in your Expression of Interest, please contact Nina Boddenberg during office hours Tuesdays and Wednesdays on 6689-0000, email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au or visit our website: www.nimbincommunity.org.au

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Letters

Casino to Murwillumbah railway

Citizens of the Northern Rivers should be in no doubt of how we are totally disregarded by our local State political representatives, Thomas George and Don Page (MLAs) and Catherine Cusack MLC, after the announcement on 8th May that the NSW (read: Newcastle, Sydney & Wollongong) Government is to spend \$2.8 billion on a new fleet of 65 inter-urban trains for CityRail.

Work is commencing on the project this year to deliver 520 new air-conditioned carriages to replace older ones in the CityRail fleet from 2018. Meanwhile, in our region we get **nothing** for public transport whatsoever!

Indeed, these three out of touch "public transport philistines" think that we are all going to be riding our bicycles and horses from town to town on a rail-trail, which might be better termed a "snail trail"! I would like to see Thomas George cycling or riding his horse in from Casino to Lismore each day to work in his office.

Even this horse-and-buggy-era public transport "solution" will have to be funded entirely by the Federal Government, according to Don Page.

We are only asking for a few crumbs from the table to initially reopen the railway from Casino to Lismore (as a first stage) and get the XPT service back to Lismore.

Even Thomas George concedes that Lismore is the only regional city in NSW without a train service. He is responsible for keeping Lismore in this parlous situation as a "third-world" village!

We also request the miserly NSW Government to spend a tiny proportion of its transport dollars on some diesel railcars to operate a train service initially from Lismore to Brisbane via Casino and Kyogle with commuter trains extended to Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby (and all places in between) as the line is progressively re-opened to Murwillumbah.

Our forefathers had the foresight to build a railway for future generations and Thursday 15th May marked 120 years since the first train ran from Lismore to Mullumbimby. Our thoughts now will focus on our current ill-informed and backward-looking local

politicians (including Mayor Jenny Dowell and Councillor Glenys Ritchie, who are supporting the rail-trail), and the mean-minded State governments which closed the railway and are still keeping it closed after 10 years.

Glen Aspinall,
Goonellabah

'Genuine Effective Consultation'

After the suspended approval of Metgasco's PEL 16, Peter Henderson put together a 42-page submission (ABC radio interview 16th May) to prove they undertook genuine and effective consultation with our community.

One of the steps they took, apparently on the recommendation of the RVC mayor Ernie Bennet (ABC radio interview), was to open a "shopfront" in the centre of town. This resulted in a whole display of posters and charts etc. stuck all over a dirty shop window in Walker Street. The locality was unmanned and behind the window was an empty space. Even this token effort soon ended, probably due to lack of positive community support.

Metgasco's earlier attempts of consultation with the community were soon abandoned with the realisation that the majority of the community were too well-informed for them to be able to convince us that living in the middle of a gasfield region was perfectly safe and everyone's dream of paradise.

Let this be a warning to other gas companies that may descend upon us: The people of the Northern Rivers are not uneducated, uninformed country bumpkins who can easily have the wool pulled over their eyes.

Pauline Luethi
Tatham

CSG's 'closet supporters'

Mayor Ernie Bennett of Richmond Valley Council still insists there is a "large silent group" who haven't made up their minds one way or the other about the unconventional gas industry, (*Northern Star* 15/5) presumably hidden somewhere in the shire.

I would like to know where this large group is located. Gasfield Free community surveys conducted from Broadwater to Dyrabba, to Bentley, have shown that 85% and upwards of Richmond Valley residents want their roads and land gasfield free, while only around 5% are in

About us

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

favour of the industry. The most recent survey, conducted at Codrington, home of Peter Graham, co-owner of Metgasco's abandoned Bentley drill site, indicated that a huge 92.9% majority don't want this dirty, dangerous industry invading their area.

The subtle message in Mayor Bennett's interview is that this "large silent group" are 'closet supporters' of the unconventional gas mining industry. However, there is evidence that the opposite is true; that less respondents will choose the 'unsure' category and move to being sure they want their roads and land gasfield free, as more information is received and disseminated.

For example, in the latest Codrington survey just completed, only 6% reported they were unsure. This is less than half of the 13% who were unsure in the 2012 survey, conducted in the adjacent Tatham/Greenridge area.

Furthermore, to characterise these people as 'silent' is somewhat misleading. Gasfield Free community surveyors consistently find respondents are quite willing to be forthcoming about their current indecision and to discuss the issue.

So, Mr Mayor, your rush to (rightly) criticise Metgasco for its lack of adequate community consultation only highlights how hopelessly out of touch you are with your own constituency. Why not make this historic event even more so by making a stand alongside your own ratepayers to oppose this unconventional invasion?

Beverley Crossley,
Tatham

Post-Bentley How-to-Vote

So after the warm inner, outer and everything else glow of Bentley and the complete abrogation of representation shown by Thomas George, you'd think that unseating the Nationals here in Lismore would be something of a doddle, right? Unfortunately it's still much easier said than done.

The first and biggest hurdle is the NSW State voting system itself: Optional Preferential Voting. Unlike in Federal elections, NSW

voters have the option not to direct preferences. It functions as a de-facto first-past-the-post system, and it massively favours the major party incumbent.

By choosing to not allocate a preference you "exhaust" your vote. The more votes that are exhausted the more the first-past-the-post scenario comes into play. An exhausted vote is effectively a vote for the National Party.

The advice to voters who want a gasfield-free Northern Rivers is to make sure you number every box and put the Nationals last.

Hurdle number two is that post-Bentley, there is a potential for a "circus" field of candidates.

To any progressive, small-g green, gasfield-free individuals thinking of running as an Independent in the March 2015 poll I beseech you now - don't! You will split the vote. You will provide vote exhaustion. Your chance of being elected is 0%. The likelihood you will harm the candidate best placed to win is 100%. You will help the Nationals yet again retain the seat.

People power and everyone pulling together as a team to defeat an obvious common enemy won the day at Bentley. If this same ethic can be replicated electorally then it's possible the 30-year stranglehold the Nationals have held over Lismore can be broken.

Tim Somerville,
Kyogle

Divestment

Over 67 years ago, my aunt set up a Commonwealth Bank account for me, her first niece.

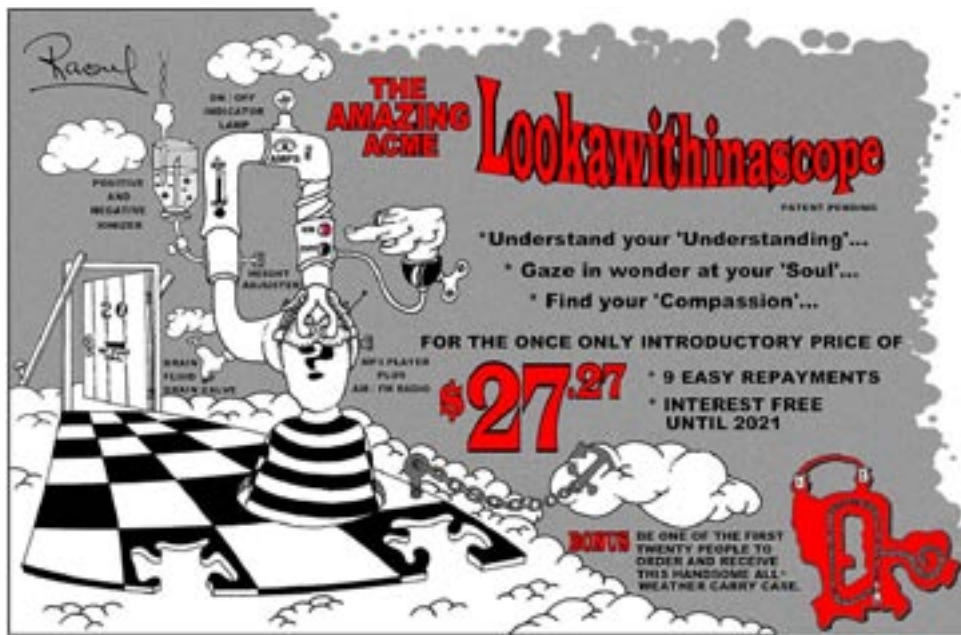
As a child, I loved putting spare pennies into the delightful money tins the Commonwealth Bank gave to children. They were in the shape of a solid, dependable, five or six storey building. Any still surviving would surely fetch a good price on the antique market.

Every Monday at primary school, we would bring a small deposit for our bankbooks. By the age of twelve, I was proud to be allowed to withdraw the money I had saved to buy my first typewriter.

Until recently, I have never considered banking

Letters to the editor

NGT welcomes letters by email or post by deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be cut. Letters already published elsewhere will usually not be considered. Include full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of NGT.



anywhere else.

But my love for Planet Earth is greater than my attachment to the Commonwealth Bank. I have been shocked and saddened to discover how much my money has been supporting enterprises that are contributing to environmental damage and degradation. The coal and gas industries, of which the CBA is an enthusiastic supporter, are major contributors to climate change, which is already having devastating impacts.

In Australia we have always endured fire, flood, drought and cyclones, but never before with the frequency and consistent ferocity of recent years. And as well as risking our precious groundwater resources and ruining habitat for endangered wildlife, the fossil fuel industries appear to have no regard for the beauty of our landscape and such fragile wonders as the Great Barrier Reef.

For these reasons I feel morally obliged, with sad regret, to move a bulk of my money to another bank which does not fund these nefarious industries.

I hope the major banks will all reconsider future investment in the coal and gas industries and place our finances behind clean, renewable energy alternatives.

Robbie Wesley
Murwillumbah

100% for Tweed?

I wonder what Tweed MP Jeff Provest has to say about the Federal Liberal and National Party Government's cuts to state funding?

Mr Provest is responsible for services such as health and the Tweed hospital, disability and emergency services, public housing, public transport, police, TAFE, schools and preschools in the Tweed electorate. The cuts will place these services under severe financial stress, force the sale of public assets and drive the states to support the raising of the GST.

The price on carbon, which would have been spent promoting the jobs of the

future and financially coping with climate disasters, is to be scrapped. All this on top of new federal taxes aimed at the less fortunate in our society. The scare-mongering about a budget emergency has beyond a doubt been proven to be a false argument.

In one of the many expensive National Party mail-outs I have received, it states that Mr Provest deals with land and water. Yet the National Party are promoting the roll-out of unconventional and coal seam gas mining in the Northern Rivers.

Mr Provest also states in large print in all his mail-outs that he is 100% for Tweed. If that is the case I call upon him to resign from the National Party and announce himself to be an independent so he can work 100% for the benefit of the Tweed rather than having to tow the National Party line.

Dave Norris,
Pottsville

Smokin' Joe

So, cigar-smokin' Joe Hockey hates the sight of wind-farms, eh? These vertical, visual abominations on a hill, quietly going about the business of generating electricity for us all. No fossil-fuel-guzzling machinery digging for coal or drilling for gas, thus creating an environmentally responsible footprint. No carting something to store it somewhere, creating another footprint; no dirty chimneys pumping smoke into yet another footprint.

There are opposing views on wind-farms and their associated health effects. I don't know the answer. Perhaps it's like cancer: some suffer and some don't.

Whatever renewable energy resource is available, we should use it, but there may be some drawbacks. It's a relatively new technology, but for technology to improve, funds for on-going R&D is essential. Very few innovations work to everyone's satisfaction first time. Improvements and innovations are on-going,

so a certain amount of tolerance should be shown to a necessary technology. The fossil fuel industry tries to stifle and undermine R&D, and any grants to the renewable sector never seem to amount to any long tenure.

With their money and access to more, one wonders why the fossil fuel industry would not merely buy the renewables sector, add it to their portfolio, develop it further and faster and charge us for it (one way or another, we pay for our own power), and reduce pollution. But the corporate mentality does not think in terms of "in benevolent conjunction with", only "in fractious opposition to".

In a fashion, Smokin' Joe Hockey is the human caricature of the fossil fuel industry. Smokin' Joe (and buddy Matty Corman) likes to have a puff on a big fat stogie, belching pollution into the atmosphere.

So, Smokin' Joe doesn't like the sight of wind-farms, eh? Well hear this Joe: 87% of folk on the NSW north coast not only dislike the sight, but also the sound, smell and effects of drilling rigs toxifying the above-ground environment and polluting underground aquifers for the gas extraction industry. Get your priorities correct.

Trust you're Havana nice day.

Ian Morris,
Casino

Just add water

So many people are into alternative energy these days. I can't understand why so few have delved into hydrogen power for motor vehicles.

It's not rocket science, it's barely high-school science. All that is needed to separate H from H₂O is some water, a battery and a bit of salt (or Epsom salts, or baking soda).

An experiment in the kitchen is: put a pinch of salt into a cup of water, stir well until dissolved. Add one AAA battery (just drop it in the salted water) and wait until bubbles form. The

bubbles are Hydrogen. Strike a match over it and the bubbles will 'pop'.

Yes, cars can run on water or partly on water (H-Hybrid). Any back-yard mechanic/tinkerer could add a hydrogen accessory kit to the fuel system of their car or motorbike, and save at least 30% of their fuel costs.

Here's one example of a simple home-made (DIY) water hybrid system: www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5nld6HzEjM and there's more information on the subject at: www.water4fuelguide.com And yes, it works for diesel too.

Where are all the entrepreneurs? Why isn't some smarty-pants out there manufacturing hydrogen kits?

Peggy Balfour,
Mullumbimby

MG Floats

Fact check! The MardiGrass Float Competition's 3rd prize winner was in fact 'The Green Wave of Hemp' (NGT May 14, p.17).

This float celebrated the wave of hemp reforms happening everywhere else.

I'd like to give public thanks to those who helped: to those judges with honesty and integrity who judged the float on its merits; to my sponsor Nimbin's 'Superior Pallets' in Gungah Road, who provided a free customized pallet for the base of the float.

Thank you to Brett from the Billen for his energy, engineering and endurance, and to Vanessa from the Billen, who bravely surfed the wave where others feared to go.

Ta to Trinity from our uke class, the two French volunteers, and the passers-by from Qld who filled in for the missing, who all manned the float and propelled it, sometimes over inhospitable ground, successfully to the finish.

Ta to Dave, from next door to me, for his truck to pick up the pallet, to the Embassy's Paula for the surfboard and Mac who dropped off the float at the parade from his ute; to many Nimbin shops for milk crates and cardboard; to Nimbin Tip for saving me four bicycle wheels, of the same size; to Alby at the rectory, for the offer of a parking space for the float; to housemate Paul for not complaining during the long construction at his place, and for his screws; to the many spectators for their encouraging words.

And ta to the *Northern Star* for their great headline - 'Green Wave starts at MardiGrass'!

Ta to you all.

Ian Wickham
Nimbin

Notices

Business for sale

Nimbin Organics and The Grapevine Café, at 50 Cullen Street, Nimbin. For sale as one, or as two separate businesses. POA. Phone David 0458-559-148 or Anna 0429-695-789.

For Sale: Tractor

Ferguson T20 tractor with slasher. New paint and battery. Rubber good. \$4200 o.n.o. Ph: 6676-6222 or 0417-808199

Reading and Maths tuition

Nimbin, Lillian Rock or at your home. Contact Diana: 6689-7430.

Jarjum Centre Art Exhibition cancellation

Jarjum will no longer be having the art exhibition opening - we will be having a closing party with a silent auction. We will let everyone know when we will be having the closing party. Sorry for any inconvenience. Please feel free to go and have a look at the Jarjums art at the Lismore Regional Art Gallery from 2nd June.

Golden Mile gathering

Blue Knob Road Residents are warmly invited to a Meet and Greet of the Old and New gathering at The Living Arts Sanctuary on Wednesday 11th June at 6pm. A chance to meet your neighbours and catch up with friends - bring the kids. Located three minutes past the Blue Knob Hall (when heading towards Kyogle Road); after the Tweed Shire sign you'll spot us on the right. Shared meal - please bring a plate. For more info, phone Amy 0412-277-889.

Tunable Bush Dance

At Tuntable Hall after AGM on Saturday 14th June. Bring your dancing feet and your kids! \$5 charge (free for Co-op members). A donation towards the musicians' supper and petrol costs will be appreciated. Amazing catering by Jay and Rindy: food from 5pm, dancing from 6.30 - with a bonfire and lots of fun to be had. Be there!

Seniors and Supporters Concert

Free concert at Tyalgum Community Hall on Thursday 19th June, 10.30am -12.30pm, featuring local Tenor David White who recently performed in Opera on the Beach, with bush poetry by larrikin and bush poet Paddy O'Brien, and a singalong with Dennis and friends. Morning Tea provided courtesy of Tyalgum Community Hall Assn. Raffles. A hall support event. Car pooling encouraged.

Hektic Bentley fundraiser

The Bentley Crew from the Gates of Bentley will come together in Nimbin on Thursday evening, 19th June, to celebrate the music, art and hectic lock-ons of Bentley. There will be videos, music and performances and we will be raising funds for the Bentley CD and Woodenbong Forest Action. Everyone is welcome. Go to the *Hektic Bentley* FB page to find out more.

Nimbin Flix

Next movie night Saturday 28th June at Birth and Beyond. Doors open 6pm, movie starts 6.30pm. Supper available. Entry \$10, or free for members.

Living and Dying workshop

'Living and Dying Consciously' with clinical psychologist, Indivar. 26th & 27th July in Lismore. Please phone/text Elizabeth 0429-199-021 or email: dr_mccardell@yahoo.com

Embroiderers' group

Meetings are 9.30am-2.30pm every 1st and 3rd Wednesday and every 3rd Saturday of each month in the function room at the rear of the Red Dove Centre, Keen Street, Lismore. Tutoring is available for new embroiderers, and workshops with local and visiting tutors are held throughout the year. Contact 0423-337-872.

My Cubby House family day care

Nestled amongst 22 acres of lush native rainforest is Blue Knob's newest childcare facility. We offer flexible care with casual, full time and part time options - before school, day and after school care. Small ratios, with a maximum of 4 for day care and 7 for school-aged children after school. For enquiries, phone Amy on 0412-277-889.

Free listings

Keep it brief and to the point and we'll run your community notice for free! Email us before deadline.