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# Resurgence of respect and remembrance

by Marc Everingham

The resurgence of interest in ANZAC Day seems to be on the increase, and every year the Nimbin commemoration has more and more participants.

In particular, there appears to be a newfound respect being displayed by the younger generations.

A huge turnout of school children in full uniform gathered at the hospital gates at 10.15am on the morning of the 25th. Forty children from Kindergarten to Year 12 from Nimbin Central School gave up a morning of their holidays to pay their respect to the diggers who paid the ultimate sacrifice at Gallipoli.

Led by the School Captains, the children assembled and marched to the Memorial in Allsopp Park.

The day was hot and sticky, but all those gathered demonstrated the appropriate solemn respect necessary for the occasion. It was a moving and unique commemoration service.

Organiser Paul LeBars said, "Nimbin, you do yourselves proud.

"Thank you everyone for turning up for our ANZAC Day commemorations, special thanks to Lt Col Matt Brumley, Pastor Jim Gallagher, Piper James Alexander, Nimbin Central School,



Photo: Simone Barnes

Coffee Camp School, Nimbin Bush Fire Brigade, South Lismore Bowling Club, and everyone who marched or joined in the service on behalf of those who served in the ADF and to those who watched on."

Next year, a Dawn Service is being planned, as well as the march at 11am. Keep an eye on the *GoodTimes* for further information about the 2015 ANZAC Centenary Commemorations. "Lest We Forget"

Students from Coffee Camp Public School with the banner they carried.



## Ticked off!

by Lily Oats

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month, and I am writing to share some firsthand experiences I have had with this terrible illness.

Lyme disease is caused by spiral-shaped bacteria known as *Borellia burgdorferi*, and is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick. These ticks often also harbour nasty co-infections, which are also passed on by the tick.

Lyme bacteria, known as a spirochete, can penetrate the tissues easily, drilling their way into tissue and bone and all organs. A Lyme spirochete, when threatened by antibiotic or herbal therapy, can morph into a cyst form, or become cell wall deficient, which makes it very difficult to treat effectively, and complex to understand. All three forms must be addressed for treatment to be successful.

Now to my unfortunate experience: I had been working happily as a local bush regenerator, a job I trained for and was very passionate about. Being a very physical job, I wasn't too worried when my large joints began to ache. Soon, a strange brain fog set in, not your normal stoner variety. Fatigue, deep and debilitating, also a bewildering array of symptoms, including tingling arm and fingers and face.

Concerned, I began visiting the doc more and more, seeking answers to these odd ailments. I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue. Soon a myriad of other symptoms appeared including recurring fever, constant headache, blurry eyes, double vision, constant tinnitus, malaise, migratory arthritis, swollen finger. My face and arm became numb, and still are two years later. Much worse was the cognitive stuff, namely confusion, difficulty thinking and concentrating, short term memory loss. I began to get lost in familiar places. I became too ill to work.

What's chronic fatigue? I kept asking, and at times I truly thought I was dying.

The doctors ordered every test known to man, with no answers. The word Lyme was mentioned, and when I looked into the clinical symptoms, I had them all, but was told NSW Dept of Health says its impossible to catch it here. WRONG!

To cut a long expensive story short, I sent my blood to a lab in America where I was diagnosed with late stage Lyme disease and some horrible co-infections. Because I was undiagnosed for so long, the disease had gained a strong foothold in my body, and realistically, I may have this forever. Treatment is controversial, and difficult, requiring multi-layered antibiotics to treat the bugs in their different forms. It's not uncommon for a patient who has been ill for many years to require open-ended treatment regimens, or maintenance therapy for life.

Although we have a handful of Lyme aware doctors in the area, they do not feel qualified to treat this terrible illness which, if untreated, can be lethal. Frightening stuff indeed. I, as a bush worker, did not know I could get sick from a tick. I didn't learn it in OH&S at TAFE or hear it from the doctor. I found out after years of being very ill.

The closest Lyme literate doctor is over 300km from me, and I have been travelling there for treatment monthly for the last 17 months. Because the Aust Govt does not recognise Lyme disease, most medications are not covered by PBS, some costing \$600 a month, and with expensive supplements and herbal remedies, this is a prohibitively expensive illness. My overseas test cost \$800, and they can be as high as \$2000. Lyme literate doctors (means have trained overseas) cost between \$350-\$700 an hour with little rebate.

Because our doctors and specialists are not trained to look for tick-borne illness in this country, most people remain un-diagnosed and misdiagnosed. Lyme disease is known worldwide as the great imitator, its list of symptoms is very long and varied, and it can mimic many illnesses, including Chronic Fatigue, Fibromyalgia, Lupus, Meningitis, Motor Neuron disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinsons disease, Rheumatoid

Arthritis, and this is just a sampling. No wonder our doctors and specialists are too afraid to treat and take an interest in this insidious disease, it is safer to put it and us sufferers in the too-hard basket and hope we will go away.

If I had known about this illness, I could have cured it with a three-week course of antibiotics when I was hit. I feel really pissed off that I saw so many doctors over a seven-year period and so much pathology work and remained undiagnosed.

Mine is a common story. Daily, I battle this debilitating, disabling disease, caused by a tick. My brain is infected, and I am suffering severe and progressive neurological illness and my life has become a grey miserable place. At age 51, I am mostly housebound, have been unable to work for 21/2 years, am not contributing to society, or bringing money into my household. I miss working in the forest, dancing, studying, travelling, dining with friends and being social. I miss feeling alive.

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley is very concerned that so many Australians are presenting to their doctors with similar stories, and that is why he established the Clinical Advisory Committee for Lyme disease (CACLD). See below for website to see latest findings of committee and patient experience survey, 2011-2012, where 225 people with Lyme disease participated. Findings from the 2012-2013 survey will be released later this year, with over 800 people participating.

For more info, contact Lyme Disease Australia Association, or go to [www.lymedisease.org.au](http://www.lymedisease.org.au) which is a most informative site, with a comprehensive symptom list and also co-infection info. These people are dedicated to raising public awareness and supporting positive change for patients in Australia.

The American documentary, *Under Our Skin*, is an award-winning film that explains the hidden story of Lyme disease, one of the most serious and controversial epidemics of our time. It's a gripping tale that concerns us and you will never forget it. This can be downloaded for free from: [www.underourskin.com](http://www.underourskin.com) Be sure to watch the bonus footage.

# Local rail: a thing of the past?

by Sue Stock

It will be 120 years since the Lismore to Murwillumbah railway was opened in May 1894. The extension to Casino was not opened until 1903 (pictured), and the southerly line from there to Grafton followed soon after in 1905. A northern branch from Casino to Kyogle was completed in 1910.

Until 1924, when a train ferry was provided over the Clarence River at Grafton, the line was isolated from the rest of the NSW Railway network. Connection to Sydney was made by means of ships from the river port in Lismore and the sea jetty at Byron Bay.

It is also ten years since the line was closed. Despite the Northern Rivers Region having one of the highest rural population densities in Australia, successive NSW governments have neglected rail transport in this region. The line came to be operated with a Sydney-centric philosophy and timetables rarely suited local travel. Lismore is the only major city in NSW without a rail service.

On May 16<sup>th</sup> 2004, in a sudden cost-cutting measure, the Labor NSW Government abruptly closed the line regardless of community protests.

At our two previous State elections the Nationals promised to get the railway service returned. In 2004, in State Parliament, Thomas George, member



A light rail option (left): the three-car VLocity-VL38

commemorates the loss of our rail service – so critically important to the elderly, the young, the disabled as well as potentially the thousands of commuters daily from the coast to Lismore.

The event takes place at Lismore Railway Station on Thursday May 15<sup>th</sup> from 6pm 'til 9pm. Speakers include Dr Mehreen Faruqi, Greens MLC; Karin Kolbe, TOOT President; and Jenny Dowell, Mayor of Lismore.

There will be great live music by Black Train and others, and refreshments and snacks will be available.

Check out: [www.facebook.com/nrrag](http://www.facebook.com/nrrag)

for Lismore, said, "The community feeling about the loss of this rail service is unprecedented during my term in this Parliament. Everyone has been firmly behind the campaign to retain the rail service." Yet nothing has happened.

So, this celebration of rail also

## From little things big things grow



by Chibo Mertineit

From a little sign I put up, a group of caring and compassionate people from Nimbin started to meet sporadically to get organised for the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade on 1st March.

The application went in and the Ganja Faeries started to rehearse. In real Nimbin Spirit, it was very exciting to get us all together and down there. Without the financial support of the Hemp Embassy and the Compassion Club we would have not made it.

And the Big Joint float was awarded a Commendation!

Special Thanks for the support of Andrew Kavasilis, on the telephone until hours before the parade and the selfless sponsorship of the Gunja Faeries, The Big Joint and the Hemp Olympix, which made it all come true.

Lonnie and his beautiful little truck from the Blue Mountains saved us lots of money, but the biggest cheer and *thank you* goes to all the participants. Thank you for being there and making it come together.



Artist's impression of those to blame for the gasfield invasion in the northern region

by Aidan Ricketts

The Bentley blockade is proving to be so much more than a protest against a drill rig. It is one of the biggest and most significant outbreaks of democracy seen in this country for many decades. It is the physical manifestation of a truly matured social movement that has mobilised majority support, achieved an impressive level of self-organisation and quite apart from its role as a protest has become invaluable as a place

where the community comes to learn, to discuss and to rediscover our power as a united community.

Thousands of people, many of whom may never have attended a protest before let alone a blockade have begun the journey from passivity and into active citizenship. For many it is a chance to meet the protesters, and the blockaders, who have for so long been portrayed by media and politicians as a separate species and realise they are us and we are them. We are the protectors.

But beyond the amazing cultural transformations that are taking place at Bentley there is of course a deadly serious political reality.

Our democracy is in crisis.

Our state government is riddled with corruption. We have watched over the last several years as the Independent Commission Against Corruption (that remaining bastion of

transparency) has revealed the tip of the corruption iceberg in this state. Both Labor and the Liberal and National parties have been shown to be captured by vested interests in the form of the mining industry and other developers. Finally we can all see exactly who has been running this state; why gas and coal licenses have been granted and renewed with no regard to community consultation, environmental safety or proper process.

From Maules creek to Bentley and from the Pilliga to the Illawarra, communities are standing up and fighting back against the mining behemoth. Communities that have exhausted every conservative avenue for being heard, that have voted, marched, written to politicians, and participated in protests or appealed to the courts have all hit the same brick wall. The state government responds by backing the industry every time. Even when the tiny town of Bulga beat the mining companies twice in court, the state government simply changed the legislation for the mining companies. Is it any wonder

that formerly conservative communities all over the state have reached the same conclusion, there is nothing left than community led non-violent direct action.

Non-violence is so powerful for communities because through it we can assert our true political power without giving the government an excuse for the violence they would meet us with.

Nevertheless our government at this time is busy developing its most absurd plan yet. To raise a force of over 700 police on an 80 day deployment to force mining by martial law upon the communities of this region. Apart from the fact that such a plan can never succeed against a united community, it represents a massive subsidy to Metgasco of over \$3 million of public money just to get one drill rig in.

To the people of the region, have pride, be courageous and know that we are winning. The greater the force that the government uses the more it exposes the corruption of our state's politics and the sheer impossibility of Metgasco's business model.

Over the coming weeks the government must decide whether it really wants to go ahead with its crazy military plan.

In the meantime we have nothing to fear, we need to keep visiting Bentley, keep enjoying our dawns, keep encouraging our friends and work colleagues and neighbours to make history with us. Whether the government backs down first or whether they go through the insanity of sending an invasion force for us to peacefully absorb, Bentley has already earned its place as a great stand for democracy.

The only thing that could defeat us in the coming weeks is complacency. Stay alert, keep visiting the blockade and keep your affairs in order so you can respond when called. Above all remain calm and peaceful in all your interactions with police, because for the vast majority of them as well their heart is not really in this madness.

Do visit: [www.gasfieldfreenorthernrivers.org](http://www.gasfieldfreenorthernrivers.org) and do send a text to 0447-399-535 to get yourself on to the red alert notification line.

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# People at the Blockade

by Mandy de Vries

We've heard it and read it many times, that the anti gasfield protestors – must have nothing better to do, are part of an extremist lunatic fringe, or are all dole bludgers. I found that the people there were a broad cross-section of the community. Many of them were on their way to work, on their holidays or missing out on study, it was a common response. They're putting their lives on hold to fight what they see as a proposed industrial invasion.



**Amy Pope**, co-owner of a family day care centre. "We could be working, but we're gaining more by being here. I'm here for the water, land and air that does not have a voice."

**Ben Pope**. "We need to stop the dollar being the most important thing. What's wrong with our government and police? They should be protecting us."



**Bronwyn Moir**, midwife and paediatric nurse. "It's shocking that the governments allow this to happen. It's important for me as a midwife to help the children have a sustainable future."



**Dr Ros Irwin**, former mayor of Lismore. "I've worked all my life. I'm putting everything else aside to be here because this is the most important issue that Australia is facing. I don't want Australia to be taken over by gasfields."



**Jeff Williams**, retired toxicologist and electrician. "Once the aquifers are polluted you can't get the heavy metals out. Short term profits for some, and no gain for the region. It's mad really."



**Max Campbell**. "I'm self-employed and I've never had any benefits. This is more important than work, you should put yourself out and not sit at home and let other people do it for you. When I see greenies up in the trees, I think, that's dole money well spent, they're doing my work for me."



**Christine Russell**, retired high school teacher. "The mining companies take so much and we have so little. This movement is giving me back some power, it makes me feel good."



**Peter Ashton**, macadamia farmer. "I can see this industry ruining the clean green image we have. Cattle, dairy, macadamias and tourism would all be destroyed. Who wants to see a stinking gas-field?"



**Paul Reynolds**. "I have a full-time job. I'll keep coming here as long as it takes to defend where I live. I'd like the government and industry to understand what "no" means, and stop this filthy industry."



**Karyn Roberts**. "We don't want CSG because our kids have to learn to live off the land and catch fish as we did. Our elders fought so hard to have what we have and we don't want to lose it."

**Harrimiah Roberts**. "It kills animals, I'm an animal fella."

**Joshua Gordon**. "We won't be able to go turtle-diving or swim in the creeks anymore."



**Steve Bolt**, solicitor. "I do legal work for arrestees. I'm here to show the government and the company that the community is not going away. The show of strength is remarkable, consistent, strong and powerful."



**Tien Lee**, carpenter and builder. "We have enough information now about how destructive it is, there's no excuse. It's ecological vandalism, and it's our duty to stop it."



**Vicki Findlay**, fulltime mediator. "We're here to demonstrate how serious we are about this, to the government and Metgasco. I'm not going to go away until they do."



**Bo Bagshaw**, landscaper. "We need to keep them out because once they're in, they're here to stay. There'll be thousands of wells everywhere and prevention is better than cure."

# Aussies against fracking visit the Pilliga

On Saturday April 5th at Barkala Farm in the Pilliga, (NW NSW) Aussies Against Fracking in conjunction with The Wilderness Society and Pilliga Pottery held a concert to bring support to local residents who are uniting to protect prime agricultural land and culturally and environmentally significant country from the roll out of coal seam gas mining in the region.

Farmers, Indigenous people and many other concerned citizens listened to interviews with a cross-section of anti-CSG activists, including local farmer and national co-ordinator of Lock the Gate Phil Laird and Gamilaraay elder Aunty Maureen Sulter, who gave a stirring 'Welcome to Country'. The culturally diverse crowd of 500 discussed the health and environmental impacts of CSG mining.

Santos, in collaboration with the NSW government, has made the roll-out of CSG a "high priority" in the Pilliga, a prime agricultural region described as Australia's Noah's Ark.

In between speakers, the crowd was entertained by comedians Glover & Sorrensen and musicians Ash Grunwald, Kevin Bennett, The Re-Mains, Andrea Soler and more. There was also a corroboree by the dance troupe Kaaka Wakakirri.

The aim of the concert was to galvanise the will of the locals and to demonstrate support for these people who have tried every available avenue to protect the Pilliga from the destructive and toxic legacy of CSG mining.

For the first time in the history of Australia, the farming community is taking direct action, with many farmers "locking on". (This is when a person physically locks their body to a vehicle or infrastructure in an effort to delay its employment.) In a recent survey, 93.3% of residents in Coonamble were opposed to CSG mining in their area.

The morning after the concert, about 80 people visited one of the toxic spills that have occurred as a result of Santos's CSG program in the area. Meanwhile a small group – including musician Ash Grunwald, Aussies Against Fracking director Nick Hanlon, journalists Eve Jefferies, S Sorrensen and Margo Kingston – visited Liverpool Plains farmer Sam



Ash Grunwald surfs the slag-heap  
Photo: Eve Jefferies

Clift, a sixth generation broadacre farmer who took them to a coal mine where Ash Grunwald donned a wetsuit and gas mask to surf a slag heap, underlining the potential destruction of this agricultural region by the fossil fuel industry.

The gas-masked surfer is a symbol of the nation's conscience as the icons Australians value are being destroyed. Farmland, rivers, forests, aquifers and sacred sites are under attack. As a result of Santos's CSG mining program, an aquifer has already been poisoned with uranium – and the industry is just in its early stages!

The amalgamation of the Boggabri and Maules Creek mines in the northern Liverpool Plains will create the biggest coal mine in NSW. This mine will significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions for Australia and will impact on global climate change. Tim Flannery said recently that this mine is anticipated to create more greenhouse gas emissions in a year than the country of New Zealand.

With renewable alternatives available, and with the health impacts of the coal and CSG mining industries becoming increasingly apparent, highlighting the plight of a threatened rural Australia is increasingly urgent.

## Renewable verses fossil fuel at Bentley?

by Sebastien Sledge

Can we, the community walk the talk in regards to renewable energy verses fossil fuel consumption at the anti-gas mining protest camp at Bentley?

Some argue for the convenience of running a big diesel-hungry generator that can easily cover our power needs. I can somewhat agree with this argument, as supplying enough power to run say a coolroom would require tens of thousands of dollars worth of solar system. My counter argument is to raise enough money for a medium-sized solar system so we can run a number of fridges for food storage and cover other necessary power requirements.

Rainbow Power Company has supported the camp

in many ways. They have supplied and installed the current small Power Cube style solar system with a Waeco fridge and charging options on permanent loan. They have also offered to supply us with additional components at a very good price.

The longer the Bentley camp is running, the more financially viable a larger solar system would be, when compared to generator hire and fuel costs. We wouldn't be pumping fumes into the atmosphere and chucking dollars at petrol stations. We would also have a system after Bentley is liberated that we could use for other charitable events. Besides if convenience is all we are after, then we might as well all stay home and let the gas companies do what they



want.

Interested in supporting Bentley going renewable? There is a Facebook page called Bentley Renewable Pledge Page where people can pledge donations, equipment, skills and time.

Support this campaign on [indiegogo.com](http://indiegogo.com/projects/769802/fblk) by going to: [www.indiegogo.com/projects/769802/fblk](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/769802/fblk) to share

and build an audience.

There is also a bank account for people to directly donate: Summerland Credit Union BSB: 728-728 Account number: 22300533 Name: Sebastien Sledge Reference: (your name/who from).

Any amount is appreciated! Let's show everyone an alternative to fossil fuel madness.



'Fat Cat' being refused entry to the invitation-only Metgasco 'community consultation' meeting at the Casino community centre by council GM John Walker, who was acting as doorman for the event. Photo: Den Draper

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# Letters

## Open letter to the Premier

Hi Mike,  
Please forgive my informality, hope it doesn't offend, please feel free to address me by my first name, Scott, in your reply. Firstly, allow me to congratulate you on your new appointment as Premier of this still beautiful state.

As I live in Lismore, heart of the Northern Rivers region and the central base for the anti-unconventional gas movement, I thought I would just put you in the picture regarding the community's feelings on this and other wider issues.

I appreciate most of the current gas exploration licenses were handed out by the previous Labor government, and that your predecessor, under your predecessor, has imposed many new conditions and regulations on the industry regarding best practice and the 2km exclusion zone from residential towns etc. Also the recent changes to applications for PELs is welcome. You may, therefore, be wondering why there is still such a massive opposition to the industry and mistrust of politicians, not only nation wide, but particularly here on the far north coast.

In September of 2012, a Council-commissioned poll showed that 87% of our community opposed coal seam gas as a viable and beneficial industry for our region. Three days later, like a smack in the face, your government renewed Metgasco's exploration licenses. In October of that same year, the then planning minister, Brad Hazzard, told our mayor, Jenny Dowell, that CSG was "inevitable" for the Northern Rivers. On the date of the federal election in 2013, Southern Cross University conducted an exit poll in the Richmond Valley LGA, which showed that 65% of the community there opposed CSG.

It's not difficult then to imagine the sense of betrayal within our communities while your current minister for energy, Anthony Roberts, follows the suit of his disgraced predecessor, Chris Hartcher, and pushes propaganda on behalf of APPEA and Metgasco, trying to label anyone opposed to the industry who attends a protest as an 'extremist'. Mike, come and see for yourself, go to the protest site at Bentley and you will see for yourself the wide diversity of our community who oppose this industry which seems

to be being forced on us by your government against our wishes.

The collusion between government ministers (on both sides) and industrial and corporate lobbyists with fat wallets is seemingly endless. The corruption is so blatant now that it almost seems the normal state of affairs! The lobbyists with the fattest wallets get what they want, no matter what the cost to the communities and electorates that you government ministers should be serving. This simply cannot go on: we, the people of this state will not allow it to go on.

We are all tired Mike, the entire state. Tired of the corruption, tired of the lies, tired of being ruled by corporate interests, tired of being treated like idiots. As Tony Windsor has pointed out, very few of us have any faith in any politicians on either side. It is up to you now to try and reinstall some faith back into our politicians and our political system, democracy itself in fact. I sincerely hope you are not just another of those sold out, self-interested duds that gets dragged through the courts by ICAC and still gets to retire on a state pension. We are simply sick to the back teeth of being sold out by those we have elected, those we pay a pretty fortune to (compared to the wages of many of us).

Now, as those who are supposed to be representing us seem only to be representing those that oppose us, we are left with no choice put to protest, blockade and lock-on, exercising our right to be arrested. We will not be turned back, there is too much to lose.

All the best, my sincere kind regards,

**Scott Walters,  
Lismore**

## Metgasco: The Untold Story

Metgasco has a 100% rate of serious failure for tight sands gas wells. The Rosella well at Bentley is Metgasco's second attempt to successfully drill more than 2,000 m down into a tight sands formation. Kingfisher, Metgasco's other tight sands well leaked from the start, failed dramatically during decommissioning when 200 m of bore pipe was blown high into the air, and is subject to ongoing investigation by the NSW Trade and Investment Mine Safety Investigation Unit.

Peter Henderson says that "It is premature to speculate, the investigation process needs to be allowed

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NGT is auspiced by Nimbin Community School Co-op Ltd., 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin

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**Wednesday 28th May**

**Email:** [nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com](mailto:nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com) or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

to be concluded without hindrance", but the Investigation Unit has already found that throughout its life the Kingfisher well's "loss of integrity" allowed gas under pressure to migrate between the inside and outside of the well casing. The Kingfisher well is now capped, but this failed well will forevermore allow gases and fluids from different geological strata to mix in an uncontrollable and unknowable manner.

Metgasco does not yet know what went wrong with their Kingfisher tight sands well, and now they plan to drill a similar well before the Mine Safety investigation is completed. If the gas is good, they will build a gas field from Lismore to Casino as quickly as possible.

According to the Office of Coal Seam Gas, gas extraction from Metgasco's tight sands gasfield is likely to require "unconventional" techniques such as fracking and aquifer depressurisation. But did you know that because the Bentley well targets a sandstone formation rather than a coal seam, Metgasco's operations are exempt from all NSW Government CSG regulations?

Forget the hoopla about "World's toughest CSG regulations", 2 km exclusion zones, Environmental Protection Agency oversight, Aquifer Interference Policies, Gateway Processes, Water Triggers, and the rest - none of that applies in Bentley. This operation only requires the approval of Minister Anthony Roberts.

Commonsense and good governance demand that the NSW Government immediately suspend Metgasco's operations at Bentley. Metgasco should not proceed at least until the Mine Safety Investigation is completed and this company can prove that it has truly achieved the technical understanding, engineering expertise, and corporate risk management culture necessary to successfully and safely undertake such a dangerous operation.

**Dr Wayne Somerville  
Clinical Psychologist**

## Black armband for democracy

If the politicians send the police against the protectors of Bentley, I believe many of the 90% who oppose gasfield development in the area will turn out to demonstrate.

It is outrageous that a group of politicians in Sydney could be so cynical about democracy as to force an unwanted development on the region, especially one that is dangerous and most likely damaging to existing businesses such as farming and tourism.

Is this the same government that says it doesn't have enough money to deliver services adequately? The process of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of the earth will probably be outlawed in the near future. Why spend so much taxpayer money to enforce mining by martial law?

Metgasco has never earned a dollar, and has breached a number of regulations. Should the government be so unwise as to choose a small speculative corporation over the strong objections of its citizens, then we should mourn the demise of democracy in NSW.

If the police come to force entry for Metgasco at Bentley, I urge citizens to wear a black armband or black clothing, especially for those who can't be on site at Bentley on that day.

**Scott Sledge, President,  
Northern Rivers Guardians**

## Media distortions

A point of reference can be very useful. Our real-life experiences help us to determine fact from fiction.

What point of reference is used by the mainstream media in reporting the Bentley Blockade however, has me puzzled. Newscorp media, for example, have consistently described the occupants of Camp Liberty at Bentley as comprising 'angry, urinating hippies'!

Yet my own experience of living in the camp has brought me into contact with an amazing diversity of friendly, professional people. These people have included: former newspaper



editors, journalists, doctors, psychiatrists, osteopaths, film makers, photographers, health workers, scientists, council members, tradies of all descriptions and others from just about every walk of life.

Some of these people are retired and have long, successful careers behind them working in different parts of the world. Many are highly respected, mature age members of the community.

So Newscorp's portrayal of those at Camp Liberty as 'angry' or otherwise 'unemployable' appears completely detached from reality.

How come? How can professional news reporters get it so wrong? I can only assume that Newscorp reporters have not taken the time to actually visit or stay at the camp. Or perhaps their opinions are driven by a fear of being sacked – I'm not sure!

What I do know is that without a first-hand experience of something, our view of a particular subject, or group of people can be grossly distorted. Without encountering someone face-to-face, we can assume things about them that are completely untrue.

Australia's mainstream media appears driven by something other than the pursuit of truth. Their reporting is neither accurate nor unbiased, but relies

instead upon their readers having no point of reference of their own by which their neatly printed lies can be exposed!

R J Poole  
Lismore

### Party pooper

Another Nimbin MardiGrass has come and gone, and 22 years on, the event organisers are yet to twig that their strategies for influencing cannabis law-reform just aren't working.

Yet to twig that the whole Ganga faeries, bong-throwing, joint-rolling-competition circus isn't persuading politicians and mainstream public opinion, it's alienating it.

Yet to twig that the weekend's festivities are one big advertisement for the negative side effects of cannabis use.

Yet to twig that the jokes have worn threadbare thin and that the whole schebang is one big lesson in self-marginalisation.

Winning over mainstream opinion and gaining widespread grass-roots political support has been the number one success of the Lock The Gate Movement. Even genetically predisposed National Party voters are being woken from their somnambulism.

Nimbin HEMP would be well served in following the lead.

And don't get me started

on the grubby, right-wing nonsense their political arm, The Australian Hemp Party, has stooped to.

Pot will be decriminalised one day, but it will be despite the efforts of MardiGrass and its HEMPsters, not because of them.

Tim Somerville,  
Kyogle

### Noxious weed?

Triny Roe in the column 'Noxious Weeds' (NGT April 14, p.19) states *Cecropia* "is a serious environmental weed in Tahiti and Hawaii." This is not true. She has got her wires crossed. The species she refers to is *Miconia calvenscens*.

Roe states: "...the potential for it to become a serious problem in the Northern Rivers is extremely high", which is once again erroneous.

In the past 30 odd years, *Cecropia* on my place and within 1km have deposited around a billion seed. There have been seven spontaneous seedlings during that time, all on disturbed roadside verges or on hard compact surface. *Cecropia peltata* has shown the same dismal seeding capability elsewhere.

A Weed Risk Management done for *Cecropia* quite correctly says it is low risk and should be monitored. Instead, weed authorities have had a knee-jerk reaction already spending close to \$200,000 on this non-invasive sleeper.

One of the mainstay food items for our fructivores are the assorted Ficus / Figs. *Cecropia* is a pioneer species with a fig substitute that is relished by every known fructivore on the North Coast. *Cecropia* is a pioneer species.

If *Cecropia* were highly invasive, it would only be in

competition with indigenous pioneers like *Jagera*, *Pittosporum*, *Macaranga*, et al. These local pioneers have already experienced decades of competition with highly invasive weed species e.g. *lantana*, *crofton*, *ragweed*, *camphor*, *Ageratum*, *privet* ad *nauseum*. Yet the native pioneers are abundant.

*Ipsa facto* *Cecropia*, if highly invasive, would not be a threat to biodiversity. In fact, it would aid and abet the population dynamics of fructivores by supplying a fig substitute for several months that is now under-supplied.

Declaration of *Cecropia* as noxious is a big mistake.

Triny Roe parrots the false paradigm of the current crop of weed authority bureaucrats when she writes: "Weeds are a serious threat to biodiversity." By and large this is primarily based on false logic that goes like this: Why is this plant a serious threat to biodiversity? Because it is a weed. Why is it a weed? Because it's a serious threat to biodiversity.

By far, the most serious threat to species, both flora and fauna, has been agricultural practices followed second by introduced animals including kangaroos that have been able to extend their range due to uncapped bore water here, there, and everywhere.

My concern about weeds are those that qualify as nightmare weeds e.g. Thorny *Solanum ergo* Giant Devil's Fig ergo *Solanum chrysotrichum*. All other terrestrials in our area including *lantana*, *camphor*, and native pioneers are at worst an annoyance and at best beneficial for a host of reasons.

Paul Recher,  
Dorrroughby

## Notices

### To Let

1 bedroom flat for rent in The Channon village – no smoker, no pets. Phone 6688-6551.

### Lost cat

Sick tabby cat missing from Cullen Street since mid-April. Any information, please contact Eugenie on 6689-1707 or email: [eugenie11@hotmail.com](mailto:eugenie11@hotmail.com)

### Contact wanted

Goddess Pixie, could you please contact Glen in regards to doing a photo shoot? 0459-471-993.

### Open Learning Centre

Nimbin Community School's Term 2 starts on 7th May, offering Art, Film Making, Sewing, Ukulele, Creative Writing, Plumbing, and Small Smart Screens. Late enrolments may be possible. Phone 6689-1477 or enquire at the Community Centre.

### Annual General Meetings

- Nimbin Community School Co-op Inc AGM will be held at 6pm on Monday 19th May in the Community School room at the Nimbin Community Centre.
- Tuntable Falls Community School will be holding its AGM on Wednesday 18th June, at noon at the school.

### Sea Shepherd fundraiser

At Tuntable Falls Community School, 4.30pm on Wednesday 21st May. Vegetarian/vegan Indian Feast for a bargain price of \$10pp and \$5 for kids. Chai and cakes also available. All proceeds will be donated to Sea Shepherd. For further information phone the school on 6689-1423.

### Commemoration at the Station

At Lismore Station on Thursday 15th May from 6pm. 120 years to the day since the line from Lismore to Mullumbimby was opened, and 10 years since it was closed (16th May, 2004). Speakers include Dr Mehreen Faruqi, Greens MLC, Mayor Jenny Dowell, Karin Kolbe (TOOT). Live music by Black Train, Chris Fisher, Mookx Hanley and Paul Joseph, videos and nibbles. Come one, come all to call for a train. Organised by the Northern Rivers Railway Action Group. See Facebook site for info.

### Tuntable Creek Landcare

All around Australia, Landcare volunteers are proving that together we can repair and viably manage our natural resources. The Tuntable Creek Landcare Group works to restore and maintain the biodiversity of Tuntable Creek. Meetings this year will be held:

- Saturday 10th May: Workshop and Meeting at Eternity Springs Art Farm
  - Thursday 7th August: AGM
  - Saturday 22nd November: Workshop and Meeting
- It would be wonderful if you could come and join us! Phone 0415-482-009 or 6689-6385 for details.

### Tuntable Creek Rural Forum

The next Rural Contact Forum for 2014 is at Tuntable Creek Public Hall on Monday, 19th May at 7pm, with six Lismore Councillors in attendance.

All residents of Tuntable are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to meet and have frank and open discussions with your Council representatives on your own turf. You can ask questions face-to-face, raise issues of concern and generally get up-to-date on any Council business that interests you.

### Living and Dying Workshop

'Living and Dying Consciously' with clinical psychologist, Indivar, has been deferred until 26th and 27th July, in Lismore. Please phone/text Elizabeth 0429-199-021 or email: [dr\\_mccardell@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

### Free listings

Keep it brief and we'll run your notice for free!

### 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.