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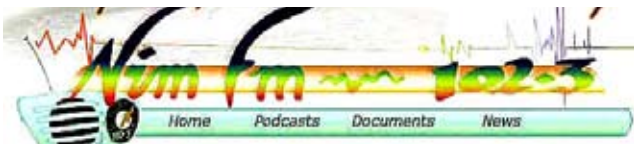
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# A new legal eagle lands in Nimbin

A new dimension for Nimbin Law: the addition of a very experienced criminal lawyer

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Under the watchful eye of principal solicitor and barrister David Spain and his son, (sixth generation solicitor) Jonathon Spain, the team at Nimbin Law have offered local people an array of assistance for 20 years now: multiple occupancy formations, complex commercial litigation, conveyancing, wills, probate and esoteric trust deeds.

But for most of that time, there has been no criminal lawyer practising within 25 kilometres of Nimbin. Now there is.

Roger Spain, David's brother, is a lawyer

specialising in criminal matters. He has now joined the experienced team at Nimbin Law.

Roger has represented the innocent and not-so-innocent since 1974. Never for the big end of town, always for those who have needed his assistance most. Those in trouble. Those who have had the misfortune to receive an unwanted, unexpected and inconvenient need to seek help from a lawyer who understands the needs of those charged with criminal offences.

Roger commenced working in North Sydney and Manly in 1974 as a solicitor. His work from then on always involved appearing in court. In 1975 he became a barrister, practising from Macquarie Street in Sydney.

Having practiced extensively as both a solicitor and a barrister, and drawing upon 38 years of extensive Court advocacy work at the highest levels, almost all Roger's practical experience has been



Captured by their profession: the Spain lawyers at the bar

centred on defending people charged with the full array of criminal offences. Roger hopes to provide a service to the local community that will assist those who need help in times of personal crisis.

Nimbin Law is located at 50C Cullen Street – behind Armonica Café. Appointments can be made by contacting reception during business hours on 02 6689-1003.

### MardiGrass breath testing results

Almost one in five drivers drug-tested during the annual MardiGrass police testing operation returned positive readings for illicit drugs.

More than 600 drug tests were conducted with 114 positive tests, while only three drivers tested positive for alcohol from 800 tests.

## We shall remember



by Paul Le Bars

Thank you to everyone who attended the Nimbin District ANZAC Day Centenary Dawn Service (100) and March (350+). The Dawn Service, the first for many decades, could become a regular event, given the attendance. Thanks to Sharon Eldridge for the poignant and reflective Commemorative Address, and thanks to the Nimbin Bowling Club for providing breakfast and morning tea.

The 10:45am commemorative service after the March, led by Lt Col M. Brumley and two soldiers representing the 41st Battalion RNSWR, began with a welcome to country smoking ceremony, then local choir Vocal Minority gave a soulful rendition of 'Abide with me'.

LCC Cr Simon Clough gave a thought-provoking Commemorative Address

followed by 'The Pipers Lament' played by James Alexander, and many wreaths were laid on the cenotaph. After the bugler Petria Dean beautifully played Last Post and 'The Rouse, the commemoration finished with the National Anthem, sung so well by the Nimbin Central School and Coffee Camp Public School Combined Choir.

Special thanks to Lt. Col Mathew Brumley-MC, Pastor-Jim Gallagher and Bugler Petria Dean who attended both services, and to Bob, Reg, Annette, my brother Marc, Franco, Wayne and the crew in the park for guarding the gardens against the roosters, and anyone else I've failed to mention, thank you for your help.

Also to Darvy Whurr, for all his time over the last few years in helping build and maintain the monument gardens, we wish him well for the future.



What a wonderful, considerate and respectful community we have – our forebears would be proud!

"Lest We Forget"

PS. Anyone interested in volunteering some time to keep the gardens maintained, please email: [paullebars@gmail.com](mailto:paullebars@gmail.com)



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The Renewable Energy Specialist

# No idle hands – Cawongla man wins blue ribbon

by Marie Cameron

Five years ago Eric Smith arrived from California to make Australia home. Little did he know embroidery would play a huge role in his future. Eric came from a knitting family, but it was a part-completed piece of embroidery found in an op shop, which started his love affair with the stitch.

Every year, the traditional country shows around Australia feature the needlework of many a craftsperson, and for the 2012 Nimbin Agriculture Show, Eric decided to try his luck and entered an embroidered cushion. It won 1st prize. As he held the show champion ribbon in his hands, Eric's embroidery career took flight.

"I was honoured to be chosen the 2012 Nimbin Show Champion," he said. "For the 2013 Nimbin show I decided to pull out all the stops and do one of the largest embroidery pieces that I had ever attempted; an afternoon tea table cloth with a federation map of Australia," he said.

It won him the 2013 Nimbin Show Champion, after which he took the tablecloth on the road and entered it into the Mullumbimby Show where it won first prize for the Most Outstanding in Needlework, and gained first prize at the Bangalow Show.

Feeling the joy of endless stitching



Eric set his sights on the premier NSW agriculture event, the 2014 Sydney Royal Easter Show. His two entries caught the judging eye to gain him a highly commended and a second place for his novelty tea cozy. Again he followed up with entries into the local North Coast shows and again his work proved successful. At the 2014 Mullumbimby Show he took out the first and second prize for embroidery.

It was at that point Eric set his sights on the big one: The 2015 Royal Easter Show blue ribbon.

"From January this year I began work on the piece Idle Hands are the Devil's Playthings. Stylistically, it is a revival work with a lot of charting and mathematics to make old patterns fit in a new piece".

An enormous amount of planning and spacing went into the centering of the text. "Even so," said Eric, "about a quarter of the work was unpicked and redone, just to be sure it was right. It is mainly cross-stitch in two colours along with drawn thread work and antique hand-hemming."

For two months Eric sat with his Pug dogs at his feet. His time would prove to be well spent; the coveted blue ribbon landed in his hands. Eric won the 2015 Royal Easter Show Craft first prize. (Category 50).

The prestigious win took Eric's voice onto the ABC radio airwaves and ABC Open photographer; Michelle Eabry made a documentary on Eric and his work.

The winning Idle Hands are the Devil's Playthings piece and the documentary will be featured at the Blue Knob Gallery's Fibre Show 2015 exhibition. Opening night is Friday 22nd May.

Eric Smith can be found most Saturdays behind the backyarder's table at the Blue Knob Farmers Market. For the past two years, Eric has sold fresh produce and embroidered at the same time. His apron is embroidered, and so too is the stall sign.

If you would like to see Eric's stitch style first-hand, catch his demonstration during the one-day Fibre Festival in the market grounds on 23rd May.

## Metgasco can't win a social licence in the Supreme Court

The Greens have said that coal seam gas company Metgasco does not have a social licence to drill and should pack up and leave, following a decision by the Supreme Court to overturn the Government's suspension of drilling at Bentley.

"You can't win a social licence in the Supreme Court of NSW, and despite this technical legal victory, it is clear coal seam gas has been comprehensively rejected by the community in Northern NSW," said Greens mining

spokesperson Jeremy Buckingham.

"The government may have stuffed up the cancellation process, but the substantive issue that the community has rejected unconventional gas extraction in the Northern Rivers remains, he said."

The Greens will be introducing legislation to reinstate a broad public interest test, so government has the power to protect communities from irresponsible mining and gas drilling.

The move was welcomed

by Lock the Gate Alliance Northern Rivers co-ordinator, Dean Draper, who said, "It is important to realise that this is only a technical and procedural victory for Metgasco, it does not mean that the suspension was not warranted, just that it was not carried out properly."

"If the law is not capable of protecting the public, then the law must be revised," he said.

"The State election was a referendum on coal seam gas in the Northern Rivers, and there is no mistaking

the result. The first order of business when the new parliament sits in May must be decisive action to protect the Northern Rivers from unconventional gas."

Greens Member for Ballina, Tamara Smith said, "Despite their court victory, Metgasco should heed the clear message from the community that they want a gasfield free Northern Rivers. Metgasco should pack up and leave. If Metgasco tries to drill again, the community will resist, and I will be standing with them."

## Creative minds wanted for Nimbin marketing group

Lismore City Council is looking for enthusiastic and creative local business people to join the new Nimbin Marketing Campaign Focus Group.

Council is seeking six people with business, tourism and/or marketing experience to join the group, which will provide advice and direction to Council on a marketing campaign to promote the village.

Council's Visitor Services Co-ordinator Andrew Walker said Council has \$120,000 for a marketing campaign, funded by Council, Destination NSW and the North Coast Destination Network.

The campaign is designed to drive tourism and retail spending and help

boost visitor numbers to Nimbin in the wake of the Cullen Street fire, which destroyed the Nimbin Museum, Rainbow Café, Tribal Magic and Bringabong shops.

"We want to ensure these funds are spent to maximise visitor numbers to the town and we need professional people to come up with clever ideas and help us get the biggest bang for our buck," Andrew said.

"This is a great opportunity for people with industry experience to help us boost Nimbin's profile and inject more funds into the economy. We already have more than 150,000 visitors come to Nimbin every year. The main aim of this campaign is to encourage them to stay a

little longer and spend a little more."

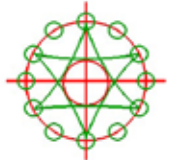
Council has now put out an Expression of Interest and Andrew encouraged interested people to apply. He said the group would assist in devising a marketing campaign over a three-month period.

It is anticipated the Nimbin Marketing Campaign Focus Group will be made up of six people.

EOI applications are due by Thursday, 14th May. Nominations should address the criteria found in the EOI document on page 36.

For more information on the Nimbin Marketing Campaign Focus Group, phone Council's Tourism and Events Manager Mitch Lowe on 02 6626-0105.

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## Metgasco return? Tell 'em they're dreaming!

The recent court decision quashing the government's suspension of Metgasco's universally unpopular Bentley speculative drilling operation last year, has revealed just how deeply flawed the current legislation concerning the mining and petroleum industries really is.

The idea that the government of the day, spurred into action by the overwhelming consensus of an entire regional community and a blockade of historic proportions simply lacks the power to call a stop to a socially divisive and dangerous speculative mining operation, reveals an industry dangerously out of control.

The urgent political imperative for our region right now is not a precipitous return to the barricades, but a sustained push for legislative reform to encourage the government to amend the legislation to regain at least some level of governmental control of the industry. Our ask has not changed, we want the Northern Rivers licences cancelled, and hopefully the process of getting there will empower the government to cancel licences elsewhere in the state as well.

The mining industry has spent 60 years worming its way into positions of influence in all of the major political parties in this country and has dominated the political landscape for too long. It has been the main 'stakeholder' in the writing of the very legislation designed to regulate the industry, but the tide is turning. We simply cannot allow the foxes to control the chicken coop any longer.

Several years ago there appeared little hope that the parliaments of 'Quarry Australia' could be turned around but in recent years with the rise of the Lock the Gate movement and the more widespread civil society campaigns against the madness of 'Mining Uber Alles' politics we have seen some cause for hope.



by Aidan Ricketts

I have long maintained that the Lock the Gate movement is very much more than a movement against inappropriate coal and gas mining. It is by necessity a widespread pro-democracy movement. Corporate domination of governments is a global problem, and the mining industry (along with arms, pharmaceuticals and more) remains one of the most aggressively anti-democratic industries on this planet. Whether it is complicity in the genocidal politics of West Papua, civil war in Bougainville, murder of activists in Nigeria and Latin America or the more subtle systematic corruption of political parties and parliaments that we have seen in Australia, the mining industry is an enemy of democracy.

The battle we fight in this region, against Metgasco, in this country against Adani, Rio Tinto and Shenhua and globally against the science denying fossil fuel industries generally, is one of the great battles of our times, and it is a fight for democracy, sustainability and human rights.

But we need to play our part in our local communities, in our state and federal political spheres and remain grounded and determined. Our efforts at Bentley have inspired others nationally and internationally, and the recent state election showed us

just what a powerful movement we have become. The NSW government remains finely balanced between those who have seen the political necessity of giving ground to popular sentiment about the out of control mining sector and those who have simply consumed too much industry Kool-Aid over the years to change.

Despite the magnitude of the problem we have a window of opportunity right now to persuade our newly elected state government to listen to the people and take strong legislative action to remove the Metgasco menace from our region for good. Your letters and phone calls to the energy minister, to the Clarence MP and your continued support for our newly elected Greens MP Tamara Smith are now needed urgently.

It should not be too hard an ask to convince the government and the minister to grant themselves more powers to control the industry and the power to cancel licences in the public interest. They actually had this power up until a few months before Bentley (s24A Petroleum Onshore Act) and they foolishly deleted the section (drinking the industry Kool-Aid again no doubt).

We may find ourselves required to return to Bentley in the future but at this point in time the scales are finely balanced and there's a good chance that with our loud and vociferous urging the government will act to put Metgasco back in its box and send it packing. Communities should not have to blockade to protect their way of life, and Metgasco can't obtain a social license by exploiting procedural defects in flawed legislation.

A stitch in time saves nine: now is the time to ramp up pressure for legislative change to get our government to cancel those licences. Metgasco does not deserve any compensation for its failed and divisive speculative venture.

## Green is the new black

by Michael McNamara

As the dust settles on the recent NSW state election one thing is absolutely clear. The political dynamics of the Northern Rivers have changed significantly. It may never be the same again!

The Greens won Ballina and have been confirmed, for the second time in a row, as the major opposition to the Nationals in Lismore (this time by a margin of just over 2% behind the Nationals).

Across the seats of Tweed, Lismore and Ballina, one out of every three people who voted National in 2011 changed their vote. This represents a swing away from the National Party in the Northern Rivers of historical proportions.

In both Lismore and Ballina, the Labor candidates managed to claw back their party's losses from 2011 but were still outpolled by the Greens candidates (as had happened in 2011). This is a seismic shift in the political dynamics of the Northern Rivers.

In 2011 all three Nationals members (in Lismore, Ballina and Tweed) were re-elected on primary votes. This means they scored more than 50% of the first preference votes and did not have to rely on preferences from other candidates. They got an absolute majority in their own right.

In the recent election, the Nationals candidates in Lismore and Tweed both relied on preferences to get re-elected with margins of around 2% on the Two Candidate Preferred (TCP) count.

Of the three electorates, Tamara Smith for the Greens had the highest winning margin at just over 3%. Don Page did not contest the election in Ballina so this may have contributed to a larger swing there.

In all three electorates CSG was a significant issue. This is not surprising, given the focus on CSG over the last few years, and the combative approach taken by sitting MPs towards those in their communities who joined together to campaign against the development of industrialised gasfields in the Northern Rivers.

A number of commentators have written off the recent electoral performance by Greens candidates across the Northern Rivers as a protest vote against CSG. This, I believe, is a serious misjudgement, as many other state-wide and local issues also played out significantly in the campaigns: the "poles and wires" privatisation, the future of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, local health services, TAFE and many other issues played significant roles.

In the seats of Lismore and Ballina, both Labor and the Greens ran strong local campaigns. Their candidates had strong local connections and campaigned intensely from the moment they were pre-selected as candidates.

In Tweed, the robust Labor campaign started early, but the Greens campaign started much later. The Labor campaign managed to claw back the losses from the 2011 election, but the Greens lost ground compared to their 2011 result. Some have

argued that, had the Greens increased their vote in Tweed in line with Lismore and Ballina, then the seat would have fallen to Labor.

In Lismore, both Greens and Labor results reportedly suffered from a high level of "exhaustion" of ballot papers. This is a result of the Optional Preferential System where voters can number one or more squares up to the number of candidates. An alarmingly high number of votes from both Labor and Greens voters were reportedly "exhausted".

Significant numbers voted 1 for their preferred candidate and then left the rest blank. This gave an advantage to the sitting Nationals candidate, because the number of votes they needed to win dropped with each exhausted ballot paper. Both parties need to put more effort into educating their voters if they hope to capitalise on the shift that has occurred in the political dynamic of the Northern Rivers.

As for the re-elected Nationals, Thomas George and Geoff Provest, neither seem to have learnt from the experience. Both have gone on the offensive, claiming that the swing against them was due to the "toxic and personal" nature of the campaign. They have missed the point completely and have not seen the shift in the political landscape.

What they have failed to account for is that one out of every three people who voted for them in 2011 shifted their vote in 2015. This sort of swing, in the order of 20% is almost unprecedented in Australian political history and does not happen in a vacuum. If they continue to ignore the lessons from recent elections they will pay a very high price. Roll on 2019!

# Fukushima's invisible tendrils

by Gi Linda, Producer/director VideoArt

Displaying the psychopathy of tyranny that sets humanity trembling on the brink of apocalypse and tempts a great leap forward, 'Danger in Paradise' is a documentary in development by VideoArt in Nimbin that reveals how a forgotten nuclear disaster has become an extinction-level event and the greatest catastrophe in human history.

Four years after an earthquake and tsunami smashed Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, hundreds of tons of radioactive water are still spewing into the sea every day. Fuelled by yellowcake uranium mined from stolen lands of Australian Aborigines, the invisible radioactive tendrils of Japan's 2011 nuclear meltdown are now returning a deadly legacy to Australia's idyllic surf beaches. Ocean current modelling shows radiation spreading globally in the next two decades as it heats deep ocean trenches and bioaccumulates in the food chain.

The Bible's prophetic *Book of Revelation* warns of divine retribution; planetary blow-back as a consequence of extreme lawlessness by soulless Saurons without compassion or empathy that willfully harm Mother Earth and Humanity to jack up supreme self-interest:

"The second angel poured out his vial into the sea and it became blood like a corpse, and every living soul died in the sea."

A frightening prophetic fulfilment is the mass death of marine creatures from Japan to the West Coasts of America and Canada. The diverse marine life of the North Pacific Ocean is already gone, with loss of whales, dolphins, fish, birds, starfish, and tens of thousands of sea lions dying on California beaches... a direct consequence of reckless misuse of nuclear technology that violates natural law.

"Everything's dying! Dead-dead-dead and dead or dying!" Scientists report that 98% of the North Pacific Ocean floor is covered with dead sea creatures. Courageously battling severe winter weather, Dana Durnford, a professional



diver, has filmed a heart-breaking ocean survey and discovered an almost total loss of intertidal species in British Columbia. He observes that most insects are also gone, and even the Orca whales have stopped singing... their babies are not surviving.

In 2013, Australian Green's candidate Ivan Macfadyen sailed a yacht from Japan to San Francisco and saw for himself the dreadful impact of Fukushima radiation. He found vast islands of toxic debris: "The ocean is broken! It's dead! For thousands of miles there was nothing, like sailing in a dead sea. Everything's gone! No birds, no fish, no sharks, no dolphins, no turtles. Nothing!"

32 million Japanese people are already permanently harmed by Fukushima radiation. Some experts urge evacuation of Tokyo and cancellation of Japan's Olympic Games, yet controlled media smother truth behind a shocking pretence of flaccid normality.

Like hungry foxes guarding chooks, nuclear industry advocates deny any radiation crisis. Erik van Sebille with the Climate Change Research Centre, says Australia will not be harmed by Fukushima radiation. He blames 'climate change' for death of the Pacific Ocean. National Geographic suggests a virus. MSNBC host Cenk Uygur admits he was cautioned to bleat the official line of 'nuclear safety.'

ARPANSA, the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency also reports that dispersed radiation is harmless and recommends no monitoring of food imports. The IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency, not only ignores Fukushima radiation, but goes beyond madness, winking as Japan tries to restart a nuclear reactor in an unstable earthquake zone close to an active volcano.

Under Japan's State Secrets Law, reporting inconvenient truths about nuclear dangers is illegal, but vocal dissenters including Mitsuhei Murata, Japan's former Ambassador to Switzerland, Michio Aoyama from Japan's Meteorological Research Institute and Yoichi Shimatsu, former editor of Japan Times Weekly, insist that Japan's ecocidal nuclear disaster is killing the Pacific Ocean and will eventually cause global devastation.

Dr Leuren Moret, a specialist in biological effects of ionizing radiation and author of 'Japan's Deadly Game of Nuclear Roulette' also reveals the immense hazards of nuclear technology. Australian physician Dr Helen Caldicott, prominent author of books on the nexus between nuclear power and nuclear war industries, comments: "it's one heck of a way to heat water!"

The Australian Conservation Foundation's anti-nuclear campaigner David Sweeney, who visited Fukushima, warns that since Corporation Australia's powerful prefer profits to people, the government plans to build new nuclear power plants and increase uranium exports, including a 'hot deal' with India.

Yellowcake uranium, mined despite the strong protests of Aboriginal Custodians, is now returning its lethal legacy to Australia. Atmospheric monitoring on the Sunshine Coast measures background radiation 33% over pre-Fukushima levels. As toxic tendrils wrap around beautiful surf beaches and the Japanese government admits they cannot fix this escalating catastrophe, nuclear hazard expert Dr Bill Deagle offers slim hope that the radiation could be contained... before it's too late.

# Crowdfunding sexuality awareness

Young people today have unprecedented access to a huge amount of imagery that is translated by many to be reliable information about how to enjoy and respond sexually.

Research is showing though that such access is creating havoc in relationships: young men who watch a lot of porn are getting addicted and experiencing PIED (porn induced erectile dysfunction); and young women are expecting unrealistic responses from their bodies and trying to conform to impossible images of femininity.

Hence a new documentary project on sexuality by local educator, comedienne, and founder of the yOniversity, Laura-Doe (pictured), who has been studying sexuality for over 30 years.

Laura-Doe believes that her 75-minute documentary in production, 'The Art and Science of Female Arousal' will support people of all ages to gain a balanced,



accurate understanding of the female body and how it is designed, while tackling some of these concerns about misinformation.

"In the past decade, scientists have discovered a tremendous amount of new information about the female body that provides a fascinating map of a woman's natural pleasure pathways," Laura-Doe said.

"Research has also identified the importance of pleasure for our health and wellbeing. I've distilled these insights into this movie, packed it with humour and a host of

practical tips and exercises, creating an invaluable tool for couples and singles, parents and schools."

Treating the subject with sensitivity and respect, Laura-Doe avoided using graphic images that may alienate some viewers, instead employing diagrams and beautiful anatomically accurate cushions for demonstrations.

Footage from her comic cabaret, 'Vaudeville of the Vulva' and songs and soundtrack with her band, The Chaps, well loved local musos Anando Bharti

(Fyahwalk) and Andrew Cox (Well Swung Daddies), add fun and funk to the mix.

Presented in an entertaining, accessible, and teen-friendly format, the movie has already been filmed and edited, and she's looking for help to get it out to the world.

Laura-Doe has launched a crowdfunding campaign asking supporters, sex-positive community and friends alike to contribute towards the post-production, manufacture and distribution of the movie. See: <http://pozible/femalearousal>

The campaign will remain live until 18th May, with less than \$10,000 left to raise.

"Supporters will be the first to view this empowering material, reap juicy rewards and feel really good about bringing more pleasure into thousands of lives with this in-depth understanding of female sexuality," Laura-Doe said.

Website: [www.theartandscienceoffemalearousal.com](http://www.theartandscienceoffemalearousal.com)

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*Letters*



**Poster compromises cause**  
The MardiGrass poster 'My dealer is my healer' discredits the credibility of the move towards cannabis legalisation. Where did the HEMP Embassy get this disinformation? Making claims that "loneliness", "dysfunction" and "domestic abuse" can be cured with cannabis is misleading at least, and mendacious at worst.  
Four years ago, I conducted an extensive search for medical conditions ameliorated by cannabis. Nowhere did I find any reference to these so-called conditions.  
I have asked that the speakers at the MardiGrass forum on 'Medical Cannabis Research in Australia' disendorse these ridiculous claims, or produce evidence to support them.  
This poster makes a mockery of cannabis research, and brings into disrepute the attempts of many fine researchers trying to put cannabis research on a rational base.  
The link between "dealers" and "healers" plays straight into the hands of the anti-cannabis lobby, who claim that legalisation would lead medical cannabis patients being obliged to source their medicine from the black market.  
Graham Irvine  
Nimbin

**ANZAC Day reflections**  
The Dawn service in Lismore was very thought-provoking for me. I stood there with many others, the silence broken only by the kookaburras greeting the dawn, and pondered.  
I loathe conflict. I wish that war did not happen. I wish that mankind could figure out more peaceful ways of dealing with the differences that make us all unique. Whatever my personal opinion, I will forever be grateful to those who have lost their lives in war. However futile it seems now, they believed that they were doing the right thing and gave the ultimate sacrifice.  
Thank you for your courage. You inspire me to continue the fight to protect what we have here – clean water, clean air and fertile land. Our governments make decisions with little regard for us, the people. We will keep up the fight for future generations. That is the Anzac spirit – we will not use violence but we will be heard and we will win.  
Judi Emmett  
Keerrong Valley

**Economic ineptitude**  
More disassembling rubbish from Doug Burt ('Economic Death Spiral', NGT April 2015). How many times do the readers of NGT have to endure Burt tripping all over his socialist bias before ending up face down in his own rhetorical garbage?  
Perhaps we could pass the hat around to buy Mr Burt an economics textbook.  
While it might defeat our purpose to acknowledge the Dunning-Kruger effect, an inability of the unskilled to recognise their ineptitude, which Burt so obviously exhibits, the effort might still spare us at least one issue watching him flail all over the place like a drunkard going ten rounds with a straw man.  
Scott Barlow  
Uki

**Country magazine blues**  
I just read Col Jackson's editorial for *Blue's Country Magazine* (April 2015), a junk mail advertising brochure that has recently appeared unasked-for in my letterbox. I was appalled at the ignorance displayed by the editor, and write to address some of his damaging misconceptions.  
In the editorial, the hard-working, dedicated people who are trying to protect the Pilliga – and other areas – from invasive gas mining, are labelled "ratbags". He implies they are "publicity-seekers and Centrelink clients", yet makes no attempt to justify his accusations. I suspect he

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hasn't gone to the trouble of meeting any of them, because otherwise he would know that many are local farmers trying to protect their water supply. Many others have taken time off from their jobs to help, often at great personal financial expense.  
It's not easy opposing a mining company. People don't do it by choice. They do it because if they don't, they are likely to lose the clean land, water and air that ordinary people rely on for life and livelihood.  
The books *Merchants of Doubt* by Oreskes & Conway and *Global Spin* by Sharon Beder show us that industry lobby groups know how to create propaganda that doesn't immediately look like propaganda. For example, it may look like a free glossy advertorial aimed at farmers.  
It does seem strange that a genuine magazine marketed at farmers – in an area where roughly 90% of people have said no to invasive gas mining – would include such a misinformed, inflammatory editorial.  
Dr Sarah Antill  
Roseberry Creek

**Reclaim Australia**  
Racism is a form of fear. This fear is not necessarily based on the colour of another person's skin, but may focus instead upon their cultural beliefs and practices. Racism is a fear with many parts and sadly, many supporters.  
The recent protests by the Reclaim Australia group were a vast display of fears ranging from a specific fear of Muslims to a general fear of white European culture being challenged by anything.  
As someone of Anglo-Saxon heritage myself, I'm ashamed of those members of this community who imagine we are the only 'true' Australians. We arrived here uninvited ourselves in boats and since that time, Australia's ethnic / cultural diversity has steadily increased – and will continue to do so into the future.  
Those Australians who struggle with this process need to challenge themselves (as opposed to others), and ask what drives their fear.  
R J Poole  
Lismore

**Political paedophilia**  
Political paedophilia has been discussed in certain circles for a while now, but due to the internet, it's now something that everyone is becoming aware of. The death of BBC presenter and serial sex offender, Jimmy Savile, prompted hundreds of abuse victims to speak out.  
Now with the publishing of serial offender Jeffrey Epstein's 'little black book' on the internet, detailing his connections to royalty and various other high ranking officials, the picture is becoming clearer.  
The new video podcast, 'Political Pedophilia: An Open Source Investigation' (available on YouTube), takes a well thought-out approach to this. Ending with a warning about 'witch-hunts', the presenter wants to make sure we look at direct evidence and not be distracted by hysteria and disinformation.  
He interviews Dr Tjeer Andringa of the University of Groningen who has coined a new word, 'kaktocracy', meaning 'rule by the worst'. He has some wise things to say about what we can do about it and how we should do it.  
I hope this information gets to as many people as possible. It will change the way you see the world, but for the better. If you don't have access to a decent internet connection, I am happy to send a free DVD copy via mail, if you promise to share it with your friends. I can be reached at: [kaki.flak@gmail.com](mailto:kaki.flak@gmail.com)  
Sam Harris  
Goonellabah

**CSG court decision**  
The NSW National Party leadership team of Troy Grant and Duncan Gay visited the Northern Rivers in the lead-up to the recent State election, stating quite clearly their opposition to Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining in our area and their intention to buy back the existing licenses, in particular PEL 445.  
The NSW Supreme Court's ruling in favour of Metgasco in relation to the suspension of its drilling approval at Bentley in May last year is not unexpected. The NSW Government has

## Letters to the editor

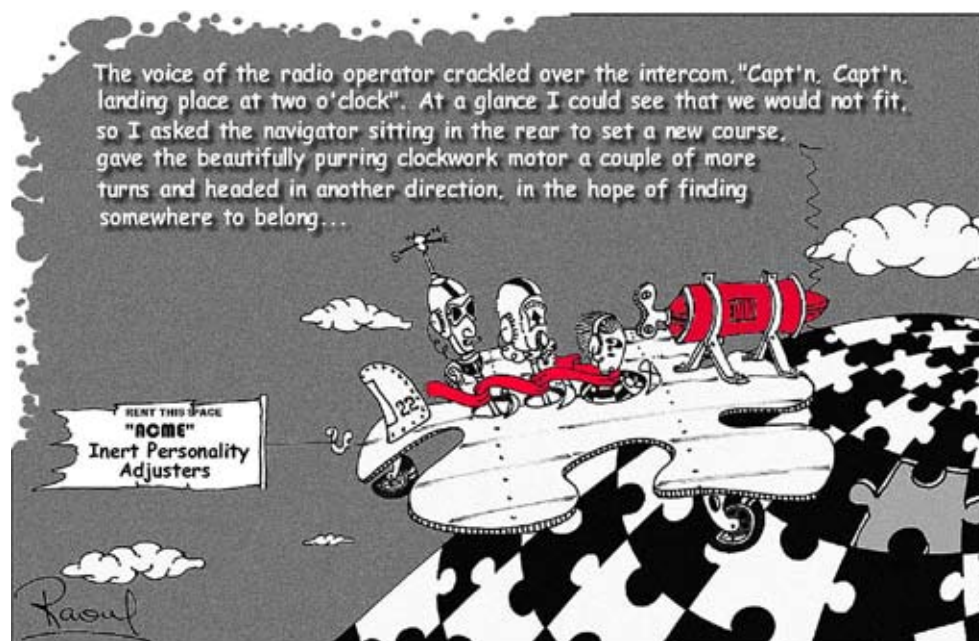
NGT welcomes letters by email or post by deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be cut. Letters already published elsewhere will usually not be considered. Include full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily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

the power, through clauses in the Onshore Petroleum Act (1991) to cancel Metgasco's license in the Northern Rivers if it had the political will to do so.

Metgasco has been fined for various breaches of its license agreement including dumping over 5 million litres of waste water into the Richmond River and breaches of the minimum freeboard requirements for its toxic wastewater dam. There have also been a number of reports of leaking wells and localised contamination.

The Northern Rivers community has overwhelmingly stated over the last five years that it doesn't want this invasive industrialisation of our rural landscape. CSG was the number one election issue, that resulted in an unprecedented swing against the National Party. I believe that swing would have been even greater if the Nationals hadn't changed their position on this issue during the final weeks of the campaign and posted out a number of flyers making sure that everyone knew that they were listening to the community.

Now is the time for them to



make good on their promises and begin a new chapter. It's time that they stood up to the Sydney Liberal Party and once again represented the interests of their constituents, and not the mining companies that seek to exploit our resources at the expense of our land, water, major industries (tourism and agriculture) and property values.

If legislative change is needed to ensure that the courts won't overturn the cancellations, then the NSW National, Labor and Greens MP's need to work together to protect our region once and for all and have the Northern Rivers declared Gasfield-Free. Anything less would show that their change of heart before the election was nothing more than deceit in order to hold onto their jobs.

I'm hopeful that the recent court decision provides the impetus to settle this issue once and for all.

Cr Jeff Johnson  
Lennox Head

## New book on EHS

Following last year's informed debate re the legitimacy of electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS), your readers may be interested in a new Australian book.

Part memoir, part cutting-edge science, *Prostituting Science: the psychologisation of MCS, CFS and EHS for political gain* addresses all aspects of these disabling conditions, in addition to presenting persuasive evidence of an environmental aetiology (i.e. chemical and EMR exposure) for a number of the non-communicable diseases now endemic in Western societies – diseases that run the gamut from asthma, migraine, and autoimmune diseases (especially diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease), to ADHD, autism, depression and Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

*Prostituting Science* is available from Inkling Australia, PO Box 422,

Maryborough, Vic 3465 for \$29.95 plus \$7.50 p&p.

Diana F Crumpler  
Talbot, Victoria

## Sorcery

Cullen Street's annual pot party will see the Hemp Embarrassment, the destroyed site of the former Chemical Alley, and sad old Allsopp Park jammed with foolish (young) people en route to memory loss, long-term unemployment and in general falling in with the new world order sedation agenda, a la fluoride, vaccine needles and microwave phone towers etc.

I believe the individual who approved the weed fest was old and retired. Perhaps it could be moved to Casino?

Regarding Baldy and others piping for addiction, doesn't the empty vessel make the most noise?

It's not called 'dope' for nothing. Read your bible. Pay attention to mention of 'sorcery'.

Vyvyan Stott  
Mullumbimby

# If you look for monsters, you will find them

by Naamah Lamech

A man in the street points to the sky and says they are spraying to reduce the sunshine. No, mate, it's smoke haze from the bush fires at Minyon Falls.

A woman in the market announces it hasn't rained here because they are spraying to stop it. No. The previous two days of weather in Northern NSW had been a series of scattered storms and showers as the larger rain depression developed. Tucked away in the mountains, Nimbin often misses out on the rain, the isolated clouds diverted by the topography. Within 24 hours, 100mm+ had fallen in the valley.

Another woman declares they are spraying the poisons collected by council in the household chemical round-ups. They are not allowed to bury them. They are not allowed to burn them. So they are allowed to mix them all up, take it up into the air and spray us with it? The cost alone would make this a prohibitive exercise, not to mention the logistics and the EPA.

Is a secret arm of the government (the illuminati?) regularly spraying us with chemicals for mind control, population control and or climate control? Which one is it? Apparently all of them. When I suggested no-one was controlling my mind the response was, "Yes they are. Because, look at us talking about it". That is not mind control! That is ludicrous.

Someone else was asked why would they spray. The reply was, "Why wouldn't they?" This is not a logical, cogent argument. Where's the evidence? "There's a pilot who has spoken out." I found a clip on YouTube: 'Chemtrail pilot speaks out.'



Voice over various pictures of contrails. But the man speaking got the information from a source, who heard it from his cousin, who talked to the pilot. Sorry not convinced. That's fourth-hand information. People never make up stories to make themselves sound important, interesting or dangerous, do they?

Another person thinks they are spraying blood and human plasma. Another Youtube clip, 'Chemtrail pilots spraying blood cause face-to-face near mid-air collisions' provides the chilling evidence. Or does it? The camera gives it away as it pans to include the sun glowing on the horizon. Have you people never

## Notices

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### Nimbin Flix

Next movie night Saturday 16th May. Doors open at 6pm, movie starts 6.30pm. Food and drink available.

### Zazen Yoga

Mondays 6-7pm at Birth & Beyond, Nimbin. Enquiries phone Peter on 0427-855-077.

### Goolmangar Public School Community Fair

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May, with the Goolmangar fire brigade, a giant jumping castle, music, BBQ, tea coffee, cakes and scones, plants, stalls, raffles, bric a brac and games. A fundraising event by the P&C committee for the school. Stall sites available for \$20. Enquiries phone 458-303-198 or email: [pjg7061@gmail.com](mailto:pjg7061@gmail.com)

### Sound bath sessions

Thursdays 5.30-6.30pm upstairs at Nurture, 115 Keen Street, Lismore. Come and unwind with a relaxing Sound Bath, all you have to do is relax and let the sounds of chimes, bells, singing bowls and rainstick wash over you, taking you on your own journey, leaving you regenerated and balanced. Group sessions \$10.

### Al-Anon

Al-Anon Family Groups meet in Lismore at 6.30pm on Tuesdays, at the Quakers Hut, Cnr Wyrallah Road and Dibbs Street and in Ballina at 6pm at West End Lions Club Hall, river end of Brunswick Street. If you are concerned about somebody else's drinking, Al-Anon can help. Go to: [www.al-anon.alateen.org/australia](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/australia) or phone 1300-252-666.

### 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. Contact 0423-337-872.

### Free listings

Keep it brief and to the point and if we think it's of interest to our readers, we'll run your community notice for free.

seen red clouds at sunset?

'What in the World are they Spraying?' records various people *speculating* about what they think is happening. One suggests it might be mass immunisation. Everyone has a theory, none based on any actual evidence. This overly long documentary fails to prove or even demonstrate any links to persistent condensation trails except the filmmakers, who feature heavily on camera, patting themselves on the back, tell us there is, repeatedly.

Why is it so easy to accept what we're told? Recent brain research has shown it takes less effort to believe than not to believe. Energy and active cognitive processes are required to doubt and reject information. What we believe is not necessarily based on facts, reason or even misinformation but often on gut feelings. We are also primed to see purpose and agency in events because this was an important survival strategy in our evolutionary history. It's human nature to want to belong to a group. Part of belonging involves believing what the group believes.

The skies are riddled with air traffic. Every day scores of planes pass overhead. Mostly unnoticed, except when the atmospheric conditions, ie. high humidity and freezing temperatures, cause condensation of the planes' exhaust vapours and create icy clouds. Next time you think that's a chem-trail plane, go online to: [flightradar24.com](http://flightradar24.com) It's probably just Flight JQ409 Coolangatta to Sydney.

Namaste.



# From the mayor's desk



by Cr Jenny Dowell

## April meeting

A big crowd filled Chambers for the April meeting. Most were present for the debate on the legality of a CSG roof sign but there were others interested in the Biodiversity Management Strategy and a handful from Lismore Theatre Company interested in the debate on the possible sale of Rochdale Theatre.

## BMS

One of the hottest topics before Council this term has been the Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) and the subsequent proposal to fund its works through a Special Rate Variation (SRV). Supporters and opponents alike have been vocal in the reasons for their positions. Ultimately Council resolved at its April meeting to adopt the BMS and prepare an application for an SRV to implement the strategy. There was strong support for the BMS and SRV from most respondents in the independent survey, but many people particularly from the farming sector remain opposed. Following

the meeting a rescission motion was lodged, so we will debate that motion at an extraordinary meeting on 5 May. At that same meeting Council will consider the draft 1 Year Imagine Lismore Plan and 2015-16 budget.

## Advertising or art?

Many of the people in the gallery were eager to hear how Council dealt with the large painted sign on a Ballina Road house. The sign or its predecessor has been on the roof for more than three years without complaint but in September last year its legitimacy was raised with Council staff. Whether the sign fits the definition of advertising requiring approval or whether it is art, is the question.

## Nimbin Waste Transfer Station

Readers might recall that Council undertook a waste survey last year. Following that survey, some changes have been recommended including more domestic collections and an upgrade to the Nimbin Transfer Station. Stay tuned.

## Street trading

On a recent visit to Nimbin, I noted itinerant traders with blankets spread in the middle of the footpath to display jewellery and other items for sale. Regularly I get complaints from residents and business owners about these traders blocking access and taking trade away from existing businesses. A small group of others feel these traders add to the ambience of the village. Clearly there needs to be some compliance with basic safety requirements but Council frankly does not have the staff to be present particularly on

weekends to ensure compliance and safety.

Initial consultation will be undertaken via the Nimbin Advisory Group to discuss issues and challenges. The feedback from the NAG will inform Council's Executive Committee discussions on the community expectations for compliance and the Council's capacity to meet these expectations. For the present and foreseeable future, service levels will be provided within current resources and budgets. That means there will be no significant increase in compliance monitoring and enforcement in Nimbin at this stage.

## NAG

The next meeting of the Nimbin Advisory Group is on May 7 at 6pm at the Neighbourhood Centre.

## Traffic

Council's Traffic Advisory Committee considered several matters pertaining to Nimbin in its recent meeting. Cassandra Jeffery's Nimbin Fun Run Traffic Management Plan was approved and Council supported a request by Nimbin Central School for safety fencing at the school's bus bay. The Committee has recommended that a plan and estimate for the works be developed in conjunction with the school and forwarded to Roads and Maritime Services for funding under the Safer Routes to School program. These recommendations will go to the May Council meeting for endorsement.

I also noticed on my last trip to Nimbin that the stop line on Cecil Street at Cullen Street has

been repainted to give better vision for drivers in Cecil Street. The repainting followed several representations made via Nimbin Hook Ups Facebook page.

At the April meeting, Council approved the Traffic committee's recommendation related to various traffic concerns on Gungas Road including sight lines, signage at causeways, line-marking and vegetation trimming. The committee considered that the current speed limit is appropriate but that some additional signage and line marking is warranted.

## MardiGrass

A huge congratulations to Mardi Grass organisers who not only lodged their Development Application and Traffic Management Plan early but were successful in obtaining approval for three years thereby saving much time, effort and money. Best wishes for a successful event.

## Autumn Arts

Congratulations to all Nimbin artists on the success of this year's Autumn Arts Extravaganza. The standard of works is consistently high and hopefully there were good sales.

## ANZAC Day

Thank you to Paul Le Bars for his magnificent organisation of the two ANZAC Day services in Nimbin. The smoking ceremony and welcome to Country along with the presence of veterans, Coffee Camp and Nimbin PS students, emergency service volunteers, 41st Battalion troops, many community members and some tourists made

the main service truly inclusive.

## Election result

While we had to wait for some time before the results of the State election was clear, I congratulate Thomas George on his return as our State MLA. Regardless of your or my preferred candidate, a narrow victory to a member of the party that forms Government is a good outcome for our electorate. I hope that we can put the blame game aside and work with the result for the betterment of our Local Government Area and the Lismore electorate. I have two other hopes. One is that the narrowness of the win brings about a policy and personal shift that demonstrates that our voices have been heard on important issues such as coal seam and other unconventional gas exploration and extraction. Secondly, that by being a marginal seat held by less than 3% buffer after having been previously held with a 24% margin, brings funding and greater attention to Lismore.

## Paul Joseph

Like many, I was shocked to hear from Paul 'Songman' Joseph via facebook that he has been diagnosed with advanced cancer. Despite the advances we are making in the diagnosis and treatment of some cancers, we are a long way off increasing survival rates in others. Paul is facing a difficult treatment regime with his diagnosis and it's a sign of how loved he is that so many people want to help him.

# Affordable housing remains a vexed issue for local government

Affordable housing remains a vexed issue for local government. No more so than in coastal communities. Many councils aspire to build affordable housing in the community, but accept the reality that rate revenues cannot be stretched to cover the up-front investment costs.

Instead councils can use its planning controls and other policies to encourage the building of affordable housing. A number of these policies are currently under review in Byron Shire.

## Holiday Letting

Short-term letting of residential properties, particularly in Byron Bay, has led to a dramatic reduction in long-term rental properties. This has contributed to the highest rents in the region, and makes it unaffordable for many families and workers to reside in town. The resident population of Byron Bay has actually declined in the last two census counts.

The practice of short-term holiday letting has grown from a seasonal option for local families to an all-year-round business use of residential dwellings. Under the draft Holiday Letting Strategy, a business use will have to be approved according to Council's planning policies. The approval process will help set limits on

holiday letting and ensure that the real costs of complying with safety and development controls are considered. Perhaps this will make it more attractive for many to remain in or return to the long-term rental market.

## Cost of Granny Flats

In 2011, Council resolved to discontinue charging developer contributions for secondary dwellings such as granny flats. This appears to have induced a mini boom, with 278 approvals and 214 completions to date. Developer contributions are paid to Council for roads, water, sewerage and other infrastructure when new development occurs. Generally increasing population without providing infrastructure is to be avoided. The question is whether the additional secondary dwellings have increased housing affordability.

Rents in Byron Shire remain the highest in the region at \$250 per week for a one-bedroom dwelling, exactly the same as it was prior to the policy. Adjusted for inflation, there has been an eight percent reduction, however neighbouring



## Byron Views

by Cr Basil Cameron

Tweed Shire sustained a twelve percent reduction and it has no exemption for contributions policy.

Meanwhile close to \$5 million for infrastructure has been foregone, and it is likely that some of the new dwellings are being used for holiday letting. Without a clear-cut benefit in the search for housing affordability, this is a policy the community cannot afford, especially when it is remembered that it is low income people who

pay the highest cost when roads and other infrastructure fail.

## Rural Granny Flats

The supply of secondary dwellings seems set to expand as Council is preparing an amendment to the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) to allow secondary dwellings in rural areas. One of the key issues around housing affordability in Byron Shire is to ensure that affordable accommodation is also safe. The amendment will allow many currently unapproved structures to be given approval where they can meet the appropriate building standards for housing.

Currently a Development Control Plan (DCP) setting out the standards for secondary dwellings is being prepared for exhibition. While the DCP tackles safety, services and amenity issues, it needs to be mindful of not imposing unnecessary costs that will hinder the expansion of this affordable housing option.

## West Byron

New developments such as that proposed for West Byron have the potential to increase the supply of residential dwellings at affordable prices and rents. However, the reality is often quite different. Many of the new housing developments in Byron

Bay in recent years have now been absorbed into the holiday letting market. Affordability can be influenced by Council's planning controls. In the case of West Byron the LEP, as the primary control on lot sizes and site densities, has already been set by the State government. Council will need to consider a DCP, however it will need to fit with the LEP roadmap.

One option that is rarely used locally is a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) whereby Council and developer agree on a variation to planning controls in exchange for affordable housing. Similarly Byron Council recently approved a medium density development in Ocean Shores under NSW government housing affordability policy that allow for increased densities in exchange for some of the homes being managed by social housing providers at controlled rents.

Perhaps as an acknowledgement of the changing character of our region, it is time for Councils to lobby the NSW government for the authority to levy developers for affordable housing under State Environmental Planning Policy 70 as currently occurs in parts of Sydney.

I can be contacted at: basil.cameron@cr.byron.nsw.gov.au or Facebook

# Simon says...

I had the privilege of addressing the ANZAC Day service at Nimbin. It was an impressive turnout, and unlike the Lismore service, showed lots of respect to the traditional owners, featured the Aboriginal flag and involved a smoking ceremony. I would like to thank Paul Le Bas for his dedication in organising Remembrance Day and ANZAC ceremonies – this year mainly from his hospital bed.

Like many others prompted by the 100th Gallipoli anniversary, I have been looking into my family history. My daughter came across my maternal grandfather's notebook on the National War Memorial website. My grandfather was a Chaplin (sky pilot) in WW1, serving in Egypt, Gallipoli and the Western Front. The notebook was full of the details of the 123 men and boys that he buried, 46 of them at Gallipoli and 77 on the Western Front, including his burying 27 young men in one day, on 5/5/1916.

His notebook starts as a very clear and precise record of the burials. However by the time he was on the Western Front

the record is much more limited and the writing less clear. One can only imagine my grandfather's feelings comforting and encouraging those sick with fear and comforting those who were wounded or dying and finally burying so many young men and boys.

As his biography on the website says, "The pressures of war were beginning to take their toll (and) in November 1917 he acknowledged that he was no longer meeting the standard of work of which he felt he was capable. He attributed the lowering of this standard to the strain of service without a break..."

For me the pain behind these official and somewhat sterile words is all too clear. It has given me a new understanding of military Chaplains' experience and a renewed commitment to work for peace.

I don't believe the Government will appeal the Metgasco decision. I think the government, correctly, was very concerned about the breaking of the Bentley blockade and its financial and human cost. Suspending the licence was probably the best action it could come up with, in a very difficult dilemma.

I note that Peter Henderson is demanding police protection to get back on the Bentley land, otherwise NSW will be a "state of anarchy". Obviously Henderson does not understand democracy. 87% of people in the local government poll voted against CSG, Thomas George only retained his seat by a thread, and a majority of voters voted for candidates opposed to CSG. What Henderson wants is a police state, not a democratic one.

My guess is Hendo is playing up the prospects of the Bentley drilling to increase his compensation claim from the government.

Ideally the community will not have to return to Bentley and the government will see the sense of either buying back the exploration licences or passing legislation allowing them to be cancelled in the public interest.

Lismore City Council at its last meeting passed the biodiversity management strategy (BMS) and the special rate variation (SRV) to fund it. The BMS meets all of the objections that have been previously raised by some in rural area:

- It is voluntary



by Cr Simon Clough, Lismore City Council

- It does not increase the regulation of rural land
- It is incentive not regulation based and rural landowners can be rewarded for continuing to protect high conservation areas by getting rate rebates
- The rate increase on rural land on average is less than \$1 per week

Those opposing the SRV did some very dodgy figures that showed the rate increase to be \$112.50, not the correct \$25.43 average residential rate rise, and then of course proceeded to scare ratepayers with untruths.

Three Councillors have put forward a rescission motion to vote it down. This motion was moved on Tuesday 5th May, and failed.

Contact Simon: phone 0428-886-217, email: [simonclough@internode.on.net](mailto:simonclough@internode.on.net)

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## Abbott attacks poorest Aussies

by Justine Elliot  
MP for Richmond

The latest Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) report on poverty provides yet more evidence the Abbott Liberal National Government should drop its unfair Budget cuts and stop attacking vulnerable Australians.

Disgracefully, at a time when more than a million Australians are living in poverty, the Abbott Liberal National Government is focusing its unfair cuts on the poorest and most vulnerable in our community.

Tony Abbott wants to cut family payments by \$5.5 billion, by kicking families off Family Tax Benefit B once their youngest child reaches six years of age, freezing Family Tax Benefits at current payment levels for two years, revising end of year Family Tax Benefit supplements to their original value and ceasing indexation from 1 July 2015.

Under this government, the

Schoolkids Bonus will be abolished from December 2016. That means more than 1.3 million Australian families will now miss out on much-needed support for their child's education. Eligible families will lose \$410 for every primary school child and \$820 for every secondary school aged child.

The axing of the Schoolkids Bonus means a typical Australian family with two kids in school will be \$15,000 worse off over the course of their children's education.

Tony Abbott still wants to kick young people under 30 off any income support for six months at a time. How does Tony Abbott expect young people to find work if they have no income stream to live off?

Mr Abbott is prepared to force young Australians into a vicious cycle of poverty. It is the cruellest of all the unfair cuts in Tony Abbott's budget and it must not become law. Ripping support away from poor people is bad social policy and bad economic policy.

The Abbott Liberal National

Government will also cut pensions by \$23 billion. This means pensioners will be up to \$80 per week worse off within a decade and a single income family on \$65,000 a year will be around \$6,000 a year worse off.

This is an appalling attack on the living standards of Australians.

Importantly, the CEDA report shows that the contribution to welfare payments as a share of GDP in Australia is "relatively low compared with other OECD countries."

The report also shows that the current distribution of social security payments in Australia has been well targeted with around 42% of benefits going to the lowest 20% of households – compared with the OECD average of around 20%.

The Abbott Liberal National Government should drop its shameful attacks on the poorest Australians.

Labor calls on the Abbott Government to take action on poverty and drop its unfair Budget cuts immediately.

## New Greens leader pro-active on cannabis law reform

Victorian Greens Senator, Dr Richard di Natale has been elected as the Australian Greens new leader when former leader, Christine Milne decided to step down.

Di Natale (pictured) is a medical doctor of Italian heritage, who has worked previously in disadvantaged areas in the Northern Territory and India.

He has campaigned strongly for the liberalisation of



medical marijuana laws. He said during his first media conference as leader, "I've got a medicinal cannabis bill in the parliament that has the

support of members across political spectrum. I want to get things done."

The Senator spoke last week at the Nimbin MardiGrass Hemposium on 'Medicinal Cannabis – Changing the law in Australia'. He is the co-convenor of the recently re-established Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy and Law Reform, and believes that the time has come for Australia to push beyond the

stigma which bans medicinal cannabis.

"To deny effective medication to someone with a terminal illness simply because of stigma is cruel," he said.

But environmental issues remain his focus. "We've got to get climate change back on track. If we do not address climate change as a nation and as a planet, well then everything else is sort of redundant, isn't it?"

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