

Nimbin Youth Film Festival 2015 Screening and Awards Presentation

by Darmin Cameron,
Event organiser

There was a quiet hush in the hall. People spoke in whispered tones. It was dark, and lounge music played softly through the speakers as people patiently made their way to their seats.

The air was thick with expectancy and a subtle tension was present in the room. Today awards and prizes would be announced, today the gathered audience would find out which films made the top ten at the Nimbin Youth Film Festival and share in over \$1600 in prizes and trophies.

Judges Jeni Kendall and Paul Tait of Gaia Films and Paris Naday of Peppercorn Project took their seats. The Mayor of Lismore, Jenny Dowell, there to present the prizes and awards to the young filmmakers, waited for the first film to be screened.

As the 20th Century Fox theme music blasted through the speakers, the whole attention of the audience was drawn to the screen. The festival had begun. Movie after movie rolled across the screen, all made by young people from the Northern Rivers region.

The festival screening started off with two animations that both won awards, a zombie flick by Tom and Declan, *My Neighbour Ate Someone*, a story of loss and friendship, emotional and touching. This was followed by a complex clay-mation hero's journey saga called *Good Old Art - episode one* by Oscar. The judges said this was something they could easily see on television.

Next on the screen a thriller by Jayden called *Lockdown*: what happens at a local high school when the lockdown



Award winners with Mayor Jenny Dowell
Photo: Grant O'Brien

alarm goes off, scary.

A stand-out film of the day was the Skate section entry *A Day to Remember* by Jamahlee and Ariel. This film won the \$300 first prize for Best Skate Film plus a specially designed trophy. The judges said it could have easily competed in the main section of the NYFF.

"A monochrome romp through the wonderful adventure of skate boarding. This is one of the best skateboard films we have seen, with excellent performances by the skateboarders and so well directed as we go on gob-smacking rides and see this sport through the eyes of carefully crafted camera angles and listening to the great music. Very well done and entertaining."

The award for Creativity, Collaboration and Concept went to *The Flipside of Nimbin* by Dick Grayson, a film the judges said "had very good ideas thought up by a creative collective of Nimbin filmmakers. Obviously they put a lot of energy into coming up with very clever scenarios that had us laughing out loud." This film was made by the

Youth Connections Links to Learning crew.

This film also was awarded with 2nd prize \$200 in the Skate Film for their wild and funny skate scene shots filmed in the Nimbin Skate Park.

The Third Prize, sponsored by the Northern Rivers Social Development Council, was awarded to a short film that took many hours of work, a live action animation titled *The Retarded Gamers* by Melissa. Judges said it was "A highly enjoyable, fun fantasy madcap drama. A funny, Pythonesque adventure. We were all very entertained, which is the very point of making films. Good sound, direction, editing and story and amazing ideas."

Second Prize of \$200 and trophy went to *Clay versus Fridge* by Alako, which the judges said was "a film that had a strong narrative, provided plenty of laughs and had a high degree of technical excellence and mastery. Funny, playful, gripping, touching characters with feelings and personality. Very well done in terms of realising what you set out to do in the narrative, plus having high engaging production

values. This is an amazing production that again, would not be out of place at all on television. Brilliant!"

The overall winner of the 2015 Nimbin Youth Film Festival, with a \$300 First Prize and trophy sponsored by the Nimbin School of Arts was awarded to Devina for Javeh Sevnon *The Third Space*, a film described by the judges as "an engaging, entertaining, humorous and deeply touching film with a gentle exploration of the human condition. The camerawork and direction was excellent, with nicely thought-out dolly and overhead 'point of view' shots."

Javeh Sevnon also won the \$200 Sustainability Award, sponsored by the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre, for the film with the strongest sustainability theme.

The audience felt lucky and privileged to see such a collection of entertaining and insightful films, and the young filmmakers happy to have their films on the big screen. With a big audience and big reactions, it was a hoot of an event. Hope to see you there next year.

Nimbin Pool Olympics 2016

by Sue Edmonds

The Nimbin celebration of our Aquatic Centre is on again, on Australia Day, Tuesday 26th January from 10am.

There will be the usual events, the Float Marathon, always hotly contested, with a time limit of 20 minutes, Longest Distance Under Water, currently held by Sally McIntosh (she did the length of the pool probably over 25 metres last year, the big question is can she repeat this feat without bursting a valve), Three-legged racing, won by Sally and Louise G for two consecutive years, the Marathon, a difficult race, four times around the pool, Walking Backwards (a new event last year won by Sue B), Backstroke (Richard is the reigning champion, can he repeat it this year?), Save the Babies, Duck Round-Up, Racing Crocodiles, Noodle Racing, and of course the spectacular, creative and inventive Synchronised Swimming.

The Poolside Fashion Parade is always



One of the fabulous trophies that can be won this year.

eye-catching; the current champions of fashion are Sue E and Michael H. What will you wear when it's time to strut the catwalk, will it be a Hawaiian shirt, a muu muu, a beach towel, swimmers? The judging panel have a difficult task and are open for bribery, a lesson learnt from FIFA.

There will be a sausage sizzle, cakes and drinks available all for a donation of \$10. All money raised goes towards repainting the surface of the pool. This is desperately needed as the surface keeps crumbling and John A, the wonderful pool keeper, spends hours vacuuming up bits of paint and cement which crumble away. The Nimbin Pool Olympics are great way to start Australia Day, with a laugh, a sausage and a splash.

There are fabulous trophies to be won, created by the multi-talented artist, Pauline Ahern who also swims with the synchronised swimming team, Slippery When Wet. This year they will try to wrest the prize from last year's winners, The Feign Jonders who are practising hard to retain their crown.

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Nimbin's colourful new bins

Nimbin's new Street Bin Art Competition artworks were unveiled on 22nd December.

Lismore City Council ran the competition during November, to decorate six new dual waste and recycling bins with 12 new artworks.

Preference was given to people living or working in Nimbin, and several accomplished artists rose to the challenge.

Congratulations to artists Markus Ahedron, Alfredo Bonanno, Sophie Amelia, Kay Sweeney, Julz Davidson and Donna Sharam for having their work selected.

Two works from each of these artists feature on the sides of each bin, and will undoubtedly be featured in many tourist photos.



Council's Waste Education Officer Danielle Hanigan (right) with artists (l-r) Kay Sweeney, Donna Sharam and Markus Ahedron. Photos: Terra Sword

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New community safety strategies



Inspector Susie Johnston addresses the meeting with Mayor Jenny Dowell and organiser Jane Mari

by Bob Dooley

A well-attended meeting was held at Nimbin Town Hall on 10th December to discuss responses to the spate of robberies in the district over several months.

The meeting, organised by café proprietor Jane Mari and a group of concerned residents, was chaired by Lismore mayor Jenny Dowell.

Inspector Susie Johnston provided an analysis of police statistics, which was at variance with the much larger number of thefts known to have occurred. Inspector Johnston lamented this under-reporting to police.

"Please report!" she said. "Otherwise you are assisting the perpetrators to remain undetected, and they'll do it again."

Reports of robberies, or information about suspicious activities, can be made to the

Police Assistance Line on 13-1444, or alternatively to Crimestoppers on 1800-333-000.

Simple crime prevention strategies were outlined, including setting up a neighbours phone tree, and installing inexpensive CCTV systems. Photographing valuable items can assist in recovery of property, and photographing number plates of suspicious vehicles can also be helpful to police.

Nimbin Hook-ups facebook administrator Max Pike gave a report to the meeting of a citizens' initiative in Ubud, Bali utilising a facebook site called 'Ubudwatch', which he has modified to create a closed group on facebook called 'Nimbin Community Safety Information' (CSI).

Local people only can access the page, which is moderated by five people who assess the relevance of the information.

Due to privacy issues, faces and registration numbers cannot be posted, but should be reported directly to local police.

"The site is for community safety information only," said Mr Pike. "It's not just for

crime, but also information about dangerous roads, floods and fires as well."

Inspector Johnston detailed the result of two search warrants executed at a Nimbin property a few days before the meeting, which resulted in the arrest of a 45-year old man and the seizure of a large amount of suspected stolen property, including drugs, weapons, jewellery, rare coins, power tools and musical instruments, described by *The Northern Star* as a "pirate's bounty".

The case against the man, which involves 19 charges of goods in custody, returns to court in early February.

Robbery victims who wish to enquire about the return of their stolen property should contact Snr Constable Mark Banfield at Lismore police, on 6626-0599.

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Early Christmas

Christmas came to the Northern Rivers a little early this year.

Firstly was the news that Porky Worka has resigned from RVC. Great, bad luck it didn't happen earlier.

Then Metgasco agrees to accept the Government's offer of an exorbitant payout.

Thousands celebrate this inevitable news. Just one pitiful voice is heard bleating in the wilderness. That lonely individual is not going to have the satisfaction of seeing our way of life being destroyed, our kids health being compromised, our land values depleted to near unsaleable.

Then the icing on the cake, Kyogle Council will not be forced to amalgamate.

Our gratitude goes out to the thousands of concerned citizens who had the guts and the conscience to stand on the front line and say no! But not everyone can do that for various reasons. However extremely important are the unseen thousands who gave money, food, equipment, rang or wrote to politicians, or supported in other ways. A blockade cannot succeed without this assistance and they are heroes too.

It should be remembered that our real fight was not with Metgasco, it was with the government. They renewed the licenses, they were going to unleash the Riot Squad on old ladies and children, they were going to destroy the whole of the beautiful heritage that is ours. They were going to take from us what we and our forebears have built up in these valleys, that we call home. They were going to take our children's heritage from them. But we said NO and we meant it.

In Parliament, politicians voted strongly in favour of gasification of our area. Judas George is on record in Hansard berating the government for not moving quickly enough, to get all impediments out of Metgasco's way. What a snivelling, spineless mob, the Nationals are!

But wait a minute, now our local misrepresentatives tell us they were on our side all the way. I just don't remember Hogan the Bogan or Judas George coming to Bentley to

support us. The Greens did and Labor did.

So let's be happy and ever vigilant.

Don Durrant, Afterlee

Councillors refuse deferral

It was a sad day for koalas at the 10/12/2015 Tweed Council meeting. A men's shed was approved at the Black Rocks sportsfield only 20m from koala habitat where koalas have been sighted, against the recommendations of koala expert and leading ecologist Dr Steve Phillips.

Council's report reveals that the doors and windows are closed at the men's shed at Pottsville Primary School because the noise and dust affect students. Will the three roller doors and windows be closed so that koalas are not impacted?

Dr Phillips has recently conducted a study which provides evidence that koalas respond adversely to loud noise and has established a link between disturbance and stress-related disease. This study has been peer-reviewed and will be published in January. Crs Longland, Polglase, Youngblutt and Byrne voted not to defer the approval until the findings of this study are published.

The Threatened Species Conservation Society has received both scientific and legal opinion that a challenge in court is appropriate should the Men's Shed DA be approved. At the community access, I raised a number of legal issues on behalf of TSCS and respectfully requested that approval of the Men's Shed DA be deferred until these issues were investigated. Crs Longland, Polglase, Youngblutt and Byrne voted down Mayor Milne's proposed amendments to increase bushfire protection.

The Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study 2015 was also approved. It paints a grim picture of further koala decline, with only half the sites surveyed having significant koala activity. There is little hope for the koalas north of Koala Beach, and to the south koala activity is 'stable'. However, this simply means that activity levels are as low as they were in 2011.

The TCKHS 2011 study found that under Council's watch the Tweed Coast koala population declined by approximately 50% within the previous decade. Decisions being made are set to decimate the remaining koala population.

Please remember these names: Longland, Polglase, Youngblutt, Byrne and vote them out at the next Tweed Shire Council election.

Dave Norris, president
Threatened Species Conservation Society
Inc Pottsville

Tweed councillors walkout

I found myself seated in council chambers in Murwillumbah on Thursday 17/12 at the special meeting convened because Tweed councillors walked out of their regular general meeting in a bit of a huff.

This stemmed from consternation at the Mayor's rescission motion asking for full disclosure of expense claims before reimbursement.

I was expecting at this special meeting some sort of apology for their poor behaviour, or at the very least a handful of receipts to be thrown into the arena, but I was bitterly disappointed.

Four councillors voted against disclosure because, despite being in council for many years, Cr Polglase and Youngblutt are still not fully cognisant of the rules around their expenditure, and junior partners Crs Byrne and Longland also require more instruction.

As the meeting progressed, I was surprised at the hostility directed from the three conservative councillors towards our Mayor. I believe she acted with poise and decorum, albeit a little wordy at times. Or maybe it's understood that it takes a long time for information to filter through to them.

I think she might be right, because both Crs Youngblutt and Polglase told the Mayor during the course of the meeting they didn't understand a word she said.

Their reactions to anything to do with bigger picture politics, such as the 'Mayors for Peace' motion; or furthering council's ethical practices beyond mainstream business to include things like the environment, waste, fair trade etc, were dismissed out of hand.

Mayor Milne's motions tumbled like confetti.

However, there was one small victory for posterity on this day in chambers, when Cr Bagnall's motion to restore parts of Murwillumbah's Tweed River bank to its former glory was unanimously approved.

Trish Mann, Burringba

Reply to Ros

I've lived in, loved in, and grown weed in Nimbin for over twenty years of my incredible life. I don't own land and I'm not a shop owner, but I have sold and watched a lot

of weed sold in my town.

I have cooked breakfast, lunch or dinner for more than half the town and watched beautiful young people grow up in a great community, throughout their schooling and through university, or travelling the world and working in other countries. I am proud of all of them.

Some, I don't even know their names, but I know they live in and were brought up here in Nimbin, like my own sons and daughters, who I am so proud of.

I am proud of Nimbin's elders and the laneway boys who have helped protect me and this town. People like Michael Hairyrocks and Andrew Cabonara who have done so much, and continue to do so. There are a myriad of other people I love and admire here, too many to mention, and I don't care what fancy letters they have after their names.

So I am sorry, Rosemary Paris, that your letter to *The Echo* (November) wasn't nice, your English was atrocious and your facts were wrong in your attempt to defame some of Nimbin's beautiful people.

Name and address withheld

Star Woes

I recently went to see *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. I was disappointed. There was a powerful female character, for whom I was grateful, but of course, she was young and beautiful. An action movie heroine who looks over 25 would not do.

This movie was a story of goodies and baddies fighting each other, with guns, bombs and swords. Many lives were lost. Just like in real life, I don't know what the baddies did to deserve this label. Films like this one perpetuate the idea that some people are good, and others, they are bad, and it's us versus them, and violence is the answer. It was in the movie.

When will all the old and middle aged men in films be balanced by equal screen time of old and middle aged women? If we addressed this gender imbalance, perhaps then, we would see society placing equal emphasis on attributes more often associated with femininity, such as the ability to communicate feelings, compassion for those less fortunate, and meditateness.

Lochkey, The Channon

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Passing of Strider: The taming power of the small

by Wendy Sarkissian

Former Nimbin identity and passionate amateur naturalist, Strider, died on 15th December at his home at the Solar Village, Humpty Doo, NT, after a long journey with cancer. He was 72.

Strider was an eccentric and consummate free thinker with an unwavering commitment to diverse causes. And boy, did he love to party. Meteorological or cosmic events were always an excuse for celebration. He took great pride in being 'the last man standing' on many such occasions.

Independent, self-taught and fiercely defensive of his unconventional views on fire ecology, climate change and bush regeneration, Strider called

himself a 'naturalist' in the style of American academic Aldo Leopold. Local, small-scale observations were his hallmark. I have seen him stop his truck on a country road simply to remove one offending weed that caught his eye. Or, in the dry season, in the days before computers, he would make a detailed inventory of flying insects jamming his manual typewriter as a measure of land health.

Global matters also caught his attention, as he sought to bridge science and activism. Despite losing all his research materials in a devastating fire in 1991, he continued his own version of a 'longitudinal study' of the impacts of fire exclusion from the Solar Village land for 35 years. That Solar Village policy – a founding

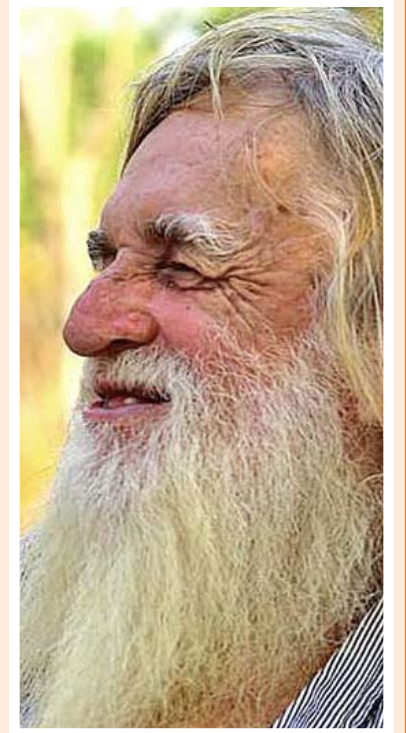
principle of the village founders well before Strider moved there in the late 1970s – resulted in remarkable rejuvenation of springs, soil, understorey vegetation and wildlife. I lived there for a year and witnessed that rejuvenation first-hand.

Strider was also deeply interested in environmental psychology and environment behavioural studies and had a sharp sense of territoriality in the manner of Austrian zoologist, ethologist, and ornithologist, Konrad Lorenz, who, with Leopold, was one of his heroes. In 1977, I observed him having a long and intense non-verbal conversation with a chimpanzee at the Adelaide Zoo. (The chimpanzee wanted Strider to hand over his hat.)

Strider's commitment to 'the small' was underpinned by a strong commitment to, and respect for Indigenous people, their rights and culture. As I discussed in last month's NGT, he was a founder member of Camp Concern, a peaceful residential protest camp established to oppose the Ranger Uranium mine. In October, Strider organised a celebration at Kakadu for the fortieth anniversary of Camp Concern's founding in October 2015.

Celebrating Strider's life

A celebration of Strider's life will be held on 23rd January at the Solar Village, Humpty Doo, NT. Please contact Wendy Sarkissian at: wendy@sarkissian.com.au for more information.



Seeking justice for Whian Whian

by Dailan Pugh,
North East Forest Alliance

In 2013 the communities of Terania Creek and Whian Whian were galvanised into action when the Forestry Corporation began logging a private property located on the ridge between them, next to the Nightcap National Park. They knew it was an important area for Koalas and other threatened species, yet nothing was being done to protect them.

What started as an effort to negotiate with the landowners and the Forestry Corporation to get them to apply the required protections for threatened species, resulted in a month of community angst and blockades, with intimidation, assaults and arrests of forest protectors.

In September 2015 the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) found the Forestry Corporation guilty of constructing an illegal road through what were meant to be exclusion zones around a Koala high use tree and eleven threatened plants. They fined them \$11,000 for two of the offences.

Now the Forestry Corporation are refusing to pay and the EPA say they can't make them. The community has been denied justice.

It is worth reviewing what led to this.

On 19th September 2013 the Forestry Corporation were stopped by an adjacent landowner from using an access road through his property in an effort to force them to apply the legally required prescriptions for Koalas, Marbled Frogmouths, Sooty Owl and Masked Owl that had been recorded by the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) in the logging area.

In response the Forestry Corporation marked an alternative road. NEFA found it passed through 8 Koala high use trees, 3 endangered

Slender Marsdenia plants and over 60 vulnerable Red Bopple Nuts, all of which legally required 20m exclusion zones around them.

That afternoon a meeting of over 70 residents in Whian Whian Hall called for the logging to cease due to poor environmental stewardship. NEFA wrote to the Chief Executive Officer of the EPA, Barry Buffier, asking him to immediately impose a Stop Work Order to stop the road being constructed through the threatened species.

The EPA scoffed at the suggestion they would stop work, and spent the next two days wandering around the area with the Forestry Corporation and two botanists identifying an alternative route.

As the community protested, under police guard the Forestry Corporation constructed a new road on the afternoon of Wednesday 25th September. They all knew that threatened species were in the way and that what they were doing was illegal.

Due to the strong community pressure, the landowners agreed to a community survey being undertaken the next weekend. With expert help, and under supervision by the Forestry Corporation, the survey identified that the new road had killed two Slender Marsdenia and severely damaged a third, as well as passing through what should have been exclusion zones for two Koala high use trees.

Across the logging area, the survey found 12 Koala high use trees, along with numerous threatened plants, many of which had roading and logging within what should have been their buffer zones. An earlier road was found to have been constructed through the Critically Endangered Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia.

Logging continued for two



Steep road through koala exclusion area (right); location of an endangered slender marsdenia tree (above) Photos: D.Pugh

weeks, with delays due to forest protests. At one stage two forest protectors were grabbed by the loggers and pinned to the ground for 45 minutes until police arrived and arrested them.

Tragically, on Wednesday 9th October 2013 a Forestry Corporation worker was injured by a falling branch where logging was occurring. When the rescue helicopter landed nearby, there was no other transport, so one of the forest protectors drove the paramedics to the accident site. Despite this, the police publicly, and falsely, accused the forest protectors of hindering the ambulance.

That night two forest protectors were attacked and bashed by loggers while asleep in their tents. The forester died the next day. Logging continued until Friday, but out of respect for the forester, protests were stopped.

After logging finished, NEFA assessed the new road and found it had been bulldozed through what should have been 20m exclusion zones for two Koala high use trees and 24 threatened plants (four Slender Marsdenia, 12 Arrow-head Vines, and eight Red Bopple Nuts). Their habitat had been significantly degraded. Two Slender Marsdenia and one

Arrow-head vine had been killed. Most of these had been identified and tagged with tape prior to road construction, so the Forestry Corporation knew they were breaking the law when they bulldozed through their exclusion zones.

There was a two-year window of opportunity for the EPA to legally pursue this matter, and they used most of this time up before they issued the Forestry Corporation with two Penalty Notices (each with a fine of \$5,500) for constructing their track through what should have been 20m exclusion zones for a Koala High Use Tree and the Endangered vine Slender Marsdenia.

They were issued an Official Caution for violating buffers of four Red Bopple Nuts, with violations of six Arrow-head Vine buffers noted. This is half the breaches documented by NEFA.

The EPA refused to investigate NEFA's detailed complaint about the remapping of endangered rainforest as cleared land so a road could be constructed through it.

When the EPA announced their fines in September 2015, the Forestry Corporation stated they intended to vigorously dispute the fines on the grounds that their



intent "was discussed with EPA staff on site during the operation". In other words, the EPA knew they were going to construct the illegal road and, at best, did nothing to stop them.

Given that the EPA had almost used up their two years for legal action, the Forestry Corporation simply bided their time before telling the EPA that they would not pay the fines and would rather dispute them in court. By then, the EPA claim, it was too late to defend the fines in court.

Yet again the Forestry Corporation have got away with illegal logging, and the EPA have proven to be reluctant and inept regulators.

So while the community's actions in trying to stop the Forestry Corporation constructing their illegal road have been vindicated, it came at a great and unnecessary environmental and social costs. This could have been avoided if the EPA had stopped work back in 2013 until a legal action was identified and community concerns were addressed.

The EPA refused to investigate complaints about the construction of another road through endangered Lowland Rainforest and threatened plants in the same operation. In March 2015 NEFA again found the EPA had approved the Forestry Corporation's bulldozing of illegal roads through endangered Lowland Rainforest and a grove of 26 vulnerable Onion Cedars in Cherry Tree State Forest.

The Forestry Corporation are getting away scot-free with brazenly flouting the logging rules and the EPA are helping them. This is not the example the Government should be setting. There needs to be an independent inquiry into this failed regulation.

Premier Baird needs to intervene to deliver justice for the local communities who were traumatised by the Forestry Corporation constructing an illegal road under police guard, and direct his agencies to ensure that both the spirit and the letter of the logging laws are complied with.



by Cr Jenny Dowell
Lismore City Council

From the mayor's desk

some parking in the adjoining Western carpark, modify designs for the frontages of the buildings and accede to some other requests. Approval of the development application was therefore deferred pending the amended plans being lodged and the community notified.

The General Manager has been given delegated authority to approve the amended land if they are lodged within 120 days. If not, or if the information provided is not satisfactory, the application will come back to a Council meeting for determination. The recommendation was carried unanimously.

Extraordinary meeting

At the extraordinary meeting on December 15, there were three items on the Agenda. One was the North Lismore Plateau planning proposal.

Readers may recall that the proposal had to be readvertised with the environmental protection zones as originally included. There had been a court finding against the State Government's requirement to remove the zones after advertisement.

The council adopted the planning proposal and resolved (8/1 with one councillor out of the room and one absent) to send it to the Minister requesting him to make the plan as soon as possible.

The second item was also of long standing and involved requests by the developers to modify some consent conditions for a rural residential development on Cameron Road. Council resolved 7/3 (one councillor absent) to approve the modifications and contribute \$96,000 towards a superior road design that would be more appropriate on a challenging section of Cameron Road.

Traffic

The December Traffic Advisory Committee minutes will not be adopted by Council until our February meeting but one item of interest to Nimbin readers will be the concerns of Blue Knob Hall committee members about speed and road safety on Blue Knob Road between Suffolk and Noble Roads.

The recommendation is for Roads and Maritime Services to assess and determine the most appropriate speed limit on that section of the road and for Council design staff to look at ways of improving sight lines at the entrance to the hall.

New bins

Just before the Christmas break, council unveiled the new look street recycling and waste bins with their great art work. Congratulations to artists Markus Ahedron, Alfredo Bonanno, Sophie Amelia, Kay Sweeney, Julz Davidson and Donna Sharam for your fabulous designs. The feedback has been glowingly positive so I think we'll see some of the bins featuring in tourist photos going all around the world.

Also just before the break, council announced the Faces of Nimbin tourism campaign aimed at telling the stories of some of the locals who make Nimbin such a special place.

Good news

The end of 2015 brought some several pieces of positive news for Lismore Council and our community. Firstly, our bicycle Christmas tree was widely acclaimed and was announced as being in the top five of sustainable Christmas trees in the world- and the only one from Australia. Just in case you hadn't heard the story, the tree was the brainchild of Dan Kubelka from our Sign Shop and was made by our staff in their own

time at no cost to residents as the staff's gift to the community. The children of staff helped paint it and Nickel Energy loaned us the solar panels to light it at night. Council plans to store the tree until next Christmas and there are thoughts of erecting it in different locations in the future. I wonder if Nimbin would like to host it one Christmas???

Gallery

The second bit of good news was the announcement that council has been granted \$2.85 million by the Federal Government for our long awaited new Lismore Regional Gallery. The current gallery has not met requirements since it as temporarily established in an old bank-legal office building more than 60 years ago. The new gallery will be constructed by repurposing the old C block at the Conservatorium-Library site in Keen Street.

Metgasgone

Thirdly we received the news that Metgasco shareholders had adopted the recommendation from its board to accept the \$25 million buy back of the Petroleum Exploration Licences that covered our local government area and region. This wonderful news means that Coal Seam Gas and other forms of gas mining are no longer a threat to our water, air, earth, economy, tourism or social cohesion. I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has united to oppose this invasive and destructive industry. I now hope that the rifts that have split some long standing family friendships can be mended.

Amalgamations

Our fourth and final piece of good news came when we were told that the Northern Rivers

councils were not to be forced to merge. As readers may recall, Kyogle had been recommended to amalgamate with either Lismore or Richmond Valley. Fortunately, that has not eventuated so all three councils can breathe a sigh of relief. Congratulations Danielle Mulholland for her strong leadership of Kyogle Council during this challenging time. Other councils in Sydney and elsewhere are now dealing with either agreed upon mergers or forced amalgamations in 2016. As a consequence, it is likely that the 10 September 2016 elections will be postponed until 27 March 2017.

Australia Day

Council will hold this year's Australia Day awards and Citizenship ceremony at City Hall at 8.30am on 26 January. Good Times readers might like to nominate someone for Lismore's Australia Day awards. There is a variety of categories and you can nominate someone for more than one. It's easy and a lovely way to recognise the wonderful people in our community who make our lives better or who've excelled in their chosen field. Nominations close Jan 8.

www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/news/page.asp?p=DOC-VIX-26-01-72

Ambassador

Our Australia Day Ambassadors for 2016 is presenter, author and journalist Liz Deep-Jones. Liz was first seen on SBS TV's Toyota World Sports and has interviewed many amazing people from Nelson Mandela to the Dalai Lama and Prince Albert of Monaco. She has also written the Lucy Zeezou teen novels. We are very excited to welcome her to Lismore and to hear her story on 26 January.

Don't forget that you can contact me via FB, email: jenny.dowell@lismore.nsw.gov.au or phone 0402651394.

Welcome to a new year. I hope you and your loved ones had a great break over the holidays and are looking forward to a satisfying and healthy new year. 2016 is sure to bring many challenges and I look forward to telling you about those that relate to Lismore City Council as the year progresses. Firstly, though, allow me to give a report of a few decisions from December.

December council meetings

Unusually Council held two meetings in December. In the first regular meeting, there were two items pertaining to Nimbin.

The first was the development application for a Telstra phone tower on Falls Road. Having viewed the site and seen the 30 metre tower simulated by a cherry picker, some councillors had concerns about the visual impact but after some debate, the tower was approved 7/3 with one councillor absent.

The second item on the agenda was the development application for the Cubes tourist and visitor accommodation at 80-82 Cullen Street. Again some Councillors had visited the site and shared staff concerns on several issues. The developer has indicated a willingness to reduce the number of units, undertake works to formalise

drill. Sincerest thanks to all of you in our community who contributed to this great victory.

Lismore City Council ended 2015 with some great news. Firstly, Council was successful in its grant application for \$2.8 million for the renovation/redesign of C block (opposite the library) for our new art gallery. Council is employing the architect who did such an impressive job with the renovation of City Hall.

It will be such a relief to see the gallery and its extensive collection out of its current, totally inadequate premises. I'm really looking forward to the boost the new gallery will bring to our fantastic local arts industry.

The gallery site will also include a piazza or central square which will give a real heart to our city, providing an amazing space for public gatherings and events.

Lismore City Council is not to be amalgamated with Kyogle or any other local council. This has been wonderful news. I'm sure Councillors and staff were dreading the possibility of endless disruption and huge financial burden amalgamation imposes. I and many other remain totally unconvinced that amalgamation has significant benefits, apart from reducing the number of councils the state government has to deal

with.

The news from the Paris Climate Change conference was heartening in many ways and emphasised to me the critical nature of community and local government sustainability initiatives. I feel strongly that this is a change that the world has to have, and it needs to come from the grassroots up. I spent an hour or so at the Sustainable Nimbin workshop (November 22) which was a hive of activity, very ably led by Nat Meyer. You can locate the new Sustainable Nimbin draft plan at: nmc.org.au/pub/index.php/sustainability/introduction

Your feedback on the plan is very much welcomed.

Seems to me it's well and truly time that the Lismore community had another look at its sustainability and set some more goals in terms of reducing greenhouse gas reduction. With various parts of the world experiencing endless floods, tornados, unprecedented droughts and bushfires, it could not be clearer that the world is experiencing the extreme weather impacts of climate change.

Wishing everyone a healthy, happy and prosperous 2016.

Remember, you can contact me anytime on 0428-886-217 or at: simonclough@internode.on.net

Simon says...



by Cr Simon Clough,
Deputy Mayor LCC

Metgasgone!! was the word oft repeated when the Metgasco AGM decided to accept the government's \$25 million offer to clean up its mess, accept the suspension of its Petroleum Exploration Licences and leave the Northern Rivers. Gasfield Free, protected by community.

The relief across the Northern Rivers was enormous, especially as the shareholder vote was much closer than anyone anticipated. I'm still trying to get my head around the reality of the government paying Metgasco \$25 million not to

The farce awakens

Return of the Loon

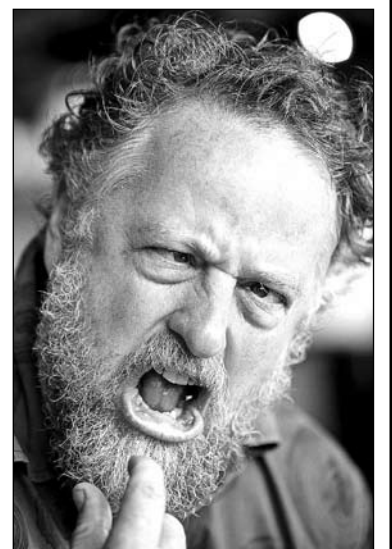
by Laurence Axtens

When I used to play sport, my own players used to punch me in the head. They thought I played better once the red mist of the berserker had descended across my eyes. They were probably right. It was rugby league – it is a substitute for tribal war. Former Australian half back Tommy Radonikis was famous for asking his team mates to punch him 'til he was deranged with anger before a game.

Of course I didn't ask to be punched in the head – it's possible I was simply fist high. I certainly was pre-communicative – I don't recall ever popping my head out of the scrum to say "hey chaps do you think you could desist from thumping me in the face. Thanks ever so much."

Pain isn't my only trigger, I don't take kindly to lots of things; sticks, stones and name calling really boils my blood.

I've spent a lifetime monitoring my violence triggers, working out what makes Dr Heckled into Mr Tan-your-hide.



All of us who grew up under corporal punishment and who played violent games know below the civil mask lies something dark, sudden and dangerous. That moment where our self-respect and others' respect for us evaporates under our own desperate desire to be respected.

This is the actual battle line of domestic violence. Perhaps the fragile mind should crack or fracture and violence escape onto the unsuspecting victim.

New year, new approach to drugs



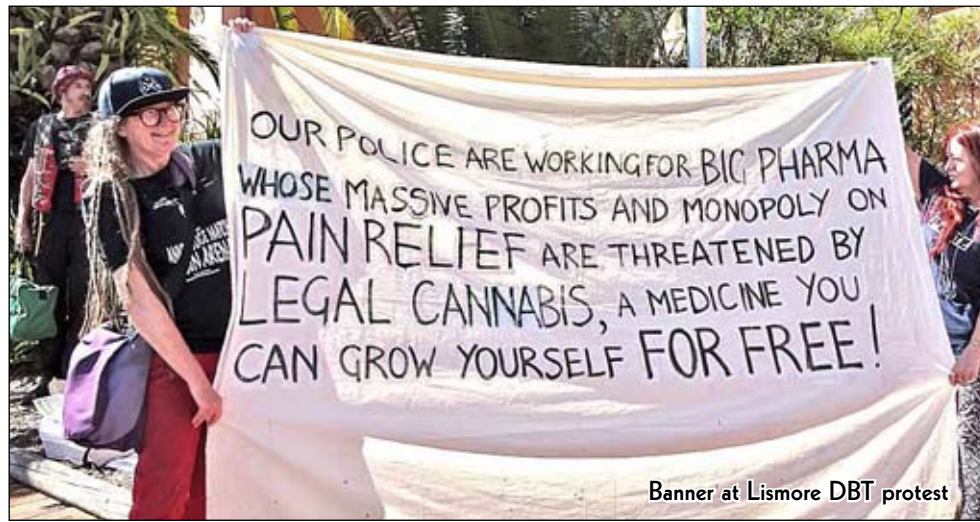
Green Scene

Mehreen Faruqi
Greens NSW MP
Spokesperson for drugs and harm minimisation.

It's undeniable that the 'war on drugs' has comprehensively failed. It has failed parents, families, young people, and it has failed the taxpayer. We need to change course urgently.

Australia still spends billions annually on policing and imprisonment associated with illicit drugs. In NSW, hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on sniffer dog operations each year. However, despite these invasions of privacy, in the vast majority of cases there is a false identification and even when drugs are found, they are in very small amounts. This results in the arrests of a large number of people who use drugs rather than drug dealers or manufacturers.

Expert organisations such as the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation, the NSW Bar Association's



Banner at Lismore DBT protest

Criminal Law Committee and Australia 21, all recommend that resources should be diverted away from detection, prosecution and incarceration towards prevention, education, social services and mental healthcare to reduce both demand and the harm caused by drug abuse in our society.

The world is rapidly moving away from failed drug policies. Most famously, Portugal decriminalised personal possession of drugs in 2001 and their experience has conclusively demonstrated massive improvements – more people in treatment, fewer drug overdoses and less crime. Some states in the USA, both progressive (Oregon, Washington) and conservative (Colorado, Alaska) have even voted popularly to move away from the prohibitionist model for cannabis, with Colorado directing \$50 million of tax

revenue into their education system and public programs aimed at preventing, treating, and regulating cannabis misuse.

Recent tragic incidents of drug-related deaths and overdoses at music festivals is another indication of why we need a different focus – and quickly – to prevent needless loss of young lives.

But, unfortunately, the reaction of NSW Premier and Deputy Premier to these incidents indicates their persistence with an outdated and dangerous approach to drug policy based on the same old thinking of 'cracking down' on drugs. What will this crackdown lead to – more of the same war on drugs? More policing, drug dogs and security? All of these tactics have been unsuccessful.

The current Government has more or less ruled out the most sensible first response to these deaths, one that has been proven to work around

the world. Pill-testing at music festivals can identify unsafe pills that can then be discarded. Pill testing does reduce the risk of harm and also provides an opportunity to provide support, information and education to people about the adverse effects of using drugs.

Admittedly, there is no silver bullet or perfect remedy, but there are tested and proven drug policies based on reducing harm and minimising risk that treat drug use as a health and social issue instead of stigmatising and criminalising people who use drugs.

Of course, the first step towards this change will be admitting that the prohibitionist and punitive 'law and order' model isn't working. Let's make sure that in 2016, we are big enough to accept this and embrace a new approach that improves safety, provides treatment and saves lives.

Penalty rates to get the chop

by Janelle Saffin

There has been more worrying talk over Christmas about the Liberal Nationals' planned cuts to penalty rates. More than 4.5 million Australian families rely on penalty rates to pay their bills and make ends meet. These cuts will disproportionately impact those living and working in regional areas, such as ours.

Across the Northern Rivers and throughout the Page electorate, cuts to penalty rates will equate to a real loss of over \$23 million a year in income. This represents an average of 17.3 per cent loss in take home pay for the average worker in our community.

But that's not all. Over the Christmas holiday break Mr. Turnbull, supported by the Nationals, slipped in further cuts to education services and increases to childcare costs. They allowed a 40 percent rise in profits to Aged Care corporations whilst care for our elderly, yes our families, decreases. Now they plan to chop penalty rates as well. The Nationals know that cuts to wages will hurt those in the bush most, yet continue to fall in behind their Liberal party bedfellows.

A better way to get more money into our economy would be for those private Australian companies and the larger multinationals to be made to pay their fair share of tax, just like most Australian workers do with every pay



packet. No matter their leader, the Liberals and Nationals would rather tax hardworking Australians and pensioners with a 15% increased GST rather than tackle multinational tax avoidance.

The GST is a regressive and unfair tax that hits everybody, but hits low and middle-income families and pensioners the hardest. Labor will not support an increase to the GST, because increasing the tax would inflict the heaviest punishment on those least able to afford it. Instead, Labor has a fair and better plan to make multinationals pay their fair share of tax.

As Labor's representative in Page, I want to continue the important fight against Turnbull's Abbot-style harsh

cuts to health and education, and The Nationals' plans to raise the GST while cutting worker's weekend penalty rates. I will stand with community and fight to protect local workers' pay and conditions.

I'm proud of my proven track record of delivering for our region, including record funding for our hospitals, a safer Pacific Highway, upgrading of every local school, much-needed community and sporting infrastructure, and standing with the community against the pro-CSG National Party aligned proponents.

Our region cannot afford another three years of The Nationals' Kevin Hogan breaking election promises, Abbott style budgets that cut frontline services, or the Liberal-Nationals' plans to raise the GST to 15% on everything.

The Nationals are a bitter disappointment to our communities, especially in the regions where we do not have equitable access to services, transport, jobs, health, and education. This Abbott/ Turnbull government are weakening Medicare, making savage cuts to education, and are making it harder for our elderly and pensioners to make ends meet.

And now they want to cut the take home pay of our lowest paid workers. Not good enough Mr. Hogan.

Janelle Saffin, Federal Labor candidate for Page: jasaffin@nor.com.au or phone 0418-664-001.

Safe and Happy Holidays

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