

Peace bike ride welcome rally in Canberra

by Benny Zable

James Fuller from Tuntable Falls community, who organises the annual Nude Bike Rides, represented Nimbin and the North Coast region on the ICAN Nobel Peace Prize bike ride from Melbourne to Canberra recently.

During the bike ride, they communicated to many communities along the way and shared the carrying of the "Alfred" Nobel Peace Prize medallion. This was awarded to ICAN for successfully campaigning in getting a majority of UN member States to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year.

On the last stretch of the bike ride, James was knocked off his bike by a careless car driver. He luckily escaped with only loss of skin to his arms and leg.

Last year in New York, I marched with the Australian contingent of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) from Bryant Park to the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza near the UN, with people from around the world rallying to call on UN member states to sign the treaty. This was ratified by the UN, except for the nuclear



weapon states and Australia who abstained from signing. ICAN, which began in an office in Carlton Melbourne, started this successful international collective effort.

On 19th September, I went by train from Lismore to Sydney Central and boarded the mini-bus to Canberra as part of the ICAN Rally/Protest. The mini-bus was organised and sponsored by WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).

We arrived 15 minutes late at the Peace Bell – but to hear the women's choir singing the

final verse to a hymn and the sound of the Peace Bell, to greet the ICAN Nobel Peace Prize brought to Canberra from Melbourne by the bike riders.

After greetings to the bike riders and the assembled by former Labor Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Robert Tickner and others, we marched onto Parliament House where police stopped and ushered us away to the lawns in front of the National Parliament.

There we were addressed again by Robert Tickner, then variously by Anthony

Albanese, the ALP deputy; Greens Canberra candidate Tim Hollo; Auntie Sue Hassledine, a senior Kokatha woman from Ceduna; and Dr. Sue Wareham.

There were about 100-150 people, including Peter Garrett, present for this historic gathering. Auntie Sue Hassledine, who has addressed the UN, told us of the dire effects of the many nuclear "tests" which took place over her country, and Robert Tickner made an appeal for a broadly-based political unity to get Australia to sign the ICAN-initiated UN ban on nuclear weapons.

A petition will be drafted up soon for people visiting the Nimbin Environment Centre to sign, urging our government to sign on to end the billions being wasted on this most threatening industry to life on our planet Earth.

Check out the ICAN website: www.icanw.org/au

At the UN, as Donald Trump pushed his disastrous agenda in the General Assembly, a high-level ceremony for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also took place at UNGA.

Follow the live-stream on twitter: #nuclearban

Notices

Nimbin Hemp Embassy AGM 2018

11am on Saturday 1st December 2018 at the Town Hall, 45 Cullen Street, Nimbin. Nominations for an elected position on the executive committee must be received by the president at least one week before the meeting.

MardiGrass Organising Body AGM 2018

12pm on Saturday 1st December 2018 at the Town Hall, 45 Cullen Street, Nimbin. Nominations for an elected position on the executive committee must be received by the secretary at least one week before the meeting.

Australian HEMP Party AGM 2018

2pm on Saturday 1st December 2018 at the Town Hall, 45 Cullen Street, Nimbin.

Nimbin Health & Welfare Association Inc AGM

Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 7th November, 2018, 4 – 6pm at Bottlebrush Studio (rainbow building opposite Oasis Café). A Celebration will be held after the AGM. Become a member for only \$3 and support this vibrant community organisation. RSVP 6689-1709 or call in and see us.

Annual Girl Guide Luncheon at Tweed Heads

The Annual Guiding Luncheon will be held at Tweed Heads on Wednesday 24th October at 10.30am (NSW time). All persons who have been associated with guiding either past or present, local or interstate are invited to come along. Parents most welcome. Entry by gold coin donation with lunch provided and a guest speaker from the mobility and ambulance. Contact Ann on (07) 5524-1454 or Elaine (07) 5536-2428.

Al-Anon family groups

Is your life being affected by somebody else's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups can help. Meetings held in your district. For more information: www.al-anon.org.au or phone 1300-252-666.

We call it black money. It's the serious coin that unscrupulous politicians receive from corporate giants in the lead-up to any given election.

The two corporate parties and financially dodgy parties like One Notion, whose leader has already spent time in prison for financial impropriety relating to party funds, are perfect examples.

Our political landscape is manipulated by cash – fake social media campaigns are purchasable, as are advertorials supporting the corrupted parties, which are the norm not the exception at election time.

Our whole system is so bought and sold behind closed doors and every time any party tries to fix our electoral donation system – they're blocked and demonised.

And if you try to get support from the community, white money, no-one in ordinary business wants to donate because it might alienate some of their potential patrons. Openly Green businesses can lose National party buyers, and vice versa.

Considering these big corporates undermine local businesses, grow fat on huge government contracts



Revenge of the Loon
by Laurie Axtens

and either fund or are part of the coal industry driving climate change we need this fixed.

So how do we fix it? Well, we need to be brave and openly support the parties and candidates committed to complete transparency for political donations, we need to openly support candidates who place realistic limits on donations and who open their books to ensure that there is no black money coming in to bolster their campaigns.

And we don't need to support candidates who suddenly seem to benefit from dubious personal smear campaigns and huge TV campaigns.

It will all become obvious over the next six months.

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From the mayor's desk

by Cr Isaac Smith

I was really pleased to see an increase in numbers at this year's Nimbin Show.

This is a big thumbs-up to the organisers for putting together an interesting event, as we live in a time where most local shows are in decline. As always the people of Nimbin like to buck the trend and head in a different direction, so well done to the whole community for being a part of its success.

How good is it to see the beloved Nimbin pool getting a fresh coat of love this past month? It is really exciting to know that council can maintain this pool and provide this service in Nimbin, both now and into the future.

The maintenance of the Nimbin pool is in our long term financial plan, so there will be more money spent in coming years to make sure it is improved and stays as a wonderful community asset. Thank you to the friends of the Nimbin pool for their continued support and willingness to work with council to keep Nimbin cool as the weather warms up.

Most people haven't heard about the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation of Councils, or JO as we call it, but it is an opportunity for our six councils in Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Ballina, Byron Bay and Tweed to show that we can work together.



Nimbin Pool last summer

Councils are plagued by parochialism, which is understandable. We are all very different communities and we need our identities to remain distinct. But the ways we have worked together in the past, such as on water management or library services, should now be able to come together under this new umbrella. The key will be looking into what other things we can do to build a stronger region.

We actually need to start thinking more like a region, with each local government area having its own strengths. Richmond Valley and Kyogle have the strongest agricultural and transport logistics opportunities. Ballina and Byron have the major airport and tourism. Tweed is our gateway into Qld and Lismore is the professional services and health hub, whilst also being the only council area to have strong and vibrant villages.

These are of course generalisations, but we



need to start thinking more regionally when we look at dealing with the state and federal government, as parochialism will only cost our region in the long run. A united approach, celebrating our differences, reduces competition for the same supports at all levels of government. These sorts of measures do not get a lot of attention from residents and local groups as they don't always align with a very local agenda. It requires everyone to have a more common sense approach to what is possible. And common sense, as they say...

One real benefit to the JO,

if done well, is our ability to show the other levels of government what good governance looks like. We have all been sickened by the petty politics shown at the federal government level over the past 10 years. And it has been a long time since people cared about state politics in any meaningful way. So can we do better?

I really hope so. I have seen the negativity and poor behaviour creeping into local government over my 10 years and I can only hope that there is a better way. So it is my firm belief that there is a better way and every opportunity, every structure we use (such as the JO) is an opportunity for something better. In the end you can only get out what you put in.

Let's hope that you as a community and us as your representatives can do more to make the future a little more respectful and common sense for the good of our region.



Kyogle Council notebook

not far from where I live. It was great to go along on the day and welcome the cast and crew to our locality.

It was exciting to see the cars performing and how much goes into a television commercial. Hopefully, this will help to further highlight all the great attractions that we have to offer in the area.

On a more official note, as Chair of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation that represents all the councils in the Northern Rivers, I was called to Sydney to meet with the State Government and attend a workshop by Local Government New South Wales, after fleshing out our regional priorities and preparing a statement of regional priorities.

I also met with the Premier, Deputy Premier, and Ministers to let them know all about Kyogle and what we need up here. We may be a long way from Sydney, but I think they all know where Kyogle is by now.

At the local level, I hope everyone has seen the commencement of the greening of Kyogle's main street. It's hoped the project will be finished by early October. In future years, the trees will grow and in the heat of summer the main street will be a shadier, cooler place than at present. I think it will also make Kyogle a much more attractive town where visitors and locals alike will meet and enjoy its many attractions.

I would like to congratulate all the

service clubs involved in the installation of the new outdoor gyms at Kyogle. The new equipment helps to contribute to healthy and active lifestyles and I encourage everyone to go and have a look and perhaps, if you're feeling adventurous, try out some of the equipment.

Mention should be made of the new committee heading up the Kyogle and District Chamber of Commerce: President, Mel Serone; Vice-President, Vanessa Wernowski; Secretary, Meghan Hogan; and Treasurer, Mandy Boocock.

Huge thanks to the new committee and to the retiring committee who have done so much to promote business throughout the district. I'm very aware of the important role that local businesses play in our economy and Council will continue to work closely with the Chamber to support and promote a healthy and vibrant business sector.

Next month looks no less busy than the last, so I expect that there will be much to report again next month. The Kyogle Show starts on 5th October, and I hope that I'll see you all there.

On a final note, a special welcome to any new residents and ratepayers to our local government area. It really is a beautiful part of the world.

If I can do anything to help you settle in or you have any questions or comments at any time, please feel free to contact me on 0438-931-425.

by Cr Danielle Mulholland, Mayor

Once again, it's been a very hectic month with lots of social events and a raft of official meetings.

I was pleased to see the Woodenbong All Day Garage Sale and Market being held, and to attend the Tabulam Medieval Festival.

Then it was off to the My Mayor Rules cook-off at the Bangalow Food Festival to promote our area with its high quality food products. While we didn't win, we did come in second, beating Byron and Richmond Valley and only just missing out to Lismore. We'll get them next year!

A big thank you to Debbie McQueen from Gateway Fine Foods for her champion efforts on the day. She prepared some truly innovative and tasty dishes under challenging circumstances.

For those of you who aren't aware, the Supercheap Auto group filmed their latest television commercial in Kyogle,

Refugee policy comes to Kyogle politics in the pub



Refugee policy in Australia has been a vexed issue for years. Australia's commitment to human rights has been questioned – at home and internationally – current policies of offshore processing and mandatory detention have left hundreds of people in limbo and there is no end in sight.

There is an enormously high cost on those detained. And there is an enormously high cost to the Australian taxpayer.

Kyogle Politics in the Pub is pleased to be hosting two speakers on this issue.

Ian Rintoul (pictured above left) is a founding member of the Refugee Action Coalition, campaigning for a humanitarian refugee policy and against mandatory detention and offshore processing, and for the closure of Manus and Nauru. Ian has visited Manus Island three times, most recently last month.

Nathan Willis (pictured) is a Lawyer and Registered Migration Agent. Nathan's first legal client was an Iraqi asylum seeker on Manus Island in 2014. That man remains on Manus Island today.

Nathan will speak about the current legal framework of Refugee /Humanitarian visas and how better humanitarian outcomes are possible.

These two speakers have well-informed views on this issue which has long been divisive in Australia. Regardless of personal views, this is an opportunity to learn more about the issue in a respectful environment.

Australia could do with more civil disagreement rather than the nonsense that masquerades as public debate.

Kyogle Politics in the Pub is on Sunday 4th November, 3-5pm at the Kyogle Bowling Club. Entry by donation, finger food provided, buy your own drinks.



by Kevin Hogan MP, Member for Page

It was great to have a mobile office outside Darren Butcher's Nimbin Bakery recently (pictured). Thank you to all those who dropped by to say hello. It was good to catch up with familiar faces and hear what is going on in the village.

I welcome Woolworths' and Coles' decision to introduce a milk levy of 10 cents a litre. This will help our local dairy farmers.

The Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud has worked to make it happen. He did this after discussions

he had with dairy farmers when he was here a couple of weeks ago.

I also encourage everyone to buy Norco milk, which is the best way to help our local dairy farmers.

I hope everyone enjoyed this year's Nimbin Show.

I would like to congratulate Show President Phillip Williams, Treasurer Jayne Alleman, Secretary David Fawkner, Senior Vice-President Neville Plush, the canteen team led by Janice Rose, the Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary who are in charge of the Pavilion and all the judges.

Thank you to you all, you do a great

On the same PAGE

job for our community.

I recently spoke about Digby Moran in Parliament. Digby is one of our most celebrated indigenous artists on the Northern Rivers and he has a new exhibition showing at the Lismore Regional Gallery called 'Growing Up On The Island'.

I encourage everyone to go and have a look at his latest work.



The Tweed rises for climate

The regional Climate Day event at Tweed Heads on Saturday 8th September was attended by over 250 people, who braved the weather to raise awareness of climate change.

'Rise for Climate' was part of the 350.org Global Day of Action on Climate, organised by an alliance of environment centres, climate and renewable energy groups, from Northern NSW and the Gold Coast.

People came with their passion and banners from far and wide to march along the perimeter of Boat Harbour Reserve to spread the message to our politicians: "No new coal, and transition to renewable energy now!"

The event was co-ordinated by Caldera Environment Centre; Byron Environment Centre; Stop Adani Byron, Lismore, Tweed and Gold Coast groups; Wildspace Mullumbimby; Gecko Gold Coast Environment Council; Repower Byron Shire; Zero Emissions Byron and Frontline Action Against Coal.

Simon Clough was the MC. Dale Williams from Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council gave the Welcome to Country and Tweed Mayor, Katie Milne welcomed people to Tweed Shire. Keynote speakers were Justine Elliot, Labor member

for the Federal seat of Richmond, and Tamara Smith, NSW Greens MLC representing Ballina. Both politicians stated their commitment to action on climate change and transitioning to renewable energy.

Young people were represented by Uma Bridges, Gold Coast Co-ordinator of Australian Youth Climate Coalition. Robert Quirk, a Tweed farmer from Farmers for Climate Action spoke of how local farmers have been affected by the changing climate.

Graphic observations on the effect that coal mining has on water resources were given by Muzz Dreschler from Front Line Action on Coal. Eight steps we can take to reduce our carbon emissions were explained by Greg Reid from Tweed Climate Action, and Dave Rawlins from Repower Byron Shire updated the audience on COREM Community Energy.

Local musicians performed their original anti-mining and climate change songs throughout the afternoon. Luke Vassella joined Mish Songsmith, Janie Conway-Herron and Timi Bell, for a stirring finale of 'We Shall Overcome'.

#RiseforClimate

Focus on action for sustainable future

Word of the Bird

by Cr Elly Bird

Spring has sprung and the thunderstorms have started.

As usual, things are picking up pace as the end of the year rears its head and starts to make itself known, for some reason with the coming of Spring I have decided that it's a good time to treble my output. I must have been feeling bored or something.

At our Council meeting in September I was elected unopposed as deputy mayor, and I am honoured to take up the mantle from Cr Ekins. I have a number of congratulatory messages and well wishes from many people in the community and I am grateful for your support.

It's another welcome opportunity for me to get out into the community and attend a range of events. I really enjoy meeting new people and seeing just how much good work is being done. We have so much going for us here in the Northern Rivers and I enjoy being able to witness our collective efforts.

Council will have a new



Elly Bird and Sue Higginson at the Lismore Rise for Climate rally at the Quad

general manager by the time you read this, and I am looking forward to entering a new chapter at Lismore Council under their leadership.

Lismore Helping Hands is still going strong and working on Recovery projects and we were just successful in securing some funding to deliver some community events in 2019 to build community preparedness, connections and resilience. I'm looking forward to continuing our conversations as we prepare for the inevitable reality that we will flood again, and we need to be ready for it.

My other recent focus is that I have taken on a

must get on with investing properly in renewables. We can't wait for the Nationals and their Liberal colleagues to act – we know that they won't.

With Sue we know that what we see is what we get. Her track record speaks for itself, in her career as an environmental lawyer she has taken on mining giants and won and has effectively represented community efforts to protect the environment many, many times.

I firmly believe that Sue is the best candidate for the seat of Lismore and I hope you will join me in the campaign to see her elected.

The electorate of Lismore is large, stretching from Murwillumbah to Lismore and out past Tenterfield. It is going to take effort to reach the 50,000 voters within it and we will need volunteers like you to get involved and help make it happen.

You can find out more about Sue and sign up to volunteer on her website: sue4lismore.org.au As always, I can be contacted for council or community business at: elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au or on 0418-639-927.

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Nimbin kids think beyond the hills

Primary students at Nimbin Central School were so moved by the plight of their pen pals in Africa that they decided to do something about it.

For the past 12 months Year 5/6 students at Nimbin Central have been corresponding with students from Agolomuok Primary School in Kenya.

The pen pals initiative is coordinated by Rob and Rikki Fisher as part of their charity Kenya Kids International. Rob and Rikki regularly visit Kenya and exchange letters between the students at Agolomuok and Nimbin Central.

When the students at Nimbin Central learnt that their pen pals had to walk up to 13km a day just to collect water from Lake Victoria and the hardships they faced on a daily basis, one student decided to do something to help.

Year 6 student and member of the Student Representative Council, Jett put a plan into

action.

Jett coordinated a walkathon in which the students would emulate the daily trek of their pen pals and carry loads of water.

He thought it would promote a better understanding of life in Kenya, and allow Nimbin students to develop empathy for their friends.

Jett designed and created the sponsorship forms, secured the necessary permissions and encouraged his classmates to join him.

All the students in the class came on board. Mr Everingham, Jett's classroom teacher, helped guide him through the process.

The walk followed the school's 12 km cross-country course with the participants carrying four litres of water.



At the cheque presentation (foreground l-r): Marc Everingham, KKI President Rob Fisher, Head Prefect Ceejay, organiser Jett, Principal Cath Marshall, and the Year 5/6 class.

Most students completed at least 8km of the course, but hats off to Daniel who completed 12km in the 2-hour time slot.

The students then collected their sponsorship money within four days and presented a cheque to KKI President Rob Fisher.

The students did an outstanding job and raised \$1200 to be used for pumping fresh water to the village, so their pen pals would have more time to do things that kids enjoy doing.

This was all as a result of one young man knowing that he can make a difference.

The Agolomuok Community Water Project is one of a number of projects improving the lives of Kenyans in a remote rural community near Lake Victoria.

Read about this and other projects at: www.kenyakidsinternational.org.au and if you would like to help, please call Rob on 0409-413-248.

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Is your child starting school in 2019?

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- Friday 23rd November 2018
- Friday 30th November 2018

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Orientation Days for Kinder 2019
 Orientation Days are on Wednesdays in Term 4, 2018

7th November 9:00 - 11:35
 14th November 9:00 - 11:55
 21st November 9:00 - 1:35

Secret history of Australia to be revealed at conference

This presentation, organised by Duncan Roads from *Nexus News Magazine*, is unique in that it presents First People truths, history and prophecy never given before.

The reality of Original magic, supernatural powers and an eminent change in the way humanity lives (through Pleiadian assistance), are central themes in these talks.

Merging the mystical and science, we will be introducing a recently found skull to the public that is neither Homo sapien nor hominid, yet part of modern human ancestry.

This science will be complemented by recently discovered evidence that proves that the local Standing Stones site is the most

important archaeological site in the world.

This sacred site contains a message from the Original Sky Heroes that is not only without equal, but part of this change.

All of the information shared is not only an essential part of a history where Australia was the spiritual capital of the world, but will be again.

The recurring theme that underpins this presentation is that the Original Dreaming is not linear but circular and the circle is now complete, and the change is nearly upon us.

The Secret History of Australia Conference will be held on Saturday 20th October, 10am-6pm at Mullumbimby Civic Centre, admission \$90, concession \$60.

Experience freedance in Nimbin

Nia Conscious Freedance is coming to Nimbin! Fusing together a range of good tunes, the evening will take you into a deep uninhibited space of free-form dancing.

With Nia therapist Christine Chouquet (pictured), you will experience a somatic journey through the realms of the body, emotions, mind and spirit.

The joy of your creative movement will guide you

towards self-healing and increased wellbeing.

It promises to leave you feeling renewed, rejuvenated, replenished, alive and happy!

Nia Freedance is being held on Friday 19th October, 6pm to 7.30pm at Nimbin Town Hall, entry \$15 at the door.

For enquiries, contact Christine on 0414-844-230 or (02) 6689-7579, FB: Nia with Christine C, Web: www.niaaustraila.com.au



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Fundraising bush dance

by Megan James

Another wonderful Tuntable Bush Dance is planned for Saturday 20th October, to raise the final amount for the rebuilding of 12 houses in the Nepalese village that our dedicated community

nurse Helen Simpson has been working with.

We are also celebrating the 45th birthday of the Tuntable Falls Co-op. It will be a hoot, if not a hootenanny!

Bring yourself and your kids and have a great night dancing at Tuntable.

Time to end live exports

Earlier this month in a historic move, a bill to ban the worst aspects of live export passed the Senate, co-sponsored by Senator Derryn Hinch, Senator Tim Storer and the Greens.

If it became law, it would see an immediate end to long-haul sheep live exports in the oppressive summer of the Northern Hemisphere for ships that travel to the Persian Gulf or through the Red Sea. After five years, there would be no live exports allowed to that region at any time of the year.

It was this route that the Awassi Express ploughed in its voyages of misery. Like many Australians, I was deeply shocked and sickened by the images that brave whistle-blowers exposed earlier this year.

We saw thousands of sheep dying from heat stress and overcrowding and more than 800 dying in excruciating conditions in a single day, a death every two minutes.

We saw scared, confused and terrified animals knee deep in excrement. A newborn lamb lying abandoned alone on a metal floor. Sheep desperately trying to escape pens as they

are literally cooked alive. Carcasses piled up as they decay in the oppressive heat. These images exposed the brutality inherent in the live exports trade.

The bill isn't perfect, but it represents a historic political deal that would see the worst types of cruelty end. The Greens are committed to the end of all live exports of animals for slaughter and essentially the inability to send sheep to the Middle East will be a death knell for a trade that has no social licence to operate.

The bill now sits in limbo as hours after the Senate passed the bill, the Government stymied efforts to bring it to a vote in the House of Representatives. Those Liberal MPs who have said they want an end to live export voted against even having this bill debated which was incredibly disappointing.

We know that if these MPs were allowed a free vote, they would cross the floor and respond to the demands of the three quarters of Australians who want this industry shut down. These MPs need to tell the Australian people if they are willing to do the right thing from the front or the



by Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi

back bench.

In an extremely reckless and provocative move, the Morrison government has approved the Maysora to go to Eilat in Israel with tens of thousands of sheep and cattle, where temperatures are approaching forty degrees.

This is an incredibly reckless decision. Sheep are almost guaranteed to die of extreme heat stress. So much for our agricultural minister's crocodile tears for animals when he said that it was bulls*it that sheep continue to die at sea on live export ships.

For the federal government to give the go-ahead to a new shipment when they haven't even released their review of the live export regulator shows how little they think of this process. They're only interested in paying lip-service to animal welfare and just ticking the boxes.

The simple reality is that this is not an industry that can be reformed by Government's tinkering around the edges. Cancelling licenses for individual exporters and making some regulatory changes will not fix the fact that the trade is fundamentally incompatible with animal welfare.

Live exports fail not only the animal welfare test, but the economic one too. Chilled meat exports are worth seven times more to Australia than live exports. We know that the live export trade competes with domestic meat processing in regional Australia, leading to closures of abattoirs and a loss of local jobs. Supporting the chilled meat industry to fill the live export gap gives us a path to improving animal welfare and creating long term and secure jobs.

It is well past time to end the live exports industry.

Turning the Page on banks and aged care

by Patrick Deegan,
Federal Labor candidate for Page

In 1914, the famous American lawyer Louis Brandeis wrote: "Sunlight is the best disinfectant."

Brandeis was talking about the need to shine a light on the corrupt practices of banks. As we have seen with the Banking Royal Commission, he was (and still is) 100% right.

Of course, Australia's Banking Royal Commission very nearly didn't happen. The Federal Government resisted calling it for as long as they could, and Member for Page Kevin Hogan voted against holding the Royal Commission some 27 times.

Eventually the stench of scandal just became too strong, and Liberals and Nationals had to give in.

Since then we've heard all about the practice of "fee for no service", customer's accounts being plundered after they have died, and banks heartlessly pursuing people into bankruptcy.

Perhaps the most galling story to come out of the Banking Royal Commission was the instance of a young man with Down Syndrome being bullied into taking out an insurance contract.

The community is now starting to understand just how badly regulated the for-profit financial services sector has been.

The disinfectant of sunlight is now penetrating the inner workings of another industry – aged care.

The wonderful woman that I am married to – Gail – is an aged care worker. I am in awe of the wonderful work she does every single day.

Aged care workers are a rare breed: generous, dedicated, humble and caring. They deserve our utmost admiration and gratitude.

But admiration and gratitude isn't



enough. Aged care workers also deserve decent pay and conditions, just as the residents of aged care facilities deserve to have the best possible standard of care.

As last month's *Four Corners* programs into aged care showed, however, the margins for operators are getting tighter all the time.

In fact, industry analysts have found that over 40% of aged care facilities around Australia are currently operating at a loss.

The problem is that the level of funding for aged care is simply not keeping pace with the booming demand for services.

As a result, operators are always looking for ways to reduce spending.

Recently, for example, it was revealed that aged care provider Southern Cross Care was cutting 734 working hours per fortnight from its two residential facilities in Grafton and Casino. As a result, a number of local workers were made redundant.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has not promised to put back the \$1.2

billion he cut from the Aged Care Funding Instrument in 2016 – but at least he has now recognised there is a genuine crisis in aged care, and agreed to conduct a Royal Commission into the sector.

This is a very important issue for our community. Nearly 20% of the population of the electorate of Page is aged 70 and older.

Our local aged care workers, aged care residents and their families deserve the opportunity to have their say.

That's why over the past few weeks I have been calling for the Royal Commission to hold a special sitting on the Northern Rivers.

I have already made a submission to the Department of Health in regard to the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission, and I have also written to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

I can assure you that I'll be doing everything I can to make sure our community's voice is heard at the Aged Care Royal Commission.

Let the sun shine in.



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