

NGT welcomes letters and other contributions received by email or post prior to deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length, and articles for accuracy. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of Nimbin Good Times.

AirBnB issues

Why do governments give precedence to a minority of investors and speculators, over the majority of residents, home-owners and tenants, when it comes to AirBnB?

Who profits?

Who loses? All those established motels and hotels and caravan parks who pay to be accommodation businesses, for one.

Where are the fire and safety costs in an AirBnB? As well as payment of licences, regulatory charges, local government rates, adequate parking and taxes?

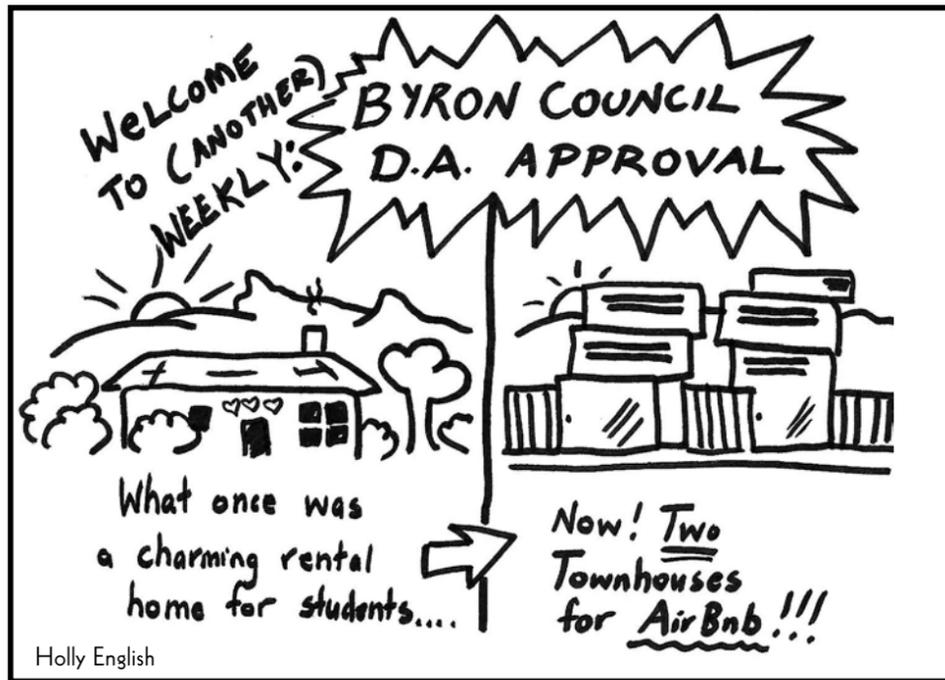
If I buy next to a motel, my purchase price is reflected in the cost, and I know I'm next to an accommodation business, with a manager on site to control unruly guests.

The AirBnB company was conceived after its founders rented out an air mattress in their living room, effectively turning their apartment into a bed and breakfast, to offset the high cost of rent in San Francisco, with someone living there as a regulator who didn't want an all-night party every night.

AirBnB is an American home rental platform based in San Francisco that lets people list, find, and rent short-term lodging in 65,000 cities in more than 191 countries across the globe. It is now valued at \$31 billion.

So, AirBnB corp gets some money for me losing sleep; an absentee owner pays off a mortgage; and the local council gets standard land value rates!

We know that for the past six years, general wages have stagnated for the worker, while big business and the



wealthy keep making money, even during Covid, and now their investments are taking away our community lifestyle, and sleep, so they can pilfer even more wealth.

When will we see young families being able to access the home market again? Certainly not until wages grow again, and the inequality of wealth distribution becomes more reasonable. Then young owner buyers may get a chance to buy a home for their family, against property investors with multiple properties and tax minimisation strategies.

Stock markets are still growing, so why can't these property investors move their money into more shares and give the average taxpayer a chance to have a home and a quiet community?

Richard White
East Ballina

Nimbin water supply

Nimbin Development Control Review Discussion Paper (submissions now due by 18th December) has raised a number of environmental issues. One of the most important being that of water supply.

Lismore City Council website says: "We are committed to improving the water quality of local creeks and our stormwater to protect the health of the Wilson's and Richmond River." However, Gungas

Road residents south of the weir where water is extracted from Mulgum Creek, report no allowance for environmental flows (Murray/Darling anyone?).

The undeniable excess water extracted has resulted in markedly compromised water quality and subsequent flow on effects to wildlife. Low flows after the weir result in siltation of the creek, a consequent rise in water temperature due to the shallow water, then de-oxygenation of the water and significant algal growth. Plus a preponderance of weeds in the creek. Platypus sightings one km south from the weir have not occurred in at least 20 years, and platypus are now deemed to be extinct here.

Every extra connection to the town water supply can only worsen an already critical situation for the environment. Where the discussion paper states that "the capacity of the existing water supply will support modest growth in reticulated areas". It will not without further environmental damage.

As yet unquantified improvements to infrastructure may result in a more economic utilisation of the water supply down the track, but with a minimum further DA approved approximately 100+ households within the RU5 zone slated to use the reticulated supply (including sewerage system) any gains made here could well be lost. (NB government "BASIX" system may include mandatory provision of those households with 3,000 litre rainwater tanks, but those details were not available at time of going to press).

I believe Lismore City Council should balance the needs of the community with that of the environment. At the moment the environment is missing out. Environmental flows need to be recorded prior to the weir and after the weir and studies need to be

undertaken by independent ecologists to ascertain an environmentally sustainable water extraction standard which can be varied according to flow rate. And water trucks filling up from the Nimbin supply may need, at certain times to source their water elsewhere.

Catherine Macleod
Nimbin

Peace and love

I recently had an online conversation about Nimbin with Roger Foley, once famous as LSD Fogg. He said the place still lived up to its ideals of Peace and Love.

So when I went there recently to a wedding, I was conscious of this. We decorated the backyard with beautiful wild flowers, the music was super cool, everyone was there to wish the couple all happiness.

But as the ceremony started, a neighbour over the back fence who apparently had some grudge against them, started up a very loud power tool, and walked up and down the fence, drowning out the words, drowning out the bird songs and drowning out the magic of the day.

My idea of peace, love and harmony, Nimbin style, was destroyed!

Julia Perry
Darlinghurst

Trumpeting democracy

He lost the election by tens of thousands of votes. But he won!

He bellows like a wounded bull. He was not defeated! He roars.

Fake facts and fictions are the new truth. He's a modern day 2020 politician. Facts are a moveable feast. Honesty is an optional extra. Electors are an inconvenience.

"Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing."

He lost but he won that's a torn-to-shred fact.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle



Nimbin CWA receives award

Lismore MP Janelle Saffin recently hosted NSW Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Learning Jodie Harrison (pictured, second from left) at a presentation in Nimbin.

The MPs presented a NSW Government Community Service Award to CWA Nimbin secretary Dr Kitty van Vuuren (pictured, centre, with award) in recognition of her and her fellow branch members' vital role in supporting their local community during the Mount Nardi bushfire a year ago.

Notices

Annual General Meeting

Nimbin Headers Sport Club AGM will be held on Thursday 10th December, 6pm at the Headers grounds, 40 Cecil Street Nimbin. Due to number restrictions, RSVP is essential. Please email: nimbinheaderssportsclub@gmail.com The Club is intending to vote on the proposed sale and relocation of its tennis courts to the Headers fields. Details can be found in the November issue of the *Nimbin GoodTimes*, p.30, or by contacting the club

Home to buy wanted

Long time local family (two adults, two teens part-time) seeking a home to buy on community or freehold. We are fine with a fixer-upper with a lovely aspect. We have skills, energy and passion for community life. We also have a quiet indoor dog that is never allowed to roam. Let us know if you know of anything that might suit! Phone Lisa on 0428-221-290, or Douglas 0401-503

Wanted

Second-hand MacBook. Contact: Hubris1@mail.com

Art competition

Entry forms for the 2021 Summerland Giant Pumpkin and Watermelon Still Life Art Competition are due 1st December. The theme for this year's competition is 'Fairies in the Melon Patch'. Prizes: 19 years+ \$500; 12-18 years \$150; 5-11 years \$50. Entry forms are available from the Roxy Gallery, Scarborough's Shoes, Amanda's Hair and Beauty and the Heartland Office, Kyogle.

Free notices

Keep it short, under 50 words, and to the point, get it to us by deadline and we'll run it for you for free.



RIP Adrian Knight aka 'Tonto'

Sad to hear of the passing of yet another Nimbin icon.

A talented musician, Tonto was a most respected street activist among street folks here.

He stopped a lot of hot situations with his personal style of non-violent intervention.

Unfortunately, the dreaded white man's poison impeded a great deal of his work. He tried shaking it off many times.

I mention this because many decent people I have known have fallen victim to alcohol consumption.

- Benny Zable

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NEXT DEADLINE:

Wednesday 30th December

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

The Nimbin GoodTimes acknowledges the Bundjalung people, the traditional owners of the land and waters on which we work and live, and pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Nimbin Aquarius Foundation activities

by Benny Zable

The Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc. was pleased to donate to the successful 2020 Nimbin NAIDOC day of celebrations.

More than ever, we need to be reminding each other that we are the ones to work together, as Auntie Nellie, a senior law woman Nellie Patterson Napanganka from Uluru reminded us at the 2020 Nimbin NAIDOC day celebrations.

We also held our annual OM for world peace at the IMAGINE circle following 11-11-11 commemorations at the Nimbin war memorial, Nimbin's contribution to this evolving culture of peace here in these unpredictable times we live in.

We have held off our AGM until our Treasurer and backbone of NAFI, Katie Cawcutt is out of hospital. This reminds me how fragile our organisation is. We are an ageing group needing fresh energy to keep going for at least until the 50th anniversary in May 2023.

NAFI can do with some skilled folks in helping with the logistics of running



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- the fulfilment of human needs worldwide
- economic and social wellbeing
- a culture of Peace and Non-violence

to ensure a stable and harmonious world for past, present and future generations.

this unique local organisation. There are archives to be maintained, roles

created and taken up by members to keep us relevant in the future.

Writing grants for the community

Since early November I have been head down, writing grants for the community to try to bring to fruition some of the ideas and visions that emanated from the community workshop the Chamber held at the end of October.

While our grants might not succeed, it seems worth sharing the Chamber's visions with you.

The first grant is to update the VisitNimbin website, a website that was maintained by Lismore City Council until funding was suddenly withdrawn in July 2020, seemingly without thought to the consequences. An out-of-date visitor website does Nimbin no favours at all.

The VisitNimbin website is currently directed to attracting the young backpacker market. This is no longer our dominant visitor demographic, so we are keen to refocus the website to appeal to the new domestic visitor market.

We're not exactly sure who this is but we're thinking the grey nomad, the middle-aged traveller, the family with young kids.

In January the Chamber is going to survey visitors to Nimbin so we can more clearly identify our new visitors and get a better understanding of what they'd like to do while in our village.

This will enable us to more strategically develop tourism product that encourages them to stay longer while enriching their experience of Nimbin beyond the main street.

If we don't take some action, we're concerned visitations may gradually dwindle as visitors are



Chamber Chat

by Diana Roberts, president

attracted by the plethora of activities being promoted along the coast and in Queensland – a state currently undertaking a massive visitor marketing campaign. Like it or not, the Nimbin economy has become very dependent on tourism and to lose this element from our economy would have serious consequences. The challenge is to make tourism work for us and with us.

At the same time as updating the VisitNimbin website, we want to integrate it with the Chamber's new website (www.nimbinaustralia.com.au). It's important the two complement each other and deliver a consistent look for our local businesses.

The VisitNimbin website is arguably a much more professional and desirable representation of local businesses than the Chamber's, so that's what we'll be aiming for.

Ideally we'd like both websites to depict all our businesses – financial members of the Chamber or not – alongside a convincing campaign encouraging people to "buy local". To help finance the website, we plan to build in an on-line shop for 'Made in Nimbin' products. Our grant application also includes a request for funding to undertake a social media

strategy to promote the websites, and website training so we can maintain the sites into the future.

Alongside the website project, we are also seeking funding to implement an ambitious signage project throughout the village. Our plans include:

- 5 large town signs – 2 under shelters, including one at the Nimbin Rocks viewing area – containing a village area map and local information;
- 25 informational building plaques;
- A directional signpost in Allsopp Park with 10 double-sided signs, much like that seen during the Aquarius Festival in 1973;
- A 3-button solar audio sign that will tell Nimbin stories;
- 3 new Nimbin welcome signs, in dual language, and also promoting the nimbinaustralia website as an information source;
- 18 signs on locations relating to the Nimbin sound trail app – a free app telling local stories visitors would enjoy hearing;
- 5 green question mark signs that will be erected on buildings where visitor information can be obtained. Their location will be identified in a brochure and map we are planning to produce in digital form and deliver in hard copy to local shops to give to visitors wanting more information.

It's an exciting grant application that came in at \$126,000, so fingers crossed.

We are also in the process of preparing a grant to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund to construct

the Rainbow Road walking trail, with the aim of supporting both business and community resilience. The more resilient our community, the better placed we are to deal with natural disasters – no doubt a feature of our future.

This grant is being submitted by Lismore City Council in partnership with the Chamber and the Nimbin Community Centre – organisations that have been strongly associated with the trail since its inception in 2005.

The grant is being put together by a small group of people and, if successful, will see a walking trail constructed from Cullen Street through to Alternative Way and Cecil Street, traversing wetlands and areas that have been long neglected by the village but are currently being rehabilitated.

It's an incredibly exciting project that has been written about extensively in the *Nimbin GoodTimes*, so I'll spare you the detail for now.

Writing grants is an arduous process and I would like to acknowledge the following people for their extraordinary assistance:

- Rainbow Road walking track: Dr Kitty van Vuuren, Dr Wil Polson and Martin Soutar (Lismore City Council);
- The website and signage project: Steph Seckold, Caroline Todd, Sammi Allen and Teresa Biscoe (fellow Chamber Executive members).

For more information on any of the above please contact us: chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au

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Mr. John Shipton father of Julian Assange
"Julian's decade-long fierce and unrelenting fight for truth has exposed squalid diplomatic arrangements and war crimes, revealing millions of people slaughtered and tens of millions of homes destroyed. It is a task we take on, fighting to bring our speaker of truth home to family and friends. We appeal for your help to Bring Julian Home!"

Nimbin 7pm Tues 8th Dec Town Hall



Supported by **Claron O'Reilly**
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All eyes on the finish line

I'm struggling a little today to get this column done, the end of the year is in sight and to be honest I am just so tired – I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

Collectively we have our eyes on the finish line for 2020, and it can't come soon enough. I'm going to be home for Christmas for the first time in many years and my family are coming to visit. I am really looking forward to it, but we aren't quite there and whilst it is tantalisingly close there is still a bit more to get through.

It's been great to see Nimbin people engaging with the Nimbin DCP review that is currently open for exhibition. Thanks to those community members who are helping to make that easy for people by sharing documents and maps on Nimbin Hookups. It's a lot of content to digest in order to make comment but it's important to consider all the information and it's very important that we hear from as many community members as possible as it will inform the future direction for the village for a number of years



Word of the Bird
 by Cr Elly Bird

to come.

We also had a council briefing this week on the results of the Rural Tourism Survey which had a high response rate, so thanks to all those community members who let us know your thoughts. Engagement with Council can be a little cumbersome at times, but I assure you it is worth it because it really does inform our decisions and the strategies that are developed by Council.

I'd also really encourage readers to have a look at the Lismore Flood Risk Study which is open for comment until January.

I was talking to someone the other day about what it's like to be a councillor,

and community engagement came up during the conversation. They suggested that I might like to share my perspectives in this month's column, so I will.

My role as a councillor is a big one, I have hundreds and hundreds of pages of documents to read each month, I sit on eight different committees all with their own processes and content to work through, and I receive around 200 emails of substance in any given week, all of which needs careful reading and considered replies or action in response. It's a big workload.

This is not a poor me session, I know that it is what the role requires and I do it willingly! The reason I want to tell you this is so that you have an understanding of how to engage with councillors and how to bring your issues to our attention. Sometimes I get comments from people that I didn't reply to an email or that I don't engage enough on social media. My honest answer is that yes sometimes emails do slip by without a response and I forget to come back to them, and there is simply no way

I have enough hours in the day to join every council conversation on Facebook, quite often I don't even see the conversations that are happening.

My advice to anyone who has a particular issue that they would like to engage with councillors on is to cover all the bases. Send an email, send a follow-up email, make a phone call and then make a follow-up phone call, and make sure you contact multiple councillors.

People have expressed to me that they feel like they might be bothering me if they do that, but it really is my preference that you do. I won't always be able to solve your problem, but I am very happy to talk to you if you pick up the phone to talk to me about it or if you remind me a few times that I haven't gotten back to you yet.

Engagement with councillors is a two-way street, so next time you want to bring something to our attention I really recommend picking up the phone for a conversation. If you would like to take up my invitation I can be contacted at: elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au or on 0418-639-927.

Vale Vital Alsar and the Las Balsas voyage

On Saturday 21st November, on the banks of the Richmond River in Ballina, a memorial service was held to celebrate the life of Vital Alsar, the Captain and inspiration behind the incredible Las Balsas voyages.

The day also marked the 47th anniversary since the arrival of three Las Balsas rafts into Ballina.

Vital, who was inspired after reading of the Kon-Tiki voyage, wanted to prove Thor Heyerdahl's theory, which was that the ancient South American people could have navigated and populated the world by building and sailing traditional rafts made of Balsa wood. The Kon-Tiki set off from Peru in 1947 and crashed into a reef in French Polynesia.

In 1970, La Balsa (the raft) set sail from Guayaquil, Ecuador, with a crew of four men. They arrived six months later in Mooloolaba, Australia. No modern navigation tools were used. A sextant was used to guide their journey.

Vital, not content with this feat, wanted to prove that it was possible for multiple rafts to cross the Pacific. "Impossible, why?" he said. If Vital could show that three rafts could cross the Pacific to Australia, via the Pacific Islands, then that would show that it was not only possible, but likely, that these long ocean voyages that took advantage of predictable ocean currents did occur.

In 1973 Vital Alsar selected eleven men, from seven different countries, to build and sail three Balsa wood rafts from Guayaquil, Ecuador to Australia. After six months at sea riding the Humboldt current, the three rafts arrived together in Ballina.

Their original destination was Mooloolaba, where the 1970 voyage arrived, but by chance the wind stopped about 10 kms off Mooloolaba and the current took the raft down the Coast



by Cr Jeff Johnson,
 Ballina Council

until they made their landing in Ballina.

One of these rafts now takes pride of place in the Ballina Maritime Museum, which is situated on the bank of the Richmond River, only a stone's throw from where the rafts landed. The expedition of the twelve brave men was forever captured by a video recorder that they had on board. Miraculously the footage survived and has been converted into a DVD, which is playing on a loop next to the raft.

Ian Leslie, a journalist who covered the arrival of Las Balsas in Ballina in 1973 said "Vital was the most courageous explorer of modern times, the Mozart of adventure. It's unbelievable that he is not a household name here in Australia". Gough Whitlam, who was Prime Minister at the time invited all the crew to Canberra for a special dinner to acknowledge their heroics and offered them all permanent residency if they chose to stay.

I was honoured to read the words of a couple of the surviving crew members at the memorial, including Mike Fitzgibbons who recalled that "Vital burst into our world, a ball of



Bella Viola and Wiliam Kyte of Los Canarios with the raft in Ballina.

pure energy with bright eyes and a huge smile. He breathed out his vision. We inhaled it deep into our lungs. We embraced it."

The story of the Las Balsas voyage is a testament to Vital Alsar and the other eleven crew members who embraced Vital's ocean knowledge and vision. The 10,000km journey is the longest ever recorded raft voyage. One of the rafts is still intact and protected at the Ballina Maritime Museum. I believe the Las Balsas raft is Ballina's unique offering to the world, and if you haven't heard of it or been down to the museum to check it out I highly recommend it.

The raft and the history of the Las Balsas expedition can be seen at Ballina Naval and Maritime Museum at Regatta Ave, Ballina, NSW and is open 7 days from 9am to 4pm or visit: www.ballinamaritimemuseum.org.au to find out more.

Missed opportunities in State Budget

by Janelle Saffin MP,
Member for Lismore

While I welcome funding and resources in the recent State Budget which find their way to our Electorate of Lismore, my general take-away is that we got a tired budget from a tired Treasurer in a tired government.

What a shame the Budget did not include the \$5 million to kickstart the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation's \$150-million priority Watershed Initiative to restore health of the region's river catchments and strengthen water security over the next 10 to 15 years.

I will keep lobbying the NSW Government to fund four shovel-ready projects to be managed by Rous County Council, including improving soil health, restoring riparian zones, redesigning floodplain drainage and natural flood mitigation.

The \$812 million for social and Aboriginal housing across NSW sounds like a lot of money but spread across metropolitan and regional areas, this modest spend

is another missed opportunity and will not make a dent in the under-supply of affordable social housing here.

From the \$212 million for the new supply, upgrades and maintenance works of Aboriginal housing in 2020-21, \$4.2 million is allocated for Aboriginal communities in Goonellabah, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads as part of a \$6.5-million project.

There is a \$300-million injection over the next two years to the Regional Growth Fund, but I can only think of how it comes from a Sydney-centric government which squandered \$53.5 million in 2016 on contaminated land at Camellia, near Parramatta, to stable and maintain the future Parramatta Light Rail. The clean-up bill could reach anywhere between \$100 million and \$700 million.

Treasurer Perrotet's 'conversation' about giving people a choice between paying stamp duty on property purchases or paying an annual property tax for as long as they own the property smacks of a thought bubble. No-one has convinced me that farmers or



Nan Nicholson with Bob Carr and Janelle exploring the Channon Gorge

landowners will benefit at all from the latter arrangement.

Bushwalking with Bob Carr

I rediscovered my love for hiking after joining former Australian foreign minister and NSW premier Bob Carr, his wife Helena and local residents on bushwalks of Terania Creek and the Channon Gorge over a weekend recently.

On the Saturday, we covered some rugged terrain in the World Heritage-listed sub-tropical rainforest of Terania Creek. It was nostalgic for Bob as he had not walked this area since the

mid-1980s. We all owe him an enormous debt for creating the Nightcap National Park as NSW Environment Minister.

As we know, Bob is a keen environmentalist and wanted to hear from the local community about the proposed Dunoon Dam, so on the Sunday we trekked into the Channon Gorge where the dam wall would be located.

This quite majestic country is warm temperate rainforest on sandstone, which itself is very rare, and Rocky Creek runs through it, home to a healthy platypus population.

The dam itself would inundate 267 hectares of land, a mix of warm temperate rainforest, sub-tropical rainforest, eucalypt forest which is very important as koala habitat and corridors, and farmland.

Special Aboriginal sites have been identified within this footprint and Whian Whian Landcare has done extensive bush regeneration work here.

My attitude is that Rous County Council has to show what's needed, and at this stage all the water efficiency options to achieve long-term water security haven't been fully explored.

We need water security; I'd look at all options, I wanted everyone to engage but they haven't persuaded me that the Dunoon Dam is the option yet... I want them to demonstrate that they've done everything they can for water efficiency and that hasn't been done.

Thank you to Nan and Hugh Nicholson, Annie Kia, Andrya Hart, Emma Stone, Simon Clough, Nathan Kesteven, Rob Kooyman, Peter McDade, Jules Petrov and Jim Richardson for having us.

Thank you for your commitment, advocacy and hard work.

Assessing all future water options for our region



by Cr Darlene Cook,
Lismore City Council

There has been a lot of information continuing to circulate in media and social media about Rous County Council's Future Water Project 2060.

While the community needs to be very aware of the range of options under consideration to ensure water security in this region into the future, some of the information being presented has confused what can be done by a bulk water supplier versus what is the jurisdiction of the general purpose councils such as Lismore, Ballina and Byron.

Many of the experts being quoted by objectors to the Rous proposals have worked extensively in areas such as Sydney Water, where the water authority operates the full water cycle from catchment to tap.

Rous CC does not operate like this – it is a bulk water supplier only. It is the local councils who should consider stormwater harvesting or recycled water for gardens or parks and sportsgrounds.

While Rous and many other water utilities are interested in direct and indirect potable reuse (recycled treated waste water for drinking purposes), it is the NSW government who refuses to allow these options to proceed. Rous has been advocating for a pilot WTP at Perradenya for many years.

The only way to overcome the government's conservative attitudes to direct and indirect potable reuse is to prove the safety of the treated water by building a pilot plant.

Water security into the future in this region is a very complex topic with very



Rocky Creek dam courtesy Rous County Council

passionate people advocating for and against some of the options on the table – especially the Dunoon Dam proposal. To read the media and social media commentary, people could assume that the dam is the only proposal on offer – it is not.

I can assure readers that if Rous' proposals are adopted at the 16th December meeting of the County Council, it will not mean that the dam will automatically be constructed. It only means that the ecological, cultural heritage and geological assessments on whether the dam is a viable option will be done.

Rous' first option to secure our future water supply is continued water efficiency and demand management measures, including smart meters, to educate people about their water use, to reduce the amount of water we all use and the amounts lost by leaking pipes.

The second preferred option is groundwater from the Alstonville aquifers treated at Marom Creek WTP. The third option is for continued assessment of the Dunoon Dam proposal. The fourth option would be additional groundwater at Wardell.

For your information, the Future Water Project documentation can be found on Rous' website: https://rous.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-KZG-22-16-87

Lismore City Council recently sought community feedback on rural tourism uses and the growing demand for these activities in Primary Production zoned areas of the LGA (where the uses are currently prohibited). I want to send out a huge

thank you to everyone who took the time to answer the survey.

There were 354 responses with approximately 67% living or owning property in rural areas of the LGA. Some 74% of responders were supportive of yoga/meditation centres being permitted; 67% supportive of function centres for weddings; 70% for artisan food and drink facilities; 75% support for some accommodation types.

There was agreement that while high biodiversity and prime agriculture areas should be excluded, farmers/landholders should be permitted some revenue diversity. There was also agreement that neighbours must be protected from noise generated by these activities and also concerns about the impact on our rural roads. A report on suggested changes to our Local Environment Plan will come to Council in the new year for consideration.

Locale Consulting has commenced discussions with the fire affected communities of Nimbin and The Channon/Terania Creek and the Rural Fire Service. Locale Consulting met with representatives of these communities in mid November to start the engagement process towards developing place-based community disaster recovery plans.

I want to wish all the many readers of the *Nimbin GoodTimes* a very happy Christmas/Hanukah/Kwanzaa/holiday season and safe celebrations to end this year. Hope to be back with you all early in 2021.

I can be contacted by phone on 0427-895-316 or email: darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au



On the same Page

by Kevin Hogan MP, Member for Page



Book Prize

Great to be at Nimbin Central School recently to present my book prize.

This year's recipient was Julian Tung (pictured) for 'borrowing the most library books this year'.

Congratulations Julian! Great school in our community.

Merry Christmas

2020 has brought many changes, and we are all

learning how to live our daily lives differently.

It is more important than ever to tell the people we love how much we appreciate them.

To all those who looked out for others this year, thank you for being our everyday heroes and for answering this call.

Together let's look towards 2021 with hope and confidence in the resilience of our community.

'Unacceptable, appalling' strip-searches in our own backyard

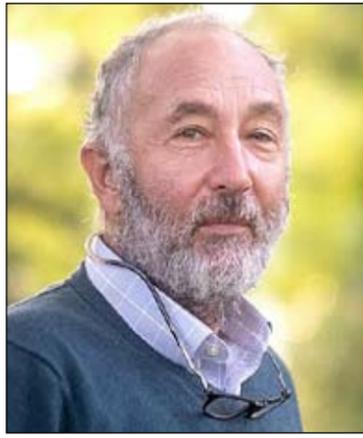
Early in October, a premature baby was found dumped in a garbage bin at an airport in Qatar.

A group of Australian women were removed from a plane and made to expose their genitals and examined to see if one of them was the mother. The women were given no choice, had no support person with them, and were locked in an ambulance on the tarmac for the process.

Obviously, this was utterly outrageous conduct by the Qatar authorities, but perhaps not unexpected in a country where female genital mutilation and rape in marriage is not outlawed.

Understandably, many of the women were distressed, and the Australian authorities were alerted. During their quarantine in Australia, the women were provided with medical and psychological support by NSW Health. Quite right too.

The politicians fumed – the Prime Minister described the treatment of the women as “unacceptable” and “appalling”. The Foreign Minister



by David Heilpern

Marise Payne said, “This is a grossly grossly disturbing, offensive, concerning set of events... It is not something I have ever heard of occurring in my life, in any context.”

Really Minister? In any context? In your life? I have heard of it happening in an equally concerning context. To children. In Australia. In our own backyard. Maybe Minister, you need to read a bit more widely.

The Law Enforcement Conduct

Commission in New South Wales recently handed down its findings on the searching of just four of the countless strip-searches of children at festivals.

A 16-year-old young woman was entering Splendour at the Grass in Byron Bay when a sniffer dog sat next to her. She was taken from the line, detained and made to undress completely and squat so that her vagina could be inspected by police in a search for drugs.

The Commission accepted that before, during and after the search, she could not stop crying and was completely humiliated.

At another festival, a 15-year-old male was strip-searched after a sniffer dog lingered near him. “Hold your dick and lift your balls up,” he was told. Another child was incidentally touched on the genitals during the search.

The police commissioner’s response was typically weak. He said he was “disappointed” and “unhappy” by the conduct of police. However, he mused that young people should have “a little bit of fear” of police and that questioning

the legitimacy of policing had a negative impact on public safety.

Reducing strip-searching could lead to an increase in knife crime, he claimed.

The police minister said that he’d be happy for his children to be strip-searched if police believed they were about to commit a crime.

No police have been charged or disciplined as a result. In the absence of a lawful right, detaining and forcing a young person to strip and expose themselves would be a really serious offence – I have jailed people for similar conduct.

And just like the women in Qatar, these children had no support persons and were denied their liberty and privacy by persons in authority. Unlike the women in Qatar, these children were not provided with medical or psychological support by NSW Health. In fact, they were shamed, humiliated, embarrassed and abandoned. No doubt both sets of victims bear the scars of their ordeal.

Redfern Legal Centre has been on the case. New data obtained via freedom of information revealed

that in the past year, 21% of all strip-searches of children were on First Nations young people, including one case where an 11-year old was strip-searched by police. In Dubbo, for example, First Nations people made up two-thirds of all strip-searched people in the town.

So, Marise and Scott, I have a question for you. I’ve looked through all of your press releases over the past couple of years, and also those of your state counterparts. I’m struggling to find any expressions of concerns for these children strip-searched in our own backyard.

I’ve looked really really hard, and just can’t see anywhere you have stood up for an 11-year old Aboriginal kid getting strip-searched, or a 16-year-old forced to squat. Why are the women wronged in Qatar so (rightly) deserving of your outrage and support, but not our own children?

Hypocrisy, know thy name.

David Heilpern was a NSW magistrate for 21 years, and has now returned to private practice.

They took the children away

by Aniko Papp

As a lawyer who has acted for indigenous families on the East Coast of Australia in the field of child protection for many years, taking a job in the NT in the same field was always going to be challenging and educational.

With only about one-third of the population of the NT being Indigenous, I never expected to see almost every child involved with the Welfare mob (what most of my clients called the government department involved in child protection) to be Indigenous. The lack of understanding of Indigenous customs and issues seemed almost as endemic amongst Welfare workers in the NT, as their counterparts on the East Coast.

One client in the witness box referred to a carer of her child as her sister. “She’s not your sister. She’s not your daughter’s aunt,” came the accusation. My client was visibly confused. “But yes, she’s my sister. She’s always been my sister.”

The retort: “You don’t have the same mothers though. You’re lying to the Court.”

Eventually, it became evident that referring to a close relative as sister is common amongst many clan groups and yes, one could even have more than one mother. Even the Judge couldn’t comprehend the worker’s lack of knowledge of Indigenous family relationships.

In the NT, I came across the same lack of understanding time and time again. Like the time that the child’s white foster carer just waltzed into a family’s sorry business without being invited, or the teenage boy who wasn’t allowed to attend his own initiation ceremony.

Client’s grandparents in my office, unable to locate their grandchildren. “All I know is that welfare took them about a year ago. I don’t know where. I ring but no-one rings me back.” Scraps of paper with names of long-gone caseworkers scribbled on them.

Weeks to track down the whereabouts of the children, only to be told that the grandparents aren’t entitled to copies of Court documents, and have no right to legal action now anyway. Clients without phones or internet had almost no hope of negotiating the bureaucratic labyrinth.

I recall one chubby eight-month old almost leaping into her mother’s arms, despite not seeing her since she was a week old. The supervisor seemed surprised; my client wasn’t. On another occasion, the grandchild shied away, prompting my client to remark while sadly pointing to his own ebony skin: “He is scared of us coz he’s been living with white folk. My grandson is frightened of this.”

During the Covid-19 lockdown in the NT, there were few removals from remote communities. The day after lockdown finished, large towns were filled with Indigenous families stocking up on food, which otherwise is double the price back in their home communities.

One client arrived from a remote community on a bus holding her toddler and baby. As she alighted, she heard her name, so my client approached the questioner, saying, “Yes that’s me.”

A moment later, my client was holding Court documents as the Welfare mob whisked her crying children away. The



documents referred to incidents which occurred weeks earlier, yet somehow the children were safe enough with their mother at least until she got off that bus.

“Bloody welfare mob,” my weather-beaten client growled. “They took my grandkids from preschool without even telling me. I’d have come down to get them if I’d have known there was trouble. I told them: this is stolen generation all over again. I want my grandkids with me. Not with some bloody white foster carer.”

The Police were called as the caseworker reported being threatened. “Yeah, I told her that I would talk to the papers. Taking kids away without even telling the family.” One grandchild climbed a huge high tree, promising to jump off if she was returned to her foster carer. Complaints were shrugged off, until it became evident that the child had been badly abused by the carer.

My client didn’t drink, smoke, had her own house, do drugs but years ago was involved in a violent relationship with her

partner. The scene at the Welfare offices meant that my client was labelled as violent, so it took more than a year to get to a Court hearing. The Judge’s summing up? “I don’t know why this grandmother didn’t get her grandchildren back in the first weeks that they were removed.”

“Can’t let the kids live with mum as there are too many people in the house ... There is no fence around the property ... Old aunt who lives with them can’t get a clear Police check as she has no ID to get one.” Just some of the excuses to refuse children being returned.

“Everyone in the household needs to complete this form and lodge it with us to consider.” So, every transient member and visitor to the remote household has to fill out and lodge 20-page jargon-laden forms, provide photos, ID and professional witnesses to sign off on the documents. Often without access to printers, internet or help, they just give up.

Welcome to the new stolen generation.

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Care and protection: Illusion and reality

by John Adams

Society is largely based on the illusion that laws are enforced. Propaganda, like 'the news', or TV dramas where the perpetrator is inevitably caught, support the illusion.

While enough of the population accepts this version of reality, chaos is kept at bay. The vast majority of criminal acts, of course, are never discovered, let alone investigated. How often have you driven too fast and not been caught?

The illusion persists, even when it's clear that bits of it are deceptive, like the sign: 'ROADWORK SPEED LIMITS ENFORCED'. Has anyone ever seen a police officer waiting at roadworks for speeding drivers? Probably not, for obvious reasons of safety.

Lies, repeated often, especially in all-caps, tend to be believed. And people need to believe they are safe, that everything, more or less, is under control.

But the State is pushing it a bit when it uses words like 'Care' and 'Protection' (C&P), comforting words enshrined in the *Children & Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998*. Reality is neither caring nor comforting to a mum having trouble coping, when the Department arrives, with police, to take her child.

The Department, historically 'the Welfare', and formerly DOCS, then FACS, now DCJ (Department of Communities & Justice), doesn't like removing children, preferring to help parents get their lives together.

But if, after investigation and assessment, some risk-of-harm reports, and much paperwork, it's decided that children are at risk of serious harm, they are removed, and an Emergency Care & Protection Order applied for.

Within 14 days we're in Court. The Children's Court, presided over by a Children's Magistrate, is unlike other courts. Solicitors for the mother, father, children, the Secretary (of DCJ), and maybe an aunt or uncle, line up at the bar

table. Everyone remains seated.

In my first appearance there, the case manager had cited a dirty nappy and toys and clothes on the floor, empty alcohol bottles on the fridge, and the mother's Asperger's Syndrome.

I acted for the mother (and also, incidentally, the grandmother and uncle charged, when the child was taken, with, respectively, assault and assault police). It seemed to me that her Asperger's made my client a remarkably focussed mother. It took five months to get the child back.

Taking a child from a parent is serious. However adversarial it might seem at times, lawyers, caseworkers and Children's Magistrate have one focus: that of protecting the child into the future. Arguments are about things like who gets the child, and how much contact parents will have.

No-one mentions that the carer gets paid while mum's back on the dole. I hear stories of carers who use the kids as drug mules and worse. We do our best but can't control human nature and the future.

As in the criminal justice system, proportionally more indigenous than white children are removed. And proportionally more children who've been removed end up in that system.

I find myself wondering whether more damage to their little psyches happened before or after removal, how difficult it is to raise a child who's been traumatised, how much psychologists and psychiatrists charge.

At this point I try to think of something else. Too much despair.

Yesterday I was at meeting of the local Grandmothers Against Removal, a dozen Koori women and Anglo me. I've been in a lot of meetings. This was the most civilised.

We discussed applications to get children back, what the court has to consider, and what they can do to help. These women are not mucking around. They've got practical plans.

I leave, my spirits lifted.

A great experiment looms

by Michael Balderstone

In North America, where pot has been legal for over two decades in areas like California, isolating cannabinoids is the new game, along with synthetics.

Just like our clothing is full of plastics these days and our food crammed with multiple chemicals and additives, like our medicines, weed is now headed in the same direction.

Doctors apparently recommend synthetics as after all, they're used to handing out little white perfect pills, and we are used to taking our medicine like that.

There are well over a hundred different cannabinoids identified now and all with particular effects. CBG for example, cannabigerol, is a new favourite for pain relief without psychoactive effects, but it's rare to find more than 1% in a plant so synthetic production is the new game.

And pharma companies are now in the rush to patent their own blends of cannabinoids. Giant biotech firms are making their own concoctions they can then patent.

There are millions of options and blends that can be unique and then it's all in the marketing. A battle is looming between the plant and the pills. Soon you will be able to customise your cannabinoids to suit your health needs. An 'expert' can make a personal blend of cannabinoids for you, not just of CBD, but CBN, CBC, CBG, CBDV, and so on.

The truth has to come to the surface eventually, and with weed it is clearly on the move. And not just in laboratories but in law reform as well, with a number of new states legalising pot in the recent American elections and Biden also promising to wind back the war he was once so keen on. Oregon decriminalised all drugs, which has to be the future.

The pressure for law reform is on in other countries also. Protestors are looking after a healthy crop they've planted outside the Mexican senate! Under orders from the Supreme Court, Mexican lawmakers have until 15th December to pass



Mexico's marijuana revolution is on display steps from the nation's Senate, where for the last nine months, activists have maintained a fragrant cannabis garden.

Photo courtesy Kate Linthicum / Los Angeles Times

cannabis legislation after it ruled that a cannabis ban was unconstitutional.

Police forces across England and Wales have decided to stop automatically criminalising people caught with personal amounts of any drug. People are finally asking how can BLM protests make any difference while the war on drugs continues. It was always a racist war.

Of course medical cannabis is legal here now, as Greg Hunt the Health Minister tells us, with that pained look he has. It sounds good but it's so full of spin that they even seem to fool themselves into thinking how kind they are. For a start, if you do get it you may want to sell the car because you're not allowed to drive.

You must get a script from a doctor first then collect the expensive and mostly imported pot medicine at the chemist, like a dangerous pharmaceutical. You can even get legal buds (\$20-\$30 per gram), mainly grown indoors in Canada in a lab environment, but Aussie crops are starting to come into the market as well now.

I always wonder why the gardeners in the giant grow houses are wearing hazmat suits. It's certainly not organic medicine. And it's never felt the sun, rain, wind or put its roots in real dirt like our bush weed. However, it is increasingly popular, because it's legal. And you don't have to find your way to a black market.

But mostly the doctors will prescribe an extract from those plants, which increasingly isn't from the whole plant but a mixture of isolated cannabinoids remixed according to the experts who I'm not sure see the importance of the

natural product as a whole item, and how all the parts help each other.

Like any decent community would. The entourage effect.

Which is kind of what happened to the opium poppy. Make it illegal then license a couple of Big Pharma companies to grow the poppies (half the world's supply is in Tassie) and then extract and process their own patented product from it. Like Endone, Oxycontin, Codeine, Morphine, Pethidine, etcetera.

Suddenly I realise, that's what's going to happen with weed. How many different cannabinoid mixes can we make from 140 cannabinoids? The mind boggles at the impossible maths. They can isolate different cannabinoids and remix the proportions how they like. I imagine jars of white powder or crystals along a shelf with different cannabinoid labels. Isolated cannabinoids look like any other white powder.

The legal CBD that we will be able to get at our local Aussie chemist soon has to be made from 98% CBD with no more than 2% other cannabinoids. See my point? No one can grow a plant producing 98% CBD. They'll have isolated the CBD from plants and created a concentrate. Different cannabinoids are extracted at different temperatures. Or perhaps they will make it synthetically.

They're missing the point of the original balance in the natural product. It's processed food versus wholefood. And that is why we have to be able to grow our own, and then we will find out if the home-grown medicine works as well as the clever scientific mixes.

STREET SHUFFLE

Journal of the North Coast's longest serving covert

Unda Scomo's smirk

He's starting to get unda my skin, the PM. There's always a smirk on his face, I decided. A kind of superior thing I've seen on evangelista before. Like I'm going to heaven and you're not. Like I know a secret and I'm not telling you. Smug smart arse.

I've been loading his CBD with more and more THC, but he just gets cockier and cockier. If anyone is reading this cry for help, you can surely see that even a highly-trained undacuva can struggle with such a severe change of location. From grubby drug dealing gutters to the prime minister's quarters in the Big House.

The carpets alone are hard to handle. I often don't see bare earth for days on end. It does something to the psyche, I tell you.

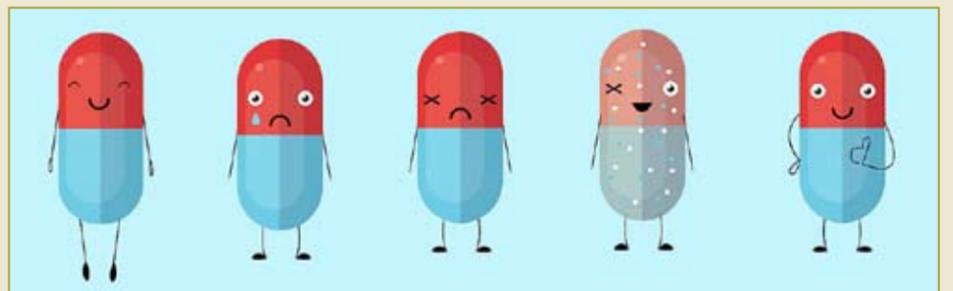
So I take myself for a fresh air walk and meet quite a few others on the same track, battling claustrophobia from the endless aircon worlds we are forced to live in. I've been

seriously thinking about quitting. Everyone I meet on the fresh air walks talks about it. It is THE subject. How to get outta here. They all have mortgages and most of them kids. But I don't.

It's got me thinking, just what am I doing? Working for the greater good somehow, arguments thrashing around between my ears. Somehow when I go back inside, the arguments subside. But as soon as I'm out on the lawn again they increase. Like a radio signal or something.

I talked to the other walkers about it and they agreed it was similar for them. When I mentioned it to Scomo he went quite bashful, awkward almost. That's when I thought here's something in the aircon. Something soporific maybe.

And if it's not in the aircon then it's in the pills that come around every morning. A mix of uppers and downers, blockers and looseners, a unique blend only the doctor could explain. They make sure he doesn't need the dunny in a critical moment, for example.



They organised his body to fit the day's schedule.

And then came the jabs. I cannot, ever, forget the moment. Admittedly the PM was flying to Japan, but why should all his staff have to line up as well? They've gone zionist on the vax as saviour, and missed the point. Of no return, me too. I refused. Suddenly the whole room was staring at me.

But, having had just the tiniest of a dried goldie for breckie, I was transported back to Pipe's camp. Around the fire, the 'shroom stew pot pulled aside, its job done. I've been here before. Now I understand. In the vision at the time it was robots staring at me. Machines. And so they are. Time stood still for the longest of moments. Slow motion took over, along with the goldie.

"I'm out," I heard myself say. And in the same motion whipped off my wig and

headed for the door and was gone before the machines had digested the words.

I had nothing to go back for, the stash was in my handbag. I strode out the long corridors, kicking off my shoes as I went. There weren't many people, but they sure must have wondered. Wig in one hand, handbag in another, stockinged feet and fairly beaming.

I'd surrendered to the trip totally as I stepped through the giant doors out of the Big House into brilliant sunshine and busloads of Chinese tourists taking photos with phones. And I was gone. I had to peel the stockings off so I could feel the grass, and in no time I was smoking a cone at the Tent Embassy camp.

The timing was perfect, as it is when the Force is with you. I walked straight into a space at the fire circle, sat down, and someone handed me the bong.

No extradition: bring Julian home!

by John Jiggins

Julian Assange's father John Shipton has recently returned from his son's extradition hearing at the Old Bailey in London and is embarking on a tour of Brisbane and the New South Wales north coast where he will talk about his son's plight.

John Shipton will speak at Nimbin Town Hall on Tuesday 8th December, Mullumbimby Civic Hall on Friday 11th December, and Marvell Hall at Byron Bay on Sunday 13th December.

Julian Assange exposed war crimes and human rights violation by the USA and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of this, he is currently the victim of British injustice in Belmarsh High-Security prison, where the Covid-19 virus is currently running rampant, awaiting extradition to the USA where he may be sentenced to 175 years for some of the greatest pieces of journalism of the twenty-first century.

The implications for journalism everywhere are deeply disturbing. The Espionage Act charges that the USA is seeking extradition for are all about journalism: Assange's crime is, was and has always been, his courageous journalism.

"Julian's ten-year fierce and unrelenting fight for truth has exposed squalid diplomatic arrangements and war crimes in which millions of people were slaughtered, and tens of millions of homes destroyed. It is a task we take on, fighting to bring our speaker of truth home to family and friends. We appeal for your help to bring Julian home!"

— John Shipton,
father of Julian Assange

On the eve of UN Human Rights Day, Mr Shipton and Greg Barns SC, Adviser Assange Campaign, will participate in a webinar, supported by the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), at the Trades and Labor Council in Brisbane on Wednesday, 9th December.

Greg Barns SC says: "The welcome release of Iranian prisoner Kylie Moore-Gilbert, ironically a relative of Julian, tells us that when the Australian government wants to, it can successfully negotiate the release of its citizens from detention in other countries. Having achieved success with Kylie Moore-Gilbert Foreign Minister Marise Payne must now speak with her UK and US counterparts about ensuring Assange



is able to walk out of Belmarsh prison for good."

On UN Human Rights Day, Thursday 10th, John Shipton will address a public gathering at Bunyapa Park, West End, to call for the Australian government to abide by the UN Human Rights conventions, support Julian's human rights, and bring Julian home. The United Nations has been calling on the Australian government to act in defence of Julian Assange for the past five years.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) working group called for Mr Assange's release in 2015, saying he was being arbitrarily deprived of his freedom and demanded he should be able to exercise his right to freedom of movement in an unhindered manner, in accordance

with the human rights conventions the UK has ratified. The US, the UK and Australia ignored the UN's calls.

In his report on the treatment of Assange, Nils Melzer, the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Torture, declared that in 20 years of working with victims of war, violence and political persecution, he has never seen a group of democratic States (Sweden, the UK, the USA) ganging up to deliberately isolate, demonise and abuse a single individual for such a long time and with so little regard for human dignity and the rule of law.

Mr Melzer declared their systematic misuse of legal procedures was a form of legal torture and warned that Mr Assange's human rights would be seriously violated if he was extradited to the United States.

Although Assange is an

Australian, not a US citizen, the US has pressured its client states into misusing their legal systems to corral Assange for ten tortuous years, asserting its imperial right to prosecute and punish any journalist who dares to reveal its war crimes. Meanwhile, the compliant Australian government has failed to protect its citizen, Julian Assange.

A year ago, filmmaker James Ricketson implored Prime Minister Scott Morrison to "pick up the phone" to his British counterpart Boris Johnson to ensure Julian Assange does not die in prison.

James Ricketson wrote: "If Julian Assange does die in prison, will you, with a clear Christian conscience, be able to inform the Australian public, in all honesty, that you did all within your power (and more) to protect Assange's legal and human rights?"

The best things in life were free

by Bernadine Schwartz

When the sun begins to rise, that's my quality time with Mother Earth, a time when you could easily believe everything in the world is as it should be, surrounded by her protective arms, no big bad world to contend with and a time to be truly thankful.

After this year though, I can't pretend anymore, not when hungry wallabies are at the foot of my steps each morning, the trees are shedding their leaves again and another year has come and gone, along with many of our forests and billions of animals, and through no fault of our scientists, who have been tearing their hair out for decades. But after 2020, I think they're about to throw the towel in, because they can't move mountains you know.

I'm calling it the year of fire, a year when wildfires broke out all around the planet, leaving behind a phenomenal loss of trees and wildlife, yet most don't seem to get the gravity of what we've losing and keep looking out their back window as if that was the only world that existed.

We're losing some of Mother Earth's most cherished possessions, including the Pantanal, the largest tropical freshwater wetlands on Earth, covering an area of 195,000 square kilometres and a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most important biomes on the planet, that spreads through Western Brazil, into Bolivia and Paraguay, and home to over a million indigenous people. It's also a key habitat for a high concentration of more than a thousand species, including the extremely rare giant armadillo, the hyacinth macaw, the maned wolf and the largest and healthiest population of jaguars in the world, as well as more than 600 species of birds that visit during the



Nightcap Oak courtesy Morning Bulletin

The Pantanal, Brazil
Courtesy National Geographic

seasonal floods. This spectacular piece of nature is on fire, and what makes this even more disturbing, is this region is a planetary carbon sink, so the soil is highly flammable, making it near impossible to control the fires, with 28% already burnt and according to ecologists, this exceptional location will never recover.

In Australia, we lost over 20% of our forests, far more than any other country, and the aftermath is soul destroying and particularly concerning when most will never recover.

Bushfires are part and parcel of Australia, however according to all the experts a major fire would occur every 75 to 125 years but some have had to suffer four in the last 25 years and many trees like the mountain ash, only produce viable amounts of seeds at maturity, 15 to 30 years old and if they're gone, the forest can't replace itself.

In our own neck of the woods is

the Nightcap Range and close by, the World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforests Area (GRAWHA).

Together they are the most extensive stands of subtropical rainforests remaining in the whole world, as well as being Australia's largest area of warm temperate rainforests, which makes them extremely valuable, but up to half of the lowland subtropical rainforests in Queensland and NSW have been damaged, including rare and ancient patches of forests in the GRAWHA region, that hold 648 threatened species and has been in existence for 180 millions years, far older than the Amazon at 55 million years old.

According to the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, large swathes have been severely damaged, causing a major reorganisation of the rainforest that will take a century or more and it's the same story across the border to the Nightcap Range, another botanical hotspot for many

threatened species, including the giant barred frog and extremely rare plant species, among them the endemic Nightcap Oak, with only 120 fully grown oaks and a hundred saplings left and they can only be found growing along one creek in the range and this forest will also take a century or more to recover.

We haven't heard a peep from our governments or our biased media, not even Australians who have also made light of the whole affair and their silence has given our governments free reign of what remains of our forests. Ruthless politicians can only see felled trees and dollar signs and we handed them over at a time when we need them most.

The forests we have lost this year are too numerous to mention, however the World Resources Institute, reported the world lost a football field of forest every six seconds in 2019, including a third of our highly prized mature rainforests

and the future for our forests and inevitably ourselves is looking grim.

A paper published in *Nature Communications*, examined 42 biomes that have recently collapsed to gain a better understanding and also determine which took the longest to collapse, larger or smaller ecosystems.

The data clearly showed bigger biomes go down rapidly when they reach their tipping point, compared to smaller ones, triggering a chain reaction throughout the entire ecosystem and the authors of this study believe the global shift we're entering won't take thousands of years or centuries to transpire, maybe not even decades but only years.

The cycles of Mother Earth are changing dramatically and this is not some passing phase, the worst is yet to come but some things never change, Xmas mania. While society is busy getting in the Xmas spirit and decorating their Xmas trees, they should spare a thought for the real trees in the forests, that serve us every minute of every day and they never asked for anything in return. And all those presents under the tree, they actually did cost the Earth.

If sanity doesn't prevail sometime soon, Mother Earth will be stripped completely bare, yet society is under the impression that they can buy anything they want, but what was it we used to say? The best things in life are free, and they were never for sale, you just can't buy them.

Like a bloody good downpour when you need it most, you can't use your credit card to return our good old fashioned seasons asap, or put down a deposit to resurrect our forests and one thing I do know, is no amount of money could ever purchase us more time. Now that we have run out of.

But again, definitely not money.

Dunoon Dam = catastrophe for koalas

by Nan Nicholson

Koalas are at a critical stage in their existence on this planet, where they have lived for about 25 million years.

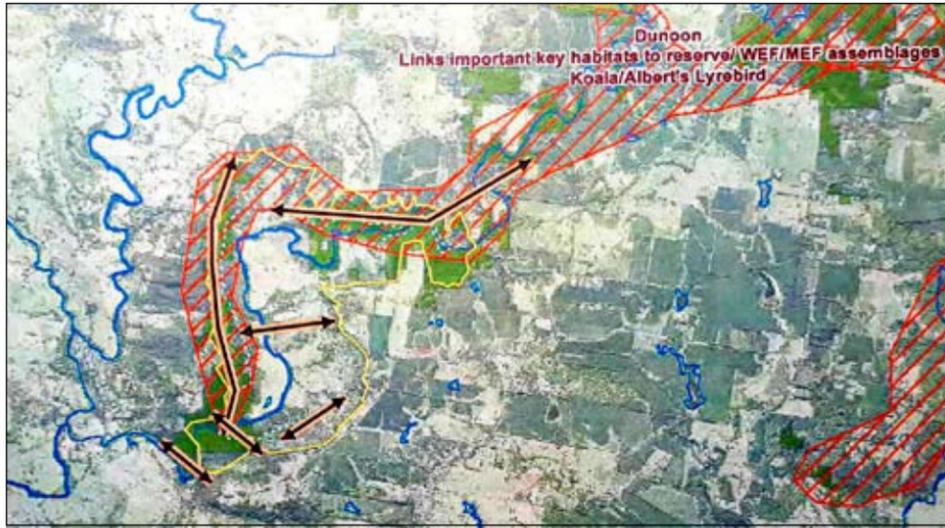
Their situation is precarious in 'normal' times and the 2018-19 drought followed by the 2019/2020 bushfires caused devastation in the region.

In the fires, 70% of our regional koala population was incinerated, according to Dr Steve Phillips, principal research scientist at Biolink.

Excluding fires, the underlying factor in most koala deaths are diseases such as chlamydia and retrovirus caused by the stress that koalas experience when their habitat is removed. (Research from submission by Dr. Ros Irwin, former President of Friends of the Koala and Chair of Rous Water, to the Rous County Council).

The destruction of swathes of habitat and critical movement corridors with the construction of the Dunoon Dam will worsen the stress-disease problem and lead to more deaths in a significant local population of koalas. Koalas are commonly seen and heard in the area of the proposed dam and The Channon is a known hotspot for koalas.

According to the *Dunoon*



Key Habitats and Corridors (NPWS) and Local Connectivity, from Dunoon Terrestrial Ecology Impact Assessment 2011. The black arrows show the koala movement corridors which would be severed or affected by the proposed dam.

Terrestrial Ecology Impact Assessment (TEIA), prepared for Rous Water in 2011, there are 72 ha of koala habitat of Tallowwood and Flooded Gum forest. Of this, one third would be destroyed outright by inundation or by construction of the wall, and the remainder would be fragmented.

The habitat in this area is unusually rich for koalas because much of the eucalypt forest is on basalt substrate. High nutrient soils produce high quality leaves of the right tree species to support koalas. Tallowwood is a primary feed species, and Flooded Gum is a secondary feed species.

The loss of movement corridors is particularly concerning because koalas need to move frequently and easily to new trees. The map below shows the koala corridors which would be severed by the Dunoon Dam.

While Rous County Council works against the survival of koalas, a local group, Whian Whian Landcare, has been labouring for the past three years planting almost 3000 koala feed trees to rebuild corridors between the proposed dam and the tracts of forest to the north. The venture has been supported by Lismore City Council Koala Plan of

Management, the Saving Our Species program, Landcare, Conservation Volunteers Australia, NRMA and the local landholders.

The Dunoon Dam would entirely fracture this corridor and be another nail in the coffin for Northern Rivers koalas.

We have reached a point in the downward spiral to koala extinction where no further threats can be tolerated. Retention of existing habitat is by far the best method of rescuing koalas from extinction. Not one tree more can be lost. If this sounds extreme, then what is extinction? Moderate?

Human attributes to create a benevolent society already exist

by Hayo van der Woude

NAIDOC Week allowed us to step back, to think in the larger context of human evolution, from the oldest culture to the heart of capitalism.

Under extremes of corporate manipulation and control, 'democratic' USA disintegrated in the face of Covid. The sickness industry failed in the face of a health crisis. As with health, compassion is inconsistent with profiteering off accommodating the poor and elderly.

The 'system' almost guarantees a major personal and financial crisis in every life. Businesses, homes, relationships, families, jobs, 'super', friends and familiar communities.

The 2020 virus 'hiccup' provided a grand opportunity for a reset. The prime cause of systemic failure is excessive self-interest, stemming from bank interest. We need to debate wresting democratic control from banks, and legislate it at zero: *AbZer0%Int*

Consider this conceptual summation of modern human history. People lived tribally all across the Garden of Eden (Earth) 60,000 years ago, and were innately endowed with great intelligence, the capacity to self-reflect, and love deeply. We aren't mere animals!

Some peoples continued living tribally, others tried villages, city and cities. Records have been lost of how civilisations failed, whether self-destructed or naturally.

Some travelled and conquered, until today we are experiencing the single 'global village'.

Western history has focussed on the negative aspects of 3,000yrs of wars and failures, forgetting that we already had all the human attributes required for a successful civilisation.

For 60,000 years those worth preserving have been refined in Australia by absent destructive invasions. So, which features are best for the planet?

Tribal communities were cohesive, featured matriarchal leadership, honoured ancestors, and respected and understood nature.

They were small enough to know everyone. Top down rule was a foreign concept, since compassionate guidance from matriarchs, uncles and aunts was readily accepted. When 'Nature' is the boss, she generously offers a 20-hour week!

Stability, and the absence of fear, enabled mature and wise behaviour – absent in governments.

So, why hasn't the modern world scaled up with the best features?

People are relaxed in a familiar, natural environment, where others look, speak, think and believe much like themselves.

But in the populous global village, all feels unfamiliar and insecure. Associating with people like oneself is vastly more comfortable. The less mature can easily become prejudiced.

Out in the big world, people forgot how to harvest natural abundance. They avoided those who were different and did not learn to know them.

Over time they plundered Earth's abundance, and exploited each other, in company with, and for people like themselves. Fear created discrimination.

Magnificent, motivated humans theorised and experimented with countless social systems, but selfish wealth and power always prevailed.

Ruling classes utilise armed forces to maintain order and protection, assisted by the innate goodness of people. We naturally trust the benevolence of our elders, customs and beliefs – we're tricked into taking the 'trickle down' bait.

Simply put, people control wealth, muscle, and mind control.

Capitalism dominates this three-in-one governance of all nations today. We are mind-controlled through party ideologies, economic dogmas and ethical posturing.

Financial predation and crimes by the most trusted corporations are shielded by politicians on the take. Our trust is shattered.

The unforgiving nature of banks, and fear of missing payments, is the prime driver of instability and fear of survival. It is experienced by rich and poor alike; if not physical, then financial.

If we can eliminate fear, our true compassionate nature can be revealed. Simply adopt *AbZer0%Int* Capital can be raised in better ways, side-stepping banks.

Let's temporarily adopt a generous Social Wage, and put ideological fears aside, while we debate and measure the benefits. The cash splash demonstrated it works.

The false fear of bludgers stems from politicians in the super-selfish world. Social Wage security allows the young to plan and exhibit their true nature, as contributors to the 'tribe'.

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