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Julian Assange's bizarro wedding

by John Jiggins

Stella and Julian's marriage was a rare joyful moment for this embattled family. The mainstream media, of course, presented it as a bizarro royal wedding, focussing on the bride and groom's clothes.

The males, Julian, his brother Gabriel, and Stella and Julian's two sons, Gabriel and Max, wore tartan kilts in honour of their Scottish heritage.

Vivienne Westwood, a long-time supporter, designed and made Stella a full-length wedding dress, which was adorned with graffiti and one of Westwood's signature corsets.

The British do these bizarro royal weddings so well, knowing well which details to ignore!

A quarter of the wedding party were prison guards, and one of them was given the task of being the official photographer. Before saying 'I do', Stella was searched multiple times and had to pass through security scanners and sniffer dogs!

She was patted down in her wedding gown and fingerprinted four times.

Two of the six guests, US journalist Chris Hedges and Scottish journalist Craig Murray (who was to be one of the witnesses) were denied entry. They stayed outside with 150 supporters

Craig Murray, who was the British Ambassador to Uzbekistan until he was fired for exposing the CIA black sites and torture centres in that country, was told that he could not enter because he would "endanger the security of the prison."

As Stella admitted, "It's not the wedding we would have planned, but we're choosing to take control of our lives. We're doing it for love, for each other, for our sons and because Julian's life has been put on hold for long enough, robbing him of years with his family."

Belmarsh's Governor Jenny Louis ordered the couple's remaining four guests out of the prison the minute the service was over, and Julian was taken back to his cell, knowing he may never get to live with his family.

As their own bizarro wedding present, the UK Supreme Court have dismissed his appeal against the High Court decision to allow his extradition to the USA.

With Julian facing a 175-year sentence if extradited to the US, his family members are confronting the prospect of losing Julian forever to the abyss of the US justice system.



Mullum preview of new doco

Fresh from attending the marriage of his son Julian Assange to partner Stella Moris, Assange's seemingly tireless, continent-hopping father, John Shipton, will return to northern NSW to address supporters at a preview screening of the film *Ithaka* in Mullumbimby on Tuesday 12th April.

Ithaka tracks John's journey alongside Julian's then fiancée, Stella Moris, as they join forces to advocate for Julian.

Produced by Julian's brother Gabriel Shipton, the yet-to-be-released documentary was directed by multi-award-winning director Ben Lawrence.

It will be shown in Mullumbimby two weeks before its official release as a special thank-you for Julian's many supporters on the North Coast.

Filmed over two years across the UK, Europe, the US and Australia, *Ithaka* follows John Shipton's punishing schedule to save his son.

We witness John embark on a European odyssey to rally a global network of supporters, advocate to politicians and cautiously step into the media's glare – where he is forced to confront events that made Julian a global flashpoint.

In marked contrast to the war in Ukraine, the Iraqi war was covered by the mainstream media by journalists embedded with the invading forces.

They provided images of horrific bombings as entertainment, and asked us to admire them as a massive firework displays; as "shock and awe", delivered by "smart bombs".

Civilian deaths were dismissed as "collateral damage".

So when WikiLeaks showed us what "collateral damage" really looked like by releasing a video of a massacre by an Apache helicopter gun crew of Iraqi civilians and two Reuter journalists, not embedded with the invading forces but trying to present the war from the



perspective of Iraqi civilians, Julian Assange called it *Collateral Murder*.

This intervention played an important role in ending the illegal AUKUS invasion of a sovereign nation, and because of this, the war criminals he exposed are destroying Julian Assange with the consent of "our" Australian government, claiming he is the war criminal!


But Assange was a hero for peace.

It is notable that the 17 examples of 'espionage' the US is prosecuting Assange over do not include *Collateral Murder*, the most famous and the most damaging release of all.

For the Apache helicopter crew, the civilians on the ground were not seen as people. Like boys playing a computer game, they exclaimed "Light 'em up!" as they blew apart their victims from their unseen platform a mile in the sky.

When a passing-by good Samaritan stopped to help those still living, he and his children were ruthlessly machine-gunned, which the murderers callously justified, blaming their father, saying he shouldn't have brought children to a war zone!

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30th MardiGrass postponed



Discussion in Hemp Bar at MardiGrass meeting with Nimbin A&I's Neville Plush (far right)

by Michael Balderstone, president
MardiGrass Organising Body

Nimbin's annual first weekend in May MardiGrass cannabis law reform protest and gathering has been postponed. The new dates are 16-17-18th September.

The date change was made because of the flood damage on the roads especially, but other reasons like Nimbin's water supply still being severely limited, and the big wet and landslips still taking their toll on the community. It's just too soon. So it will be a spring planting ceremony instead of a soggy harvest festival.

We need the Town Hall and the

Nimbin Showgrounds to be free for the weekend, and we were lucky to squeeze in, as Nimbin is busy in September.

The Annual Nimbin Show is on the last weekend and we appreciate that they are letting us have MardiGrass the weekend before. The World Cup Poetry Event is on the first weekend and Nimbin Fashion Show the second, both annual events also.

The MardiGrass program for this year's 30th anniversary was pretty much sorted for May, but this will give us more time for the historical display we're planning. So anyone with photos or movies of early MardiGrass protests please get in touch, especially from the nineties.

Most people involved in this year's

event have confirmed they will be available for September, and we expect the program to just get better between now and then. Meanwhile the ground will hopefully dry up for the Hemp Olympix events and Legalise Cannabis will get a huge vote in the election.

Maybe the new PM Albo will be forced to finally listen and we will be allowed to grow our own weed and the mean saliva testing will be scrapped in favour of sensible sobriety tests. It's gotta get legal soon!

Big apologies from the MOB to anyone whose travel plans have been upset by the change of dates. The spring planting ceremony will be awesome though, so mark the weekend on your calendar.

Towards Nimbin Aquarius 50th anniversary

by Benny Zable, president
Nimbin Aquarius Foundation

It has been a devastating couple of months in the Rainbow region. Nimbin survived with some minor flooding and major landslips, but who knows what the future holds for Lismore.

Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc. (NAFI) has rescheduled its 2022 Annual General Meeting, which is now on Friday 8th April in the Nimbin Community Centre at 4pm.

This is an invitation for all interested folks and organisations to sign up with us in preparing for the Nimbin Aquarius 50th anniversary, from 20th to 24th May next year.

The Foundation acts as an umbrella organisation to

facilitate Aquarius Festival anniversaries, and has done so since the 20th anniversary in 1993. It operates as an information, ideas and energies exchange network fostering the Spirit of Aquarius.

At our committee meeting in February, we discussed assembling a team to write a vision statement as part of promoting the 50th anniversary.

Lots of great ideas have already been seeded by our team, including a number of documentary interviews planned in the lead-up to the 50th, and the support of Nimbin Central School's principal for developing projects to encourage students to participate.

Juno Gemes would also like to hear from people



Photo: Chibo

who attended the Tuntable Falls Aboriginal Gathering she helped organise. Go to: juno@junogemes.com

The Nimbin Chamber of Commerce is currently canvassing Expressions of Interest in developing a program of events.

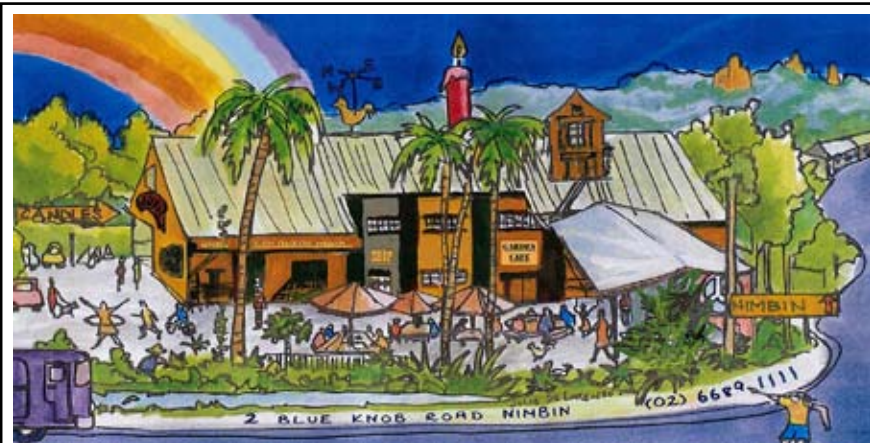
If you are interested and would like to receive the EOI information, please email

the Chamber: chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au

The program of events compiled under the EOI is to be completed by the end of July 2022, so as to allow for grant funds to be sourced.

Applications are to be made by close of business, 22nd April.

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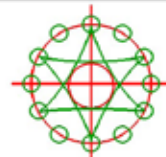
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Railway for transport disadvantage

by Beth Shelley, Northern Rivers Railway Action Group

In the recent floods, many people's cars were submerged and therefore ruined. This has led to a greater demand for replacements.

Due to a shortage of cars coming from overseas, car prices had been rising. Consequently with the additional demand, people are finding that insurance claims do not cover a sufficient amount to replace their car. This means the number of people suffering from transport disadvantage is growing.

The need for public transport in this region is rapidly increasing. However, in March Lismore City Council accepted the funding offer from Federal MP for Page, Kevin Hogan, of \$9.9 million for a bike path to replace our local railway infrastructure for the 16.3 km section from Bentley to Lismore Railway Station. This amount of money would be enough to repair the railway.

We really need to question, in this time before the Federal election, why the Nationals are wanting to rip up valuable railway infrastructure. We know they don't favour action on climate change, but none-the-less, railways have been

proven to be the best way to cut transport emissions quickly. Yet here we are seeing the destruction of a railway in a busy, populated area like the Northern Rivers. Traffic congestion, road damage and accidents will continue to worsen.

There was a protest at Stokers Siding near Murwillumbah on 7th February 2022. People there are upset and angry about the railway tracks being ripped up. Marie Luxford from Northern Rivers Railway Action Group said, "We're trying to stop the railway line from being ripped up for a bike trail. This is the end of the line."

"They're going to rip it out right through to Crabbes Creek. Byron Bay is ready to bring in light rail and a bike path and we could've all joined up together."

People at the protest said that the community was never consulted. There have been no meetings to ask whether people wanted the railway or a bike path. Transport disadvantage in the Northern Rivers region has been reported for decades. Because of the current flooding crisis, public transport is needed more than ever.

Once deputy prime minister, Mr Tim Fischer, was a National but he stated, "Rail trails are great in many ways but,

better still in north-eastern NSW, a shuttle modern light rail between Casino and Byron Bay and Murwillumbah makes great sense."

Returning a rail service to Northern NSW, Mr Fischer said, was "essential to the core transport fabric of an increasingly congested part of NSW, adjoining as it does the Gold Coast."

We need to let Kevin Hogan know that he's not looking after the needs of our community when he offers funding to destroy our railway. We also need to talk to Lismore City Councillors and ask for the funding to be redirected to repair the railway line, because we need urgent action on climate change right now.

An article in the *The Conversation* (13th December 2019) states, "In the quest to cut carbon out of civilisation, the future of transport is key. Emissions from the sector have doubled in the past 40 years and continue to rise. We need radical and rapid reductions in road traffic. Electrified rail travel uses seven times less CO₂ than road travel, and 20 times less than air travel."

For more information, email: nrrailwayaction@gmail.com

Please sign the petition: <https://www.change.org/SavetheTracks>

Supporting access to GPs in flood-hit areas

Residents in flood-affected communities across the North Coast can be assured that access to primary health care services is starting to bounce back as the recovery effort gets underway.

Healthy North Coast chief executive officer Julie Sturgess has praised the commitment of all primary health care workers – general practices, Aboriginal medical services, pharmacies, dental practices, mental health services and other allied health providers – in continuing to serve the community during the flood emergency and now recovery period.

"We have been working with GPs, pharmacies and other primary care professionals to get them back on their feet as soon as possible," said Ms Sturgess.

"We know that about 85-90% of GP clinics in flood-impacted areas are now open and many are fully operational, with about 90% of our pharmacies also open.

"This is a clear demonstration of their resilience and commitment



Pictured are (l-r) Monika Wheeler, executive director – wellness, Healthy North Coast PHN; Jodie McLean, practice manager, Lismore Clinic; Julie Sturgess, chief executive officer, Healthy North Coast PHN – with the Street Side Medics mobile GP clinic positioned outside Lismore Clinic in Molesworth Street.

to our community and their determination to be part of the recovery and re-build in Northern NSW.

"But we know that many areas were hard hit and we are exploring a range of options with the GP workforce to meet community needs in those towns.

"In Lismore, we've identified which clinics are operating and we are liaising with other towns where access to GPs is still difficult.

Mr Sturgess urged residents

to visit the Healthy North Coast website at: www.hnc.org.au for service updates, where information will be published as it comes to hand.

"We've also been able to stand up a mobile GP clinic in Lismore thanks to the generous folk at Street Side Medics," said Ms Sturgess.

Street Side Medics is a not-for-profit that normally delivers a free, GP-led, mobile medical service to people experiencing homelessness in NSW.

Ms Sturgess said Street Side Medics has kindly donated a fully equipped mobile medical centre on temporary loan, free-of-charge, to support North Coast communities.

The mobile clinic has commenced operations outside the Lismore Clinic, at 185 Molesworth Street, though it will be in the region for at least the next month.

"We are also very grateful to Lismore Clinic GPs and clinical staff who are staffing the mobile clinic.

"I want to remind people that if they can't get to their GP due to the flood impacts, they can still call Healthy North Coast GP Telehealth on 1800-931-158 for free 24/7 phone or video consultations, including electronic scripts.

"In times of crisis, people need support at the front line. And that's where our GPs, pharmacies, Aboriginal medical services, and mental health professionals have been, not only through this flood emergency and recovery, but for the past two years. We are truly indebted to them."



Heritage, graves and koalas at risk from one-track dam thinking

by Nan Nicholson

WATER Northern Rivers Alliance, Widgebal Wia-bal Traditional Owners, Friends of the Koala and concerned people from Byron, Lismore, Ballina and Richmond Valley rallied to oppose Dunoon Dam.

A crowd of about 150 people rallied at 9am outside Rous Water to protest the motion by new Rous Councillor Rob to bring the Dunoon Dam back as one of the options for the Future Water 2060 plan.

"We are here today in support of a drought-resilient water system for the Rous region that does not include the destructive and unnecessary Dunoon Dam. We stand for protection of the Widgebal Wia-bal burial sites, the rare rainforest and the critical koala habitat that would be destroyed," said WATER Northern Rivers spokesperson Terri Nicholson.

"Many of the Rous councillors are completely new to their positions. They should not have been put on the spot to make a decision of such import as this, before being fully informed.

"They should have listened to the Widgebal Wia-bal whose ancestors' resting places would be drowned, as well as the water experts who consistently say a new dam is not the answer to water security," said Ms Nicholson.

Widgebal Wia-bal woman Skye Roberts spoke powerfully on behalf of her Elders, addressing both the rally and

then the Rous Councilors in the meeting.

"I am bringing the message from my people, my elders. We must protect these sacred sites; burials and men's and women's sites. We will not give up. I will keep standing up and speaking for my people and our sacred places and living connection to this land and our culture", Ms Roberts said.

Elder Aunty Leonee Roberts Nowta said, "This Dunoon Dam motion is disrespectful to our people. It shows an unwillingness to listen to Traditional Owners. His motion is deeply offensive to us. We must protect the resting place of our ancestors. No dam at Dunoon."

Ros Irwin, as spokesperson for Friends of the Koala, spoke of the recent listing of koalas as 'endangered', and the importance of the Dunoon population which has the genetic diversity and health needed for the survival of koalas around Lismore.

"If 72 hectares of koala habitat was to be destroyed, damaged or fragmented in Ballina Shire, there would be public outcry. Koalas are on a direct path to extinction unless we preserve their habitat. This can not be offset or mitigated," she said.

Water expert Professor Stuart White (UTS) who has over 30 years' experience in urban water supply demand planning sent a written submission to Rous councillors prior to their meeting.

"I am of the view that the Dunoon Dam should be ruled out as an option for water supply for the region, on the

grounds that it is not needed and has too high a marginal cost relative to other options, as well as the environmental and cultural heritage risks," Professor White said.

WATER Northern Rivers is deeply disappointed that the newly-elected Rous councillors voted 6:2 to put Dunoon Dam back on the Future Water 2060 plan.

"This decision is reckless and irresponsible," said Ms Nicholson. "The Cultural Heritage, rare rainforest remnants and Endangered koala habitat are all of national, and indeed, global significance. This action today will come under wide scrutiny."

Two Cultural Heritage reports were conducted by archeologists. Both found that the area of the proposed dam contains multiple grave sites that predate European settlement, and other sites of huge cultural significance.

"There was global shock when Rio Tinto blew up the Juukan Gorge. Would we let this happen here? Rous-Tinto does not have a good ring to it," said Ms Nicholson.

"It is a step backwards. Instead of continuing with leadership in sustainable water security, environmental protection and reconciliation for Traditional Owners, this move is an embarrassing and dangerous diversion.

"It is deeply harmful to genuine reconciliation with the Traditional Owners which Rous has prided itself on."

Northern Rivers relief fund supports immediate needs

The Flood Relief Fund, a grassroots community-led fund, has been formed in response to the devastating March 2022 floods across the wider Northern Rivers region.

A collaboration between the Byron Community Centre and Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF), the fund was established to provide rapid and informed support for recovery and action at a community level. 100% of all donations received will be directly allocated to not-for-profit community organisations working in flood recovery across the Northern Rivers.

A Grants Committee has been formed to identify local needs, based on continuous research conducted by the NRCF team, to distribute the funds for the quickest and most effective support.



The Grants Committee is made up of senior members from both organisations, as well as a number of neutral members, all of whom have had a long-term commitment to the Northern Rivers and are known and trusted within the community, including Byron's Citizen of the Year for 2020, Helen Hamilton, who is acting as Chairperson. "The past weeks have shown what a generous and resourceful community we have in the Northern Rivers. The Flood Relief Fund (FRF) allows us to harness that

for the maximum benefit of people impacted by the floods. Please support our locally-led recovery," said Helen.

Since commencing a few weeks ago, the fund has raised over \$350,000 in immediate funds, with several hundred thousand dollars committed by donors over the coming weeks.

The Fund has been able to award 28 grants to community projects already, which is expected to multiply substantially in the coming weeks as the fundraise continues and weekly grants are allocated.

The organisations and projects funded represent a broad geographical spread and a diverse range of immediate needs in flood affected communities across the Northern Rivers region.

Barbara Swain of the Mental Health Support Group, a recipient, said, "Our

community is absolutely incredible – I don't know where they get their kindness and their generosity from. I can't thank the donors enough. It's not a 'hand down', it's a 'hand up' to help with recovery."

The community fund is live now and accepting donations via the Byron Community Centre, which holds DGR1 status. To promote transparency, all allocated funds and the projects they are supporting will be published on the fund website on a weekly basis.

To make a donation to the Northern Rivers Flood Relief Fund or for more information, please visit: www.floodrelieffund.org or call the Byron Community Centre office (02) 6685-6807. Credit and debit cards, bank transfer and cryptocurrency are accepted. All donations are tax deductible.

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Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News

Flood disaster help and information

Not every person is on-line or on social media – please pass info around as much as possible by other means, and let people know if they need help to contact us at NNIC.

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Info Centre (NNIC) is OPEN 10am-4pm Monday-Friday at 71 Cullen Street (next to the park), phone 6689-1692. If you need help, come into NNIC or call us on 6689-1692 for a face-to-face or telephone appointment.

We are currently operating as a Response and Recovery Hub for the Nimbin area and we have been hosting numerous additional external service providers to assist flood/landslide impacted community members. These include Service Australia (Centrelink) staff, Services NSW staff and DCJ Housing support staff.

We can help with lots of other support and info, eg food support (including dog/cat food), hot meals,

frozen meals, drinking water, mental health support, assistance with mobile phones/devices, printing, copying, internet access and help with navigating the myriad of disaster relief payments and grants. See our website for useful info, links and regular updates: www.nmic.org.au

We are maintaining a register of internal roads and access issues, homes that need structural assessments, and people who need temporary housing support due to damage to or loss of housing due to landslides etc. To register these issues (or any other help needed), come into NNIC or email us on: admin@nmic.org.au and include exact location, contact name and phone number, and pictures of the issue if relevant.

You should also log these issues with Services NSW via their website or by phoning 13-77-88 to ensure the extent of the impact in our area is fully recognised (and resources allocated).

The response and recovery in Nimbin has involved a huge team effort by multiple community organisations, businesses and individual community members.

We wish to acknowledge everyone involved, the list being too extensive to print here, but to all of you thanks so much for everything. Nimbinites you are AWESOME.

Nimbin Flood Relief Appeal – donations

For People wishing to donate funds to provide Nimbin Flood Relief to folks in the Nimbin catchment area, cash donations can be made at the Neighbourhood Centre at 71 Cullen Street Nimbin or deposited to: Summerland Credit Union BSB 728 728; Nimbin Neighbourhood & Info Centre GIFT FUND: Account Number: 22205341. Please use FLOOD as reference and include your name.

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. If you want a tax deductible DGR receipt for your donation, email us the details and the date you donated and we will send you one or come down to the Neighbourhood Centre.

NNIC is a registered charity with a current Fundraising Authority. No fees are taken from donations. 100% of flood

relief donations will be distributed to people in need who have been directly impacted, prioritising the most disadvantaged or vulnerable people in our community.

To everyone who has donated funds to date, we thank you.

Nimbin Recreational Cannabis Forum – Towards a Safe and Healthy Cannabis Culture

****DATE CHANGE****

This event will now be happening on Saturday 7th May, 11am-1pm at the Town Hall.

Remember that film we were making back in May and June 2021 featuring loads of Nimbinite's views on Nimbin's Cannabis Culture? Well finally we can show it... this is a Community Workshop to discuss our recreational cannabis culture. All Nimbinites welcome.

This is a FREE event and yummy food will be provided. Come along to see the film and have a conversation about it.

Brought to you by Nimbin CDAT (Community Drug Action Team), it's sure to be a lively and interesting discussion so don't miss this!

www.nmic.org.au
www.facebook.com/pages/Nimbin-Neighbourhood-and-Information-Centre

Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services

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SOCIAL CENTRE with Veranda – Monday-Friday 10am-2pm. Drop in for a cuppa, access support services, info and computers.

DEVICE ADVICE – Back soon: Wednesdays 9.30am-1pm. Seniors can book for assistance with phone, tablet or laptop issues.

SENIORS SOCIAL GROUPS – booking and fees apply

- Nimbin Tuesday Social Group, 10.30am-1pm. Morning tea, conversation, music and light lunch, weekly
- The Channon Seekers and Sages 3rd Thursday, 11am-2pm
- The Outsiders Group 1st and 3rd Thursday, 11am-2pm
- Wise Ones at Koonorigan Hall 4th Monday, 11.30am-1.30pm

BUS OUTINGS – 2nd and 4th Tuesday. Scenic drives, cafes for morning tea & lunch (you pay), bookings essential, fees apply.

Phone **6689-1709** or visit NACRS at the Bottlebrush Studio, Nimbin Community Centre to find out more.

www.nacrs.com.au

Peace Park boundary adjustment

One of the items on Council's February business paper was a motion to stop any work being done to reclassify part of Peace Park and transfer a portion of it to the community hub at 7 Sibley Street as a boundary adjustment.



Councillors are hoping to have a site visit at some time and to speak with the community about this land and any future development they want to see on it.

Nimbin Chamber of Commerce is in the process of organising a community meeting with Lismore councillors and staff, which is currently slated for the evening of Monday 2nd May to discuss the handover of part of the site.

It is hoped that many residents will be able to attend this meeting. In the meantime, please email and let councillors know your vision for this land and 7 Sibley Street.

Nimbin Hospital information



Child immunisation

By appointment, please phone 6630-0400.

Early childhood nurse

Every Tuesday. Baby checks, weighs, post-natal support. For appointments, phone 6630-0400.

Women's health nurse services

Confidential service, checks, advice, general health information. Phone 6689-1400 for appointment.

Wound clinic

Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am. For self-referral, phone 6689-1433. Referrals also from Nimbin Hospital and GP clinic.

Drug and alcohol counselling services available

For an appointment, please contact 6620-7600. A trained professional will ask you a few confidential questions and will provide you with an appointment time.

Nurse practitioner clinic

• Diabetes clinics: third Thursday of the month, next is 21st April.

Community Registered Nurse

Monday to Friday, 8am-4.30pm. Assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy, provision of palliative care in the home, medication support. Phone 6689-1433 – leave a message, will return call swiftly.

Nimbin NSP

Needle and Syringe Program open Monday to Thursday. Arrangements can be made to see a Community Registered Nurse.

Health advice line

Phone 1800-022-222 if you have a health issue. 24-hour, seven days a week, free service. A Registered Nurse will assess whether you need to go to an Emergency Department.

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

Monthly meetings are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month, 9.30am in the CWA room. New members are most welcome.





by Scott Sledge, president

NEFA and local public forests

Forest defence organisations like the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) include the Environment Centres in Nimbin, Lismore, and Murwillumbah plus the Kyogle Environment Group.

NEFA president Dailan Pugh, AOM, is outspoken about government's failure to protect koala habitat. He recently pointed out that the state-owned Forestry Corporation bends the rules every chance it gets.

Last month he led a group from Fridays4Forests to the Camira State Forest, south of Casino. They found strong evidence of koalas living in the section scheduled for logging, which had largely escaped the Black Summer bushfire. Furthermore, the area that Forestry has designated as the required "offset" is the area most severely impacted by fire and shows few signs of koalas.

Dailan said that's typical because Forestry Corp cares only about getting the forests cut down, not the future for wildlife. If EPA or another agency finds out they violate the rules, they get a slap-on-the-wrist fine, which is paid by the government anyway. Why should they care?

We need the world to wise up and stop behaviours that damage the biosphere and drive climate change. We can get our timber from plantation trees and paper from hemp.

Boosted protection for Koalas

Federal Minister for the Environment Sussan Ley said the government would provide \$50 million for koala conservation and protection under national environmental law, and "will seek agreement from Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory on the National Recovery plan."

She continued, "We are taking unprecedented action to protect the koala... Today I am

increasing the protection for koalas in NSW, the ACT and Queensland listing them as endangered rather than their previous designation of vulnerable. The impact of prolonged drought, followed by the black summer bushfires, and the cumulative impacts of disease, urbanisation and habitat loss over the past twenty years have led to the advice. The National plan developed through scientific advice and public consultation will now go to the relevant states for their final adoption and will help guide state and local government strategies."

Long-time Liberal MLC, Catherine Cusack (based at Ballina) said the NSW government has failed to acknowledge that dogs and habitat destruction are the main causes of koala decline. A community-driven petition of 25,000 signatures was presented to Parliament by Tamara Smith (Ballina), leading to a debate in NSW Parliament and the purchase of good koala habitat near Port Macquarie.

Local Members Janelle Saffin and Geoff Provest spoke in favour. Newly-appointed NSW Environment Minister, James Griffin (Manly), made this commitment as the Minister for Environment and Heritage: "The Government will roll out the NSW Koala Strategy at speed."

Koalas made it onto the second Ballina Shire Council meeting agenda for 2022, with new Greens Councillor Simon Chate calling for their habitat to become an immediate priority. He noted that the federal government officially reclassified koalas as endangered (11th Feb 2022) and said this meant it is 'critical' for the council to do everything possible to ensure the 'health and longevity' of the species.

NB: If the State Government is genuinely concerned about the survival of koalas, it needs to stop excessive tree clearing and stop koala habitat being sold off to developers. While the land at 147 The Ruins Way was saved, critical koala habitat – much of it in State-owned forest – is being cleared and logged.

Community Centre News

by Teresa Biscoe, Co-ordinator

As April arrives with more flood warnings, we are all bracing ourselves and hoping we just get a bit more rain and not more havoc while we are still in recovery.

The Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre is still co-ordinating support for affected community members.

They are saying that lots of people who are in need are not taking up the services because they don't think their problem is "bad enough" or they think the support is only for property owners and not tenants.

It's really important that everyone who has been affected register what has happened so they not only



get the support they need but these services know what's happening and can direct resources and funding to the village.

The staff at the Centre are really helpful and will direct you to whatever support is available.

We have lost a few Community Centre volunteers from our office and grounds maintenance crew in the last month. Our office volunteer Ann Matzaros has left the area, Lynda Bell and James Gardner have retired,

and Glenn Sparkes is busy for the next three months working as a maintenance person for Council at the Lismore Caravan Park where many displaced people are now residing.

They have all been wonderful volunteers. This leaves Paul Sims as our lone ranger who comes all the way from The Channon to volunteer.

If you are thinking of volunteering anywhere or know someone who may be interested please direct them to the Community Centre. We are registered with Centrelink and welcome any assistance.

The Centre can be contacted by phone (02 6689-0000) or email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au if you are interested in volunteering.



Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, President

What a month!

The Chamber extends its commiserations to the members of both the Nimbin and Northern Rivers community that have been affected by the recent cataclysmic flooding event.

We would especially like to acknowledge and thank the many individuals who have been involved in the aftermath and clean up, and local community organisations, such as the Bushfire Brigades, Nimbin A&I, Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre and the Nimbin CWA, who have contributed tirelessly to providing information and support to the local community during this period of distress.

The carnage of the past few weeks is a reminder of how vulnerable we all are to the forces of Mother Nature, especially when we as a nation ignore the responsibility to contribute to achieving balance by observing best conservation and environmental practices.

The cost of this disaster has not yet been fully revealed and will not be for many months or even years to come.

The flood had a big impact on myself as a business owner. The Nimbin Bush Theatre complex became 'as one' with the river. We were thigh deep in water, the café fridges were floating, and river mud was everywhere.

However, before the black dog of depression had the chance to take hold,

a band of caring patrons and community members came forward day after day, willingly giving their energy and skills to assist us getting things back into shape. We will be forever grateful.

To those in our community who have experienced loss of homes due to land slips or water inundation, please reach out for support. You are not alone. Fortunately, Nimbin is a caring community that will join to assist those who have been impacted and are now in need.

The Neighbourhood Centre is holding funds which have been donated via a friend of the Chamber for distribution to those most in need. If you need help, ask.

It is time for the community to shine, to excel in displaying our care for each others' well-being.

Service NSW has a range of support measures available to both business and the general public. They are contactable on 13-77-88 or: www.service.nsw.gov.au They also have hubs in Lismore.

Business NSW North Coast has also set up a business hub at Southern Cross Uni campus where all businesses can go for support and advice on a wide range of

issues.

Our thanks also go out to both Janelle Saffin, local member for Lismore, and Steve Krieg, Mayor of Lismore, who both took time from their busy schedules to visit Nimbin to assess the impact and engage with our community.

Also, a shout out to the Australian Defence Forces who were deployed to assist with the clean-up and repair of important infrastructure such as the Nimbin weir, and replacement of 4km of pipes that comprise the village's main water supply which was washed away in the flood.

Fortunately rural consumers now have water again.

Illuminate Nimbin and more

The Illuminate Nimbin Festival which was planned for March has been postponed until 26th August.

August/September will be a busy period in our village as events go, a time to celebrate our recovery as a community. Nimbin will be the place to be.

The new village signage the Chamber has been working on should also be completed in time for these events, providing a fitting welcome to our guests.

New members

A big welcome to the three new members of the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce:

- Rico Elliot – the Nimbin Plumber. Phone 0459-356-270.
- Sophie Stouff – Colour consultant, Painting, Homescaping. Phone 0422-799-451.
- Sandrine Rangeon – Rainbow Goats Vegetation Management. Phone 0457-624-824

NIMBIN'S SUSTAINABLE LIVING HUB

7 Sibley Street

April What's On!
\$10 unless otherwise noted
Bookings: text 0475-135-764
or email: sibley@nnc.org.au

Workshops (start 10.30am)

- **Wed 6th: Spinning basics** – bring your old spinning wheel or use one of ours
- **Wed 13th: Non-toxic pest control** – learn to make traps, baits, dust powders and limewash
- **Sat 16th: Food gardens for future resilience** – what, how and where to grow
- **Wed 20th: Textiles** – what to do with raw wool. Learn traditional methods for felting

- **Wed 27th: Back to basics** – play with clay and make your own oil lamps

Regular events

- **Community Tools Library:** Wed and Sat, 10.30am – 2pm.
- **Plant nursery:** Seedlings, cuttings, fruit and regen trees for sustainable gardens.
- **10-minute workshops:** Try your hand at hemp string making, stick spinning or loom weaving.

Shop 1, 66 Cullen Street
**** HAPPY EASTER EVERYONE ****

THE NIMBIN UNICORN

Shop 1, 66 Cullen Street
**** HAPPY EASTER EVERYONE ****

FREE CAR BODY REMOVAL

LOCALLY MINDED

0439333910

Dispossession

When my ancestors' family landed in Brisbane in 1863, they settled in Coorparoo, close to the lagoons at Woolongabba.

They played with the local kids there, who taught them how to swim, how to make and use a spear for fishing, and taught them their language.

This was not an isolated case. There were many such "first contact" stories all over the country. It was later that the trouble started, when settlers brought their sheep and cattle onto the land without permission, and started destroying the native environment, a process we continue down to the present day.

Ten years ago I was able to visit my ancient homelands of France and Ireland, which was a great healing for me. And one of the beautiful things I found was that there are still traditional owners there, and in the UK, in touch with their ancient past, maintaining sacred sites, ancient monuments and other signs of human habitation dating back millennia.

If they can do it there, why can't we accord the traditional owners here the same respect?

We Australians who came here after 1788 continue to benefit from the dispossession of the original occupants. Until we can accept this, we live in a state of denial and delusion. Until quite recently we told ourselves, through our legal system, that this land was unoccupied, belonged to no-one.

The legal term was terra nullius. It was finally overturned by the High Court of Australia in Mabo (1992), long overdue, given that King George III ordered Captain Cook to act "with the consent of the natives".

In the past 30 years there has been a growing awareness and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge in all realms of human existence here.

For me, the proposed cancellation of the hand-back of Council land on North Lismore Plateau, sits in the same basket as the revival of a new dam on Rocky Creek: these decisions, if taken, represent a triumph of greed, hatred and ignorance over the much-touted "Australian" values of mateship, tolerance and a fair go.

I urge Council to think clearly before going down this emotional, knee-jerk road. Don't stir up hate and division: be "man" enough to honour previous commitments.

There's plenty to do, working together, without these distractions.

Keith Gasteen
Lismore

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.

Rebuilding Lismore

Help people move!

Lismore is on a flood plain. It's in a massively wide hollow that will flood again and again.

Surely the horror of this and previous inundations, the devastation of the whole town, makes it clear that droughts and heavy rains will be with us over and over and more frequently and that flooding will be a regular happening.

It's a disaster, that the climate is changing, that rebuilding the whole town is simply not an option. Perhaps an option is that the state and federal governments help people to move to a safer, higher place.

Oh, my goodness, I'd hate to see this happen again next year or the year after, and to witness so many people suffering.

Michael Brooke
Kyogle

Dam revival

Immediately after the decision by incoming Rous County Councillors to revive the old Dunoon dam proposal, television news interviews featured well-known dam promoters Sharon Cadwallader and Richard Trevan spinning eerily similar lines that revisiting the dam investigations yet again was just good process – that it was 'necessary' for good planning.

Good planning and process would have seen new Rous councillors receive full briefings by staff through their regular workshop process before rushing to overturn a previous decision.

Good planning and process would have seen Rous councillors wait for the release of the much trumpeted CSIRO review that the (now dumped) Water Minister Melinda Pavey instituted, before committing ratepayers money.

Good planning and process would have seen Cr. Rob's motion deferred until the release of the imminent Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy by DPIE so that Rous could align its supply options with those of the region.

However, sensible guidance by the General Manager was not provided, apparently.

The previous council looked

at all the evidence with due process, and made the right decision for our water security, by finally removing the dam from its plan. The previous council heard the Widjabul Wia-bal elders and responded accordingly. The new council seem blind and deaf in comparison.

Fans of the dam have done the community a great disservice with misinformation, and misinterpretation of the 'All Options on the Table' concept. To consider all options reasonably is not the same as endless wishful thinking and unwarranted revision.

Cluttering the table with options that have been considered and found unfit is a recipe for distraction and procrastination. It is the opposite of good planning and leadership, and is wasteful of time and money.

Rous County Council has known for a decade that the dam was problematic, yet allowed it to displace sensible development of alternative sources of additional capacity, including serious water efficiency.

Apparently ratepayers will have to foot the bill for more time-wasting studies in order for some on the new council to save face, backtrack, and finally agree a second dam on Rocky Creek is not the answer.

Jim Richardson
Clunes

Can Rous govern itself?

With the new Rous County Council being made up of 6:2 pro-dam councillors there is now a demand for Rous to shelve the current Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy (IWCMS) and put the Dunoon Dam (DD) back on the table.

Much has been made of the 10,000 signatures on a petition which insisted that the DD be reinstated. Some pro-dam councillors have said that they can't ignore these people.

They apparently believe that the 10,000 people (6.6% of the population) should determine water policy for Rous County Council.

But, these same people emphatically ruled out groundwater, recycled water, and desal plants as permanent water sources. Some of these measures are already being used by Rous and have been for many years.

Does "rule by the 10,000" mean that Rous should immediately pull out the new deep bore that has recently been drilled into the Clarence-Moreton Basin?

Should Rous immediately stop pumping water from the Wilson River (into which Bangalow releases its treated sewage) up to the Nightcap Treatment Plant?

Should Rous be ruled by

populist demand? If Rous councillors dictate that Rous County Council should bow to the 10,000 and go with the only option they agree with (the new dam), then it will have to abandon all the other water management options that it has spent the last year developing and implementing.

Rous would become unworkable. How embarrassing for all of us. Our Northern Rivers community will look like a bunch of backwoods hicks who are stuck in the past and can't read a scientific report or a cultural heritage impact assessment.

Nan Nicholson
The Channon

Kyogle working group ignored

While I applaud the Kyogle Council in initiating and implementing a Climate Change Working Group, after almost two years it is time to evaluate the achievement and direction of this group.

In the original terms of reference representatives were sought from the following groups: community, indigenous, youth, science, commerce and industry. The terms of reference were amended in October 2021 to "seven community representatives to accommodate the new appointments."

One wonders how this ensures representation from all areas of the LGA in particular from the important areas of commerce, indigenous and youth.

Further the original terms of reference while admirable appear to be unachievable as evidenced by the minutes from the group.

While council has met some of their targets by sourcing electricity from on-site solar installations and renewable energy, little has been achieved in engaging with the community to provide a broad advocacy role that seeks to inform and educate as cited in the terms of reference.

However, of particular concern is the failure of our Councillors to engage with the actions from the CCWG. For example the minutes of the 22nd February, 2021 state:

"Maggie May to advise Council in a delegate's report for the March meeting that (i) the working group agrees that there is a climate emergency and (ii) the declaration of a climate emergency is for Council to decide and not the working group."

At the Council meeting of June 2021 when the CCWG minutes were finally tabled there was no discussion of this action, amongst others, contained in these minutes.

Further a recommendation from the September minutes 2021 tabled at the February



2022 meeting states:

"Recommendation from CCWG that Council seek a report from relevant scientific bodies for a science informed LGA-wide impact and adaptation assessment (based on appropriate 2021 projections for climate change).

The minutes and podcast from the council meeting held on the 14th February indicate that there was no discussion of this action recommended by the group.

It is difficult to see how this group can have an effect on what happens in the LGA if the Councillors do not take the time to engage with and discuss the CCWG's recommendations.

Sue Page
Kyogle

Capitalism to blame

Bernadine Schwartz' article, 'As fast as society consumes, mines too are busy consuming mother Earth' (NGT February 2022), highlights the dire state of the global environment by rapacious consumer societies, apportioning all blame on humanity.

However, she remains silent of the fact that slick, manipulative marketing and advertising practices by the rich and powerful political and corporate elite have shaped consumers' attitudes, ideas, values and behaviour.

Bernadine's analyses and narratives don't provide any remote hope, bordering on nihilism, which only further adds to the sense of hopelessness and despair.

People need to understand that by collective, democratic action we are a force to be reckoned with against the oppressive and exploitative practices of capitalism writ large.

These predominantly corporate entities have deliberately and consciously ignored the effects these destructive productive forces are having on the global environment and workers, in the endless pursuit for profits, in the eternal struggle

between capital and labour.

Clearly these practices are designed around maximising profits by ensuring competitive advantage in the corporate world.

People per se have not consciously chosen to destroy their environments, especially in this age of unprecedented ecological global destruction.

It essentially comes down to being for many, especially those in undeveloped nations, a question of survival. No real choice there for many living in poverty.

Recognising where and who holds the power in the economic and political system is a first step in identifying the real culprits of ecological, social destruction, then it's a question of wresting this power.

Political agency vis a vis democratic collective strategic action becomes imperative for an enduring, inclusive and genuinely ecological sustainable system of living.

In this age of uncertainty and rampant misinformation, political context is critical to ascertain the drivers of global ecological destruction and exploitation, to formulate a strategic plan to defeat the enemy at home, within: capitalism.

Boyd Kellner
Newrybar

Respect Indigenous culture

The great article by Aniko Papp in the last NGT, 'Respect Indigenous culture, history and knowledge' brought back some memories and inspired me to write this.

It was January 2019 and I was sitting in an ashram in South India (Tiruvannamalai) for a question and answer session with Maharishikaa Preeti.

The main focus of her teaching was to be fully embodied in the here and now; no escaping to Nirvana or disembodied states while you are here.

Also in the room was an Australian woman with Aboriginal connection. She asked Maharishikaa

About us

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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.

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**NEXT DEADLINE:
 Friday 22nd April**

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

why there were so many Aboriginal youth suicides and what happens to the soul of the disembodied. To the answer why, she explained the different developmental stages of the physical incarnation.

At the age of 18 to 24 the genetic racial imprints manifest, bringing to them, the whole suffering and inhumanity of their treatment by the whites. Since women at that same age are most likely already with child and more involved with family, it affects mostly the males.

As to what happens to the soul, Maharishikaa said it (mental, emotional, thought energy) stays close to the physical earth. The souls are attracted to like energies and create astral (mental emotional) energy clouds. These clouds then affect the minds and emotions of incarnated souls of like energy on earth.

Maharishikaa further declared that if Australia does not want to go the way of America, with high violence and mass shootings, the only way is the following two points. First, as Aniko said, the Australian population and especially school children, ought to be taught local indigenous language, culture, stories and history.

Secondly, the Aboriginal population, especially leaders and elders, need to be empowered. Bridges need to be built to include Aboriginals in our society with meaningful work and fulfilment.

How can we achieve this essential integration for the future of a happy Australia?

**Govinda Sailer
 Larnook**

First Nations justice

It is said that what we walk past is what we accept.

How can we accept and morally justify the acquittal of the NT police officer for shooting a teenager three times with the excuse, "That's what I was trained to do"?

How can we accept and morally justify the acquittal of the NT police officer for shooting a teenager three times with the excuse, "that's what I was trained to do"?

We can train all sorts of animals to do our bidding,

but human beings are supposed to make choices in circumstances. If they are not capable of using discretion and perform out of habit, then they are not qualified to represent society.

There was not one Aboriginal on the Jury, not one! How does that represent society or value systems?

The government and police force are the judge and jury of themselves. Of course they are going to give freedom to their own!

The punishment doesn't fit the crime of taking the life of a teenage lad.

Aboriginal people have tried since Federation to have their value systems recognised and be included in Parliamentary Laws of this country. How dare we, the white majority, decide what is best for a people who have lived and governed themselves for over sixty thousand years?

We are so blinded to what they can teach us. Wake up Australia! Soon it will be too late!

I wonder if society has a conscience, or do we all keep walking past?

**Bett Taylor
 Kyogle**

Racist trope

Whenever I visit my family up north, I read the *Nimbin GoodTimes* and find its articulate expression of local experience and opinion interesting and informative.

It was therefore with surprise and dismay that, in the February 2022 edition I read a letter titled 'Shylock lives.'

Shylock is the archetypal Jewish moneylender from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, known for demanding his "pound of flesh" when the eponymous merchant couldn't repay his loan. (Never mind that the character is actually much more nuanced and deeply humanised, his behaviour explained by his experience of rampant Anti-semitism.)

Thus, Shylock is the embodiment of the Antisemitic trope that Jews are ruthlessly money-hungry parasites. (Never mind that Jews were forbidden most trades and thereby forced

into occupations that good Christians regarded as immoral.)

What adds insult to injury is that I agree wholeheartedly with Claire De Ellae in her excoriation of the Morrison government's financial treatment of elderly people. To "financially bash, kick, demean and steal from the aged" is indeed "cowardly, gutless and disgraceful."

Nevertheless, it's absolutely not acceptable to link such behaviour to any ethnic, cultural, or religious group, whether through allusion or more directly.

I trust that the *Nimbin GoodTimes* will ensure that this racist trope is an aberration that won't make it past the editors again.

**Michelle Berkon
 Maroubra**

Dogs of war

Many of us sense what people are thinking and feeling; so Putin's (Russia's) behaviour is not strange to us. I know I have the capacity to behave just as badly as that.

An ordinary human, I am an accomplished killer – poison a cockroach, strangle a chicken, slaughter the cow I eat, shoot the lion I perceive a threat – it's nothing for me to destroy whole species of creatures... genocide comes to me quite naturally.

That I refuse to behave like that is a matter of choice. This thing we have about killing... unless we curb it, it will cause the end of us. I doubt we'll ever grow up, grow out of it, curtail our need to kill each other?

Et tu Brute!
**Michael Brooke
 Kyogle**

Independent candidate drives a tinny

Our prime minister may not hold a hose, but Independent candidate for Page, Hanabeth Luke didn't bat an eye at driving in a tinny to rescue people and deliver desperately needed supplies, during the recent unprecedented floods in NENSW.

Recognised for her bravery during the Bali bombing, Hanabeth's tireless efforts this time were focused on her home ground of Evans Head and Woodburn.

Being a capable, multi-talented woman, she was involved with others in setting up systems for meeting the needs of evacuated people, in the absence of essential services. These included a food distribution plan for the three evacuation centres in the area.

Not afraid of getting mud on her hands, she joined the "mud army" in the cleanup, noting how amazingly well the community responded to the challenges.

Hanabeth was then called on to represent the

significant community crisis response to the floods, at a gathering in Lismore. She says her role there was: "... recognition of the importance of the community effort and improved collaboration between formal agencies and spontaneous community operations".

A senior lecturer in the science and engineering facility at Southern Cross University, Hanabeth is founding coordinator of the innovative courses in regenerative agriculture.

She is skilled in conducting research, interpreting complex scientific data and translating this understanding for the community. She is clear that we urgently need to address climate change, which is a driver of the unprecedented natural disasters we are now increasingly confronted with.

I am convinced that Hanabeth Luke is the ideal candidate for the Page electorate. Intelligent, practical, cooperative, ethical. Hanabeth is at the forefront of action when crises arise, and nature, can throw at them. Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion are welcomed at borders. Governments were forced into real assistance, and UN condemnation of Russia.

What more can one ask of a representative?

**Beverley Crossley,
 Lismore**

Least worst party

I saw an advertisement for Shaun McCalleff's *Mad As Hell* which made a great representation of the upcoming Federal election, stating something along the lines of "watch tonight to find out which party is the least worst".

It seems the Liberal's policies moving forward are let's not rock the boat by changing anything and Labor's policies moving forward are let's not not rock the boat by doing anything the Liberals aren't (after all Labor lost the last "un-loseable" election trying to implement some minor changes).

It's obvious what policies are needed, a clear de-carbonised energy strategy, electric car subsidies, an affordable housing strategy and even domestic resource processing wouldn't go astray. Gee there could be so many jobs on offer they could close offshore detention centres and give illegal refugees employment.

However, this election ballot should probably just have one question. A simple question to determine your party preference - "Dear voter, do you feel you are that disenfranchised by the Scott Morrison government that you are prepared to risk voting for the other guy. Yes or no?"

Notices

Wanted
 Silkworm cocoons for spinning. Phone Bruce: 8438-689-480.

Annual General Meetings
 • Nimbin Aquarius Foundation AGM: Friday 8th April, 4pm at Nimbin Community Centre.

Free notices
 Keep it short, not-for-profit and of interest to our readers, get it to us by deadline, and we'll run it for free.

It feels like we aren't voting for new government policies we are just being forced to partake in a popularity contest. The winner being the least unpopular.

**Jeremy John
 Kingscliff**

Signs are everywhere

The signs are everywhere. An awakening humanity no longer tolerates governments owned by global corporations. People are increasingly willing to unite in solidarity and love, against whatever the establishments, and nature, can throw at them.

Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion are welcomed at borders. Governments were forced into real assistance, and UN condemnation of Russia.

Three days after the flood peaked, a Mullumbimby observer was impressed with random passersby assisting businesses clearing flood mud. Million dollar houses in the hills were lost, or rendered inaccessible long term.

Both natural calamities, and unstable economies, can be a great leveler.

But global capitalism is accelerating the rich poor divide, along with personal and structural instability.

No matter humble beginnings, a short career on the upper side of this divide, can blind anyone to those doing it tough. Having replaced earlier hippy critics of the establishment, such loss of vision amongst the new local leadership, can be demoralizing.

And, aided and abetted by mainstream media, we have also lost sight of the millions of young idealists demonstrating globally and nationally. Amongst them are groups like Reignite Democracy Australia, clearly focused on a future for all.

It is a folly to replace one failing government party with another, also set to be controlled by similar forces. We have all been lied to and misled by corporate influenced fake news from all political sides.

Absent national leadership, local communities must engage all those with grievances, to identify reliable truths.

I dream of an apolitical

national electoral support body, that can quickly mobilize, and guide a raft of highly talented independents, whatever their original inclinations

Genuine politicians ensnared in a failed system, do deserve our sympathy. But, right now, we must have an effective mechanism to replace traumatized, inferior graduates of all parties' factional wars.

They have no concepts for, or belief in, a society designed to cater for all. All majority governments will again accelerate the rich/poor divide.

Only a round table of community representatives, without preset ideologies, has the capacity to find real solutions. It starts with the basics of team work for food, shelter, and a functional money system with adequate liquidity, and finding useful roles for all. Without those, instability and crimes of desperation are inevitable.

**Hayo van der Woude
 Mullumbimby**

Thorny devils

Everyone can see the current devastation of the floods, but something more insidious and with greater long-term effects is the spread of the African Coral tree or Cockspur coral tree.

Walking along the beach east of the sailing club (River St/Kingsford Smith Drive) I noticed an extraordinary number of baby cockspur coral tree, (*Erythrina crista-galli*).

These plants are spreading rapidly in the Richmond/Wilson River catchments and need to be managed as a matter of urgency

Looking around Lismore, where they have been for a couple of decades, they have taken over large sections of land and river banks.

They are worse than camphor laurels, extremely thorny and reproduce even more rapidly.

If these plants are allowed to get established even further it will severely limit access to the river.

Please write to your local council to apply for funding in their flood packages to restrict this horrible plant's spread.

**Richard White
 East Ballina**