

The Alternative Journal of the Rainbow Region

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THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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Tree Planters Edition
October 2022
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Case against lock-on climate activist falls over



Mali with her solicitor after the hearing
Photos: Chibo Mertineit

by Chibo Mertineit

On Tuesday 27th September, the Lismore Local Court heard the case against Mali Cooper, a 22-year old resident of Lismore, for her action in June of this year.

Ms Cooper blocked the Sydney Harbour tunnel entrance road on 26th June in peak hour traffic by locking herself inside a car with a bicycle lock to the steering wheel, and as she said on her live-streamed video at that time, "...in protest of the climate

destruction that is happening on this continent right now."

Her lawyer, Mark Davis from Sydney City Crime, stated in court that she suffered pre-existing anxiety which developed into stratospheric levels after her home in Lismore was destroyed twice in February and March this year.

As Mr Davis said after the court case, "Mali suffered anxiety as this is quite common in that generation through climate change, and after losing her community and home it developed into PTSD (Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder)."

She heard of the climate protest actions planned by Blockade Australia in Sydney and went down there to join the protests, and was one of 27 protesters arrested in June. Mr Davis said in court that Ms Cooper was unstable and in a traumatised state when travelling to Sydney, making the spontaneous decision to get in the car and do the action.

Around April this year, the NSW government changed the Road Act to fine protesters who are blocking



Supporters outside the court

roads with a \$22,000 fine or two years in jail, while before it was a \$400 fine. Ms Cooper's case is one of the first to be tried under this new legislation.

After her protest there was a lot of tabloid hype, and during her action she suffered abuse on site as well as on social media. It was interesting to see how magistrate Jeff Linden would judge in this case.

Ms Cooper had a professional diagnosis regarding her mental health and the development into Post Traumatic Stress Trauma. The court accepted that Ms Cooper's decision-making ability was greatly compromised by the trauma she had suffered and that it wasn't appropriate to be dealt within a criminal court.

Magistrate Linden dismissed all charges against her under the Mental Health Act. No conviction will be recorded, and Ms Cooper will have to continue her therapy with her psychiatrist to address the anxiety and trauma.

As her lawyer Mark Davis said afterwards, "We are very relieved, and I'm grateful to the court that could it take such a wise analysis of what happened, rather than listening to the tabloid outrage."

Ms Cooper said after the case in an interview with NBN News in front of Lismore court, "Look, I think the most important thing is that we keep talking about these issues and stay strong, defend the planet and protect each other, and show up for communities."

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