



From the mayor's desk
by Steve Krieg
Lismore City Council

Roadworks proceeding

establishment, installation of steel barriers and traffic lights, establishment of safety and environmental control, tree cutting along the entire embankment, removal of road materials including asphalt, and preliminary excavation ready for drilling operations.

The activities scheduled during the next month for both sites include completion of preliminary excavation, completion of working platform for drilling operation, excavation of working benches (a series of horizontal steps with near-vertical surfaces between them), completion of piling operation and construction of rock embankment at Site 2.

The works are expected to occur over seven months, subject to weather, contractor and material availability. This will involve piling and retaining wall construction works to allow repair of the landslips, reconstruction of pavement, reinstatement of road and guardrail barriers along with installing signs, guideposts, and line marking.

Traffic control lights remain in place and existing single lane traffic control will remain in place during the works period. Council would like to thank the residents of the region for their patience during this time.

For more information, please go to the Your Say site on Council's website at: www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and look for the Maintaining Roads and Bridges page: <https://yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au/maintaining-our-roads-and-bridges>

Or you can contact Council directly with any questions or comments and register your contact details to receive updates by calling (02) 6625-0500 or emailing: floodrecoveryroadsbridges@lismore.nsw.gov.au (Please include the title 'Nimbin Road Landslips - June Update'.)

Council also recently received DRFA funding to replace the current structure at Branch Creek on Terania Creek Road. Works will include replacing the current box culvert structure with a

16m bridge and extending erosion protection to the edge of the road.

The funding application for other damages on Terania Creek Road are currently being assessed. Survey and design work will commence soon, with works to install the replacement structure expected to commence in 2024.

As our community recovers from the worst natural disaster in Australia's recorded history, we are also looking to the future. Not only do we need to ensure our built infrastructure more resilient, but we must also make our economy and communities more resilient.

Tourism workshop

Tourism has always been an important part of Nimbin's

economy and as Council looks to attracting more visitors to our region, we are holding a four-hour Tourism Workshop at the Bush Theatre on Wednesday, 19th July between 9.30am and 12.30pm.

I encourage local businesses and tourism operators to come along and share your thoughts. Together we will look at ideas that have been suggested, discuss ways to enhance the visitor experience, increase visitor length-of-stays and spend, as well as achieving greater dispersal of visitors across Lismore, Nimbin and villages.

Those interested in attending the workshop, please RSVP to: karen.birst@lismore.nsw.gov.au or call 6625-0500.

Works to repair Nimbin Road are proceeding well at both landslip sites – one about 1 km from Nimbin and the other about 4 kms from Nimbin.

During the past month, both sites have undergone site

Operational Plan and Delivery Program

by Cr Darlene Cook
Lismore City Council

At the June Council meeting Council passed the annual budget for 2023/2024, and the one year Operational Plan and four-year Delivery Plan of projects to be undertaken.

Council voted to increase rates by the state set cap of 3.7% and to increase fees and charges by around 5%. For some people this will be a hardship, however Council has to raise the funds to deliver the services expected of it, in a world where inflation and demands for services has increased significantly the costs of providing those services.

Lismore Council is working hard to contain its expenditure within the permitted revenue increase and not impose additional burdens on our community. Maintaining that financial restraint will require careful planning and strategic decision making over the next years.

Following questions from members of the Nimbin Advisory Group at its recent meeting, Council staff informed the Group that during the next few weeks Council will be replacing the BBQ at Allsopp Park, and will also be repairing and resealing the surface of the Nimbin Pool in preparation for next summer.

The tenders for the major landslip repairs on Nimbin-Lismore Road have been awarded and work has commenced on those sites. It is estimated these repairs will take up to nine months to complete. There is a full report on

the NAG meeting on page 13 in this edition of the *GoodTimes*.

Lismore Housing Grants

Lismore City Council launched a \$1.2 million Housing Grant program on 1st July, providing grants of \$15,000 to eligible landowners to stimulate the construction of new affordable housing.

There will be a total of 80 grants which will be available on a 'first-come-first served' basis until such time as the pool of the available funds is fully committed.

Affordable housing is really the responsibility of the State Government, however Council did receive some Federal Government funding that must be utilised to facilitate new affordable housing opportunities.

The Lismore Housing Grant program will go some way towards easing the housing crisis to help our community, and importantly is also open to flood-affected residents who want to relocate their home within the Lismore Local Government Area.

The program has six eligibility criteria that are designed to create more diverse and affordable housing options for the Lismore community.

- Existing landowners who build any of the following housing types on their land, that is, in addition to an existing dwelling:
 - A secondary dwelling;
 - A small dual occupancy with a maximum of two bedrooms and < 115m² of floor space;
 - A tiny home (non-moveable);
 - A manufactured home.

- First-home buyers who purchase vacant land to build any new home within the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA).
- An owner/occupier of a flood affected house in Lismore who wants to relocate their existing house to another site within the Lismore LGA (provided they do not own any other residential property).
- A homeowner who has accepted a buyback offer from the NRRC and wants to build a new house on another site within the Lismore LGA (provided they do not own any other residential property).
- Any registered Community Housing Provider (CHP) or Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) who build new housing within the Lismore LGA, (excluding the projects on Council-owned land at Bristol Circuit and Cynthia Wilson Drive).
- Any developer of new multi-dwelling housing, residential flat building or co-living housing that agrees to enter into a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with Council to have the housing managed by a CHP for a minimum of 15 years as affordable rental housing.

The application form is now available on Council's website, as well as a fact sheet detailing eligibility. Simply go to: www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

And, as always, I can be contacted by phone on either 6626-0154 or 0427-895-316; or via email on: darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au



Never a more important time to shop local

by Kevin Hogan,
Federal Member for Page

Small businesses are the heart of the Nimbin community.

As any visitor to the 'Rainbow Region' will tell you, their memories usually involve a visit to one or two of Nimbin's unique local enterprises.

Picking up a treasure from a store on Cullen Street, visiting the market or staying in a friendly local guest house or B&B are the experiences visitors go home and rave about.

Now's the time for us locals to also visit and support our business community and keep precious dollars circulating within our region.

Unfortunately the Labor Government has lost control of inflation and the latest interest rate rise, the 12th consecutive increase under PM Anthony Albanese, risks sending many households to the brink.

Most small businesses rely on their home mortgages to get started and then re-draw when times are difficult. Spiralling energy costs are also hitting small business the hardest because they pay even higher prices than households for electricity.

Promoting and supporting our local small businesses and making people aware of the great range of goods and services available locally is a real positive way to make a difference right now.

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Authorised by Tamara Smith Member for Ballina. Produced using parliamentary endorsement.

Moving forward together?

As I walked through the streets of our town in the Lismore Lantern Parade for the 29th year I felt the depth of connection, love, warmth, survival, grit, work, co-ordination, solidarity and the river.

I saw the light, colour, art, fire, community, children, work, coordination and the river. I heard the children, cheers, laughter, music, voices, particularly First Nations voices, community, work, coordination and the river.

The theme of this year's Lantern Parade was Gates of Renewal, which the organisers describe as reflecting the history of the lantern parade which celebrates Winter Solstice; the change from the longest nights to the return of the sun – known as liminal space, where optimism and magic happen.

During the fiery finale on the banks of the river the flaming words Moving Forward Together were held up. These words hit me hard because the truth is we are not moving forward together, people are being left behind.

Moving forward together is the key to a community-led recovery, and we know for our recovery to be successful it must be community-led.

Our rescue effort was community-led, it was spectacular and incredibly successful. We did it together in all of our ways. It defied all odds and a bunch of state rules and regulations, this is why more people didn't lose



by Sue Higginson,
NSW Greens

their lives.

Still in the rescue phase and again community-led, the following days and weeks saw kitchens and recovery centres and hubs pop up and continue to save lives. Many of these initiatives across the region were also in defiance of the rules and regulations of the state.

Then herculean clean-up teams moved through the wreckage, led and organised by the community and volunteers from everywhere, again many rules and regulations of the state were breached so that this work could get done. The state was kicking in largely through our volunteer community SES members, rural fireys and the feds deployed some ADF.

Only a few days after the water receded, the State said they would back our community-led recovery, that they would join us, that "not a dollar will be spared" in the effort. That the State

would "stand side by side with the people of the Northern Rivers" throughout a process expected to take years, and we would come back better.

This task was largely delegated to the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC), once it had become clear that Resilience NSW could not do the job (it was shortly thereafter abolished and reformed and rebadged as the NSW Reconstruction Authority).

Our communities rightly placed trust in the NRRC, after all it is made up of people who came here and some who were already here, to help, to fulfil such a mammoth promised task, something that had never been done before.

There is no doubt the NRRC has been working hard, but the time has come to check in and ask if what we are doing is working, are we genuinely on the best track. After all, what we face in part can be described as a wicked problem, namely one that is difficult to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

One thing that is certain about our wicked problem is the extent of 'homelessness'. Many people put forward in simple terms what the needs of the community are: land swaps, buy-backs, house raising and resilient fit-outs.

The voices of those most impacted were resoundingly saying that the most essential



Lantern Parade fiery finale

thing we need if we are to move forward together is flood free land to enable house relocations and land swaps so that those who truly know the scale of danger and harm of where they live, can move.

We were told early on we can't have land swaps and house relocations, because that would be too difficult in the current market settings, but we could have buy-backs at pre-flood prices – if you are the (un)lucky ones.

This raised more questions for many than answers. If the rules and regulations are too hard to do what we know we need to do, to move forward together, shouldn't we change them or push on through, like we did in our rescue. Most of all we were told to wait, wait and wait in our own state of limbo, uncertainty and unknowingness.

As the months passed by, the Lismore CBD has been building back and was supported to do so. It's different to build back a business than a home in the circumstances.

By January this year there was some 60% occupancy rate in the CBD. There has now been talk that the floods have somehow saved the Lismore CBD from the cost of living

crisis (increasing interests and inflation) due to the injection of the recovery and rebuild funding! It's become clear we are not moving forward together.

People with no home, began asking politely, for people who have lost everything and who are living in tents, caravans and the shells of their homes, what is happening with the Resilient Homes Program, how will it happen, when will it happen and how will you let us know and keep us informed.

It became more and more bizarre that there was no clear and inclusive communications flowing in and out of the NRRC. We are a community that has always discussed hard things and worked together.

There have been useful drips of information through the media and social media, some 50 presentation sessions, these were useful but people said they didn't get a chance to ask their questions and there have been announcements.

Exactly one year on from the floods the first round of offers of buybacks from the \$700 million Northern Rivers Resilient Homes Program funded by the State and Federal Governments were made to 250 people in the highest-risk flood zones. This announcement came with a dedicated call centre, case managers and the promise no one would be left behind. We were also reminded about the scale and complexity of the Resilient Homes Program.

At the end of June the flood mapping that is the basis of the Resilient Homes Program was released. As an environment and planning lawyer I have seen a lot of planning maps, good ones and bad ones – I was surprised by how seemingly inappropriate they were.

They are hard to read, have strong words of no liability, are based on modelling that doesn't include 'the flood', are not peer reviewed, they arrived with no communications strategy and most of all they show that we are not moving forward together.

With the release of the maps the NRRC said 800 people in the Northern Rivers would receive a call by the end of the month offering a buyback at pre-flood value. However, the owners of 500 properties would miss out due to a lack of funds. It is being sledged that if there is more money, more offers will be made. It seems the NSW Labor Government is holding back the funds.

We are not moving forward

together. People are being left behind, and despair is now setting in on top of the compounding trauma. What is now happening is what we knew would happen, some of those who are being made an offer have nowhere to go because the amount offered is not enough to relocate somewhere within our community, so some feel compelled to stay in the very home they were rescued from and others do not know what they will do. This is not moving forward together.

The NRRC is signalling that the Resilient Lands Strategy intends to develop land for more than 10,000 homes across 22 sites. The strategy includes plans for "immediate on-ground investigations" at 15 sites across the region, with the goal to provide homes for about 7,800 residents from the areas most affected by the 2022 disasters. The NRRC says it has started feasibility studies for each of the first 15 sites; this is years away.

There is an enormous disconnect happening. We are not moving forward together and we are not being kept informed together with the degree of transparency we deserve or to be sure we are even moving in the best direction.

Prior to the release of the draft Resilient Lands Strategy, journalists were invited to an on-line briefing about the strategy with the NRRC, during which they were permitted to ask questions but were not able to use the answers or attribute the comments made by anyone in the briefing and were forbidden to record or reproduce any part of the briefing.

To date the NRRC has failed to provide any detail in the draft strategy about the timeline, process or mechanisms that will be followed to implement the draft strategy. Communities and Councils feel cut off from any communication about the development of the draft strategy and have lost trust in the NRRC due to poor interaction and consultation.

Through the Parliament I have now called for all of the papers behind the draft Resilient Lands Strategy, the Resilient Homes Program and the Flood Hazard Information because things are going wrong and it is not only the fault of the NRRC; the NRRC is an instrument of the State Government.

It is time to reclaim our recovery.
<https://www.suehigginson.org>

Finally, there's movement on housing

by Janelle Saffin MP,
State Member for Lismore

Lack of affordable housing has dogged the Northern Rivers for well over a decade with inaction on housing provision by the former NSW and Federal Coalition Governments coming home to haunt us.

Never in my remit was the Coalition mantra "it is for the private sector, or local government". Well, not so and not fair.

Now at least we have the NSW and Federal Labor Governments working together to make an immediate start on delivering much-needed social housing in addition to work being done in NSW to boost the supply of affordable housing.

The Albanese Federal Government has just committed to roll out \$2 billion in funding for social housing to all the States and Territories within the next few weeks, of which NSW will receive some \$610 million.

All of this money has to be committed to social housing construction in NSW by 30 June 2025, which will go some way to addressing the appalling rundown of social housing supply under the previous Coalition government.

The funds can be used both to construct new dwellings and to refurbish existing stock which has fallen into disrepair - another issue I hear about constantly, with too many of our local NSW Housing tenants

forced to put up with sub-standard accommodation blighted by mould, leaky roofs and faulty wiring.

The Federal Government's Social Housing Accelerator, as it is called, adds to the growing momentum in this State to improve the supply of affordable housing. Affordable housing is open to people on a wider range of incomes than social housing, many our frontline workers.

Private operators will be offered incentives to construct new developments so long as they include at least 15% affordable housing, while State-owned Landcom will have expedited approvals for any project it develops that contains at least 50% affordable housing.

All of this won't happen overnight but you've got to start somewhere, and after a decade of wanton neglect we're finally shifting the dial in the right direction.

Putting permanent teachers back in the classroom

News just to hand shows that teachers are responding in droves to the promise of permanent employment, with almost 5,500 casual teachers and support staff accepting offers to become permanent employees in less than two months.

The majority of parents in our region choose to educate their children through the public school system, and the least they can expect is classrooms with engaged educators who know their pupils and are committed to their development.

In Opposition we promised to tackle the workforce crisis in public schools that saw a record 1,854 teachers resign during 2022. We are now well on track to turning this around, with a total of 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff to be offered permanent contracts by the beginning of Term 4 this year.

A permanent position in a school gives teachers security and peace of mind, allowing them to do their job, which is to teach children.

New 4WD ambulances announced

The Northern Rivers has some of the most varied terrain of any region in NSW, ranging from beaches and coastal wetlands through to mountains, rainforest and thick bushland.

Much of it is accessible only via dirt roads and bush tracks, which as we know, are more vulnerable to wet weather and flooding.

It's therefore welcome news that 80 new purpose-built four-wheel drive ambulances are being rolled out across the State. The new Toyota Landcruiser 200 series vehicles have been modified to include space for a stretcher and medical equipment, and will be able to access remote communities, isolated homesteads and farms which would be impossible for normal ambulances to reach.

I can confirm that one of the new ambulances will be based in Lismore but the need for more in our region is overwhelming. Rest assured I will keep up my advocacy to ensure it happens.

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After the flood

Saving our public libraries

Interviews by Nic Margan

Lucy Kinsley, manager of Richmond Tweed Regional Libraries:

We were down there Sunday afternoon, madly packing up. Everything on the ground floor was on wheels, so we could just move it upstairs in the lift. We walked away thinking we were safe.

One o'clock the next morning I get a phone call from a staff member who lived across from the library. He rang up and said, "It's in the middle floor", and I knew everything was gone.

That staff member was asking to go into the library to get away from his apartment. He was on the roof at the time. He got rescued by a boat like so many people.

We knew that the library would be needed in the community after such a big disaster. So we opened up a little branch library in the Goonellabah industrial estate, put more books down at Goonellabah library and went from there.

The mobile library trailer (which goes to Nimbin) was in flood water, so it was damaged as well. Unfortunately, the part that was in the water was all the electricals so the insurance company wrote it off.

In the meantime, our staff ran the service with boxes out of a station wagon. They'd unload the books onto trestle tables at each stop, pack up again, every day for six days a week. Often in the pouring rain.

After some months we were able to source a second-hand trailer. It was in Melbourne, and they actually drove it up for free because of what had happened.

A lot of places gave things that aren't physically visible, but they were all affected by the library being flooded.

The donations started coming in early on, from all over Australia. Soon we were literally getting pallets of books being delivered. Kennards across the road, very generously would send their little forklift over and unload them for us.

Anyone and everyone were sending them. Unknown people, organisations, publishers, libraries, schools. Anyone. That image of the library books outside the library, it had such an impact across Australia.

We were contacted by a charity in Victoria called 123Read2Me. They collect children's books and give them to people who need them. They have sent seven pallets-loads of children's books, each containing about 600 kilograms.

We've been able to distribute them to the YWCA, to patrons at our libraries, the Merry Markets, NAIDOC week over at the turf club and the lantern parade. Giving away books helped us provide the feeling that Lismore is a happy space. We're still doing it.

We received a substantial amount of financial help from the community across Australia but the fact that many of the books in our libraries are given books is special. I think that has more impact than if we'd spent whatever thousand dollars buying them. They would have just been normal books but these are community books.

Libraries are about more than just books, we're also a community hub. We develop relationships with people and provide services like internet, printing, helping people fill out forms, tech lessons and programs for kids.

One of the things we did was set up the book swap down at Lismore Central. At that stage there was nothing downtown. The manager of the centre said yes, you can set up some shelves. It got such a response and such a demand that it is now set up in a whole shop of its own in Lismore Central, multiple shelves, open all the time. I still can't keep up with the shelving!

They set up a Facebook group to share and review the books they'd taken from there. The public set that up themselves. The books are taken there, by us, but that's it. It has a life of its own. People go there to have an interaction and the books help them do that.

The community is not going to be back to normal for years. But the library will be back, up and running, better than ever. The light's there and we're heading towards it. We had a flood plan, now we'll just do a new flood plan. We'll work it out. It'll be bigger and better and brighter than ever.

Michael Lewis, Lismore area librarian:

I hate the BOM radar now because I woke in the middle of the night, looked at the radar and thought, "Oh my god what is this? Just go away!"

I live out of town on a hill. We had a landslide that affected the foundations of our house. But the big thing for me was that a friend of mine was rescued from South Lismore and he and his family stayed with us.

There was a lot of uncertainty in those first few days. News that a building was on fire was circulating and he was stressed that that was his property. It was



so difficult to tell what was what.

On the Wednesday, we finally got into town. He had a small garden, he had chickens, he had guinea pigs. We got there and we made a makeshift bridge from wood from the timber yard nearby. The chickens, most of them were sitting on the porch and then he heard the guinea pig squeaking inside and I just remember him laying down and crying.

It's a small story but I think there's the people who've been impacted and then there's everyone else who has been impacted around that. There were conversations about guilt-trauma and things like that. I look at our landslip and the damages to our property and I think I kinda feel better that happened because I was a part of it. But 18 months and a \$70,000 bill later I'm kinda going, "Uh, I would be fine if that had not happened."

When I walked into the library after the flood there was no carpet, it was just books. It was dark, it was gloomy, it stank. It was your work, your community impact. Everything was just on the floor in ruins.

The image of the books out the window had an impact. People would come to us who wanted to give, to share, to talk, to connect. There would be days when you would have someone donating who's crying and you've got a staff member who's crying. It was cathartic.

The act of giving was supporting people to give them some power over something they felt so powerless over.

In Singapore there's an international school and their faculty got a hold of the image and their community ended up donating five thousand dollars, which went to the flood appeal.

We had over one hundred thousand books donated and the library lost 29,000. All of the donations went into three forty-foot shipping containers and a storage shed here and Lucy's garage at home - which is large. 32,000 books have now been digitally catalogued into our system.

There are few free, open spaces that are available for

anyone in the community to come in and learn and connect and when your home and your library have been wrecked, where do people go?

Libraries have been an open door for people to better themselves and to establish themselves. People go to the library to find pathways to better themselves. We pushed to bring our services back with that in mind.

We did a lot of things. One of them was a fines amnesty. People would come in and say, "Oh I wasn't able to save the library books." We were like, "Forget the library books, you're okay, let's get rid of the charges, don't even think about it, what would you like to borrow today?"

One of the most effective programs has been the social circle, which was established purely to combat social isolation. When I ask people why they come to that, they say, "I just needed to connect."

Here we are, eighteen months down the track and we've done a lot but we're still hindered by the lack of large, open spaces for community groups to get together. The pop-up library in Lismore is a shop space catering to a population of forty thousand. You have Storytime going on while people are trying to study.

So the next thing we'll do is establish a children's library for children to be children in the library. That will free up the adult space so people can do those things like study and better themselves in a better environment.

It's been impossible for me to separate the personal from the professional. At times I thought, "God, it's an absolute mess." Other times I look at how our staff have come together and done this amazing service in the face of such adversity, purely to give their community that connection and there's a really positive feeling.

We've got a couple of folders full of letters that came with the donations and what I would like to see is a display in the Lismore library when we got back. I don't think we could just name a couple of people because it was an amazing, collective response.

Nimbin Advisory Group June meeting report

The NAG meeting scheduled for 25th May was postponed to 22nd June, and was chaired by Cr Cook. The meeting was also attended by LCC General Manager, Jon Gibbons; Assets Manager, Scott Turner; recently appointed Destination Co-ordinator, Karen Hirst; and Governance Manager, Christine Cotterill.

Governance

Ms Cotterill spoke to LCC's intention to require our NAG meetings to adopt a more formal meeting structure than we have thus far operated under and advised that Council sought for consistency and uniformity over all its advisory groups. The terms of reference we operate under are to be reviewed and 'code of conduct' training provided to members.

CCTV Footage

At the February NAG meeting, the possibility to quickly access Nimbin CCTV security camera footage was discussed and a reply was provided to us at this meeting. LCC manages the CCTV cameras and footage can only be made available to the police upon their formal request to Council. In no circumstance would footage be provided to another party.

Footpath from Alternative Way to Sibley Street

The lack of a footpath joining Alternative Way to Sibley Street has been a longstanding topic at NAG meetings. When staff recently sought to plan the work, it was realised that the repair would be more complicated and expensive than initially envisaged. Whilst the footpath has still not been constructed, a satisfactory design has been drawn up and the work is now on a work crew schedule to be completed relatively soon.

Library services

The manager of the Richmond Tweed Regional Library, Lucy Kinsley presented an update regarding ongoing library services to Nimbin. The bus that serviced the villages was lost in the flood, a secondhand hand smaller vehicle was purchased, which is currently delivering library services. The Library received a \$475,000 grant from the Public Libraries Division of the State Library of NSW, has some financial reserves, and is seeking other grant funding to facilitate the purchase of a replacement vehicle, possibly an EV.

When a suitable vehicle is found, the specialist fit out will be carefully planned to create the best user experience possible and community input will be sought. Ms. Kinsley noted that a large number of the Nimbin community use the library bus service and although there is currently no funding for it, there have been discussions around the need for a static Nimbin library. The idea of a "pop-up" library has also been floated, but funding and finding suitable physical premises has been an impediment.

Nimbin events calendar/destination

After LCC decided to no longer support and maintain Nimbin tourism services, the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce took over and updated the Visit Nimbin website. Recently Council has resumed operation and management of the Visit Nimbin website, and to facilitate that have recruited Karen Hirst as its Destination Co-ordinator. She attended the meeting to provide an update. She will be assisted by a part time staff member to reconnect and update the online presence. She intends to visit Nimbin, walk the street to introduce herself to business houses, and to find out how Nimbin prefers to be represented in "Destination" promotions.

She has planned a Council hosted, tourism workshop from 9.30-12.30 on Wednesday, 19th July at the Nimbin Bush Theatre and has the intention of feeding ideas generated at that workshop into the formation of a LCC Tourism Strategy. It was noted that, as Ms Hirst was newly appointed, she would be unaware of the well-attended, tourism workshops whose ideas fed into the Chamber of Commerce revision of the Visit Nimbin website. She invited event organisers who wanted to discuss individual event promotion to email: business@lismore.nsw.gov.au

EV charging stations

LCC are currently looking for suitable locations for EV fast charging stations across the whole Local Government Area and Nimbin may possibly be a location considered (the words "only a possibility" were stressed). It should be noted that charging stations must be on public land and preferably near amenities. Mr Turner welcomed suggestions from the NAG. He said he had considered the north exit from the western car park may be a possibility. A placement at the caravan park was also suggested.

Nimbin Road landslip repairs

The NAG received a progress report on the extensive road repairs on the two land slip sites on Nimbin Road. The repairs are jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments and, unless they run into weather or supply problems, are expected to be completed in nine months. At both sites the initial clearing, excavation, site establishment and safety barriers are completed. The contractors are on schedule to construct drilling platforms next month.

Other matters

The NAG moved a motion of thanks to the Mayor for his condolence motion for local resident Nora Savona.

The NAG received a verbal update on the revised NNIC Disaster Plan, which is now lodged with Council. Shipping containers are stocked with a supply of emergency equipment and there are funds to build a roof over them. Community Care Team recruitment and training has commenced. The emergency radio network has 18 members and is operating. NNIC's Recovery Support Service staff continue to assist residents with flood recovery. It is clear that recovery is a long-term proposition and many people are still struggling. The complexities, anomalies and inconsistencies involved in dealing with the various grants and assistance packages remain a challenging process.

The annual maintenance of Nimbin pool is being planned comprising grind back any damage, repair cracks and reseal. It is intended that the shade sails are cleaned at the same time.

The NAG was advised that during the Aquarius 50th celebrations, the organisers were unable to fully satisfy Council Traffic Management Plan requirements. As a consequence, some planned activities were cancelled and Council withheld a portion of the funds they had previously gifted to support of the event. A discussion then explored the possibility a satisfactory Traffic Management Plan template of sorts might be developed for various venues, which could then reduce costs, simplify the process and assist compliance.

Staff were advised that there had been damage to the seating at the blister which rendered it unsafe. So, although there are plans to replace it in the Wayfinding Project, action may need to be undertaken immediately.

We were advised there are plans to replace the BBQ in Allsopp Park and a request was made for the replacement to be a double.

Another financial year ends



Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

I didn't see an end of financial year sale sign up anywhere in Nimbin, nor do I ever expect to.

It is time for business owners and taxpayers to lodge the dreaded tax return – hopefully it lives up to its name and we all get something back.

As of 1st July, 2.75 million Australians will receive a pay increase of 5.75% along with an increase in contributions from employers to superannuation accounts of 0.5% taking the annual rate to 11%.

While the government is happy to herald the wage and superannuation increases as an achievement, it is just smoke and mirrors shuffling responsibility from government to employers and then ultimately back on to the workers.

Employers already under pressure are left with little choice but to pass on wage increases through increased prices, or alternatively reduce employee numbers.

However it falls, the employees will ultimately feel the brunt of poor government policy and decision-making.

The outcome will ultimately be higher inflation fuelled by pay increases, placing more pressure on households who are already burdened by increasing interest rates and/or higher rents, which will result in less money in the pocket of the average person.

Enough of the gloom and doom, we are way better off than our city cousins. Grow your own trade and barter, look out for your neighbour and she'll be right!

On the fun side of the ledger, Illuminate Nimbin, which was embraced as a fun family spectacular in 2022, was all systems go again on the last day of the financial year 2023.

We thank Lismore City Council for generous funding that has allowed us to run the event again this year.

Social media workshops

During the last week of June Lismore City Council, in conjunction with the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, conducted a series of three workshops on social media strategy, which were very well attended and appreciated by those present.

In the modern age it

is most important that businesses keep up to date with social media techniques, as most of our visitors and in fact community, spend a lot of time interacting on phones and computers.

Destination Nimbin

Council is currently reaching out to key stakeholders with the aim of developing a destination management and visitor economy strategy.

It is in the interest of Nimbin tourist operators, accommodation providers, primary producers, venue operators, artists, and entertainers, to come forth and have your say.

The three-hour session will be held at the Nimbin Bush Theatre on 19th July from 9.30am to noon. Please register for the event by visiting: <https://nimbinbushtheatre.com/events>

Women in business

There has been an incredible amount of interest in a Nimbin Women in Business group forming.

To support this important networking and support group the Chamber will assist in funding the inaugural event to be held Saturday 22nd July commencing 9.30am at the Nimbin Bush Theatre.

Please register for the event by visiting: <https://nimbinbushtheatre.com/events>

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State of flux

by Scott O'Keeffe, ecologist

The study of ecological succession is an investigation of disturbance.

Succession is the change that occurs in ecosystems as they respond to disturbance. Studying these responses is fascinating, and provides the insights needed to manage intact ecosystems and restore those that are damaged or vanishing.

No ecosystem remains forever the same. Ecologists have always been fascinated with the ways ecosystems respond to disturbance because there are noticeable expansive patterns in this process. The multitude of variations on these grand responses is the result of local variations in landforms, climate and aspect. This produces a rich biological patchwork rather than uniformity. This is true, whether the disturbance is natural or fabricated.

Imagine a newly formed lava field where a fissure produces an entirely new landscape of sterile, hardening rock. This is year zero for an ecosystem. As soon as the rock is cool, succession begins.

Simple organisms like bacteria colonise the new landscape and begin transforming it. Sun, wind, rain, heat and cold also transform the rock. More simple organisms colonise the new but slightly weathered landscape. The new organisms increasingly alter the rock as they gain a toehold.

These changes create new opportunities, and over a very long period more organisms are able to colonise the lava flow. Lichens will grow on rock faces. The acids they exude weather and crack the stone creating the beginnings of soil. Small plants appear in the grit and cracks, attracting insects and invertebrates.

The process continues for tens of thousands of years. The landscape evolves and biological diversity increases. This process is "primary succession".

Eventually the ecosystem reaches an equilibrium where biodiversity peaks and remains stable, but not static. This state is called an ecological climax. The ecosystem adjusts to cyclical and modest disturbances without collapsing or developing in an entirely different direction.

Few of us will ever see year zero in a primary succession. Those lucky enough to see a lava flow being colonised will only ever witness a mere second of primary succession.

In 'secondary succession', a disturbance occurs in an already established ecosystem. We see this after a catastrophic shrubland fire or when a forest is swept away in a landslide. The direction that succession takes will depend upon the character and size of the disturbance.

A prolonged, very hot fire that burns a large area will provoke a response that differs from that of a small, cool fire. Variations in terrain and landscape will ensure the resulting vegetation is never uniform. Watercourses, gullies and escarpments will protect some patches from the fire or at least moderate its impacts. In some places there may be more moisture in the subsoil that allows fungi, microorganisms and invertebrates



A hot bushfire burns away the canopy that shades the ground. A new layer of low-growing vegetation appears as succession kicks in. Photo: Greenfleet Australia

that aid rapid recovery to survive or quickly recover. A multitude of factors at a relatively small scale will shape the response to fire and the future character of the ecosystem.

If a landslide is small, the disturbed ground might be rapidly recolonised by robust, fast growing trees that quickly close the gap in the canopy, excluding full sunlight, allowing a relatively quick recovery of the original vegetation. These trees might also contribute seeds or attract animals that void seeds on the disturbed site.

A larger slide might result in colonisation by plants that thrive in the full sun and tolerate lower humidity and wind. Recovery of the original forest might then be slower, or the area might evolve in a somewhat different direction. We can see this all around us where climax forest has been severely disturbed and the sites colonised by woody weeds like lantana and privet.

You can see why understanding the process of ecological succession is of practical value to conservationists. If we understand the processes of disturbance and succession we can use this knowledge to manage recovery so that biodiversity in a disturbed ecosystem is not degraded.

Those of us who are restoring or regenerating ecosystems can use our knowledge of ecological succession to ensure success. Effort is easily wasted when enthusiasm is not informed by knowledge. A brief example of applied knowledge will illustrate this.

Imagine you are trying to return a rainforest on cleared land adjacent to an existing rainforest. The cleared land is covered in a mixture of coarse weeds and lantana. Restoration might succeed if you mimic the natural processes that allow gaps in a mature forest to recover.

You could remove much of the existing weedy plant cover and replace this with plants that will grow rapidly and create a canopy that excludes some light, blocks wind and competes with exotic regrowth. The conditions that develop favour development of other rainforest species that you might plant. The conditions created could also favour dispersal of local plants via natural seed deposition by wind, gravity and wildlife.

As you travel through Northern Rivers, you will see succession everywhere. Have a look at the many landslips in the region. These are already beginning to disappear from view as a result of ecological succession. This is an excellent opportunity to see the process, even if it not the most aesthetically pleasing. Put that aside, and imagine how knowledge of succession could be applied to produce something more than a green weed scape.



Only days after a major flood, tree seeds have been deposited on a freshly laid sandbar.

Photo: Scott O'Keeffe

The big slug

The red triangle (*Triboniophorus graeffei*) is a mollusc in the family *Athoracophoridae*, colloquially known as "leaf blade slugs".

Members of this group have beautiful markings that look very much like the veins on a leaf. You can see this in the photo below. If you come across one of these slugs, look closely; the pattern is truly remarkable.

The red triangle is the largest Australian slug, and it's a whopper. They can be up to 15 cm long. If you see one, you can confirm that it's a native species by looking at the antennae. Like all Australian slugs, they have one pair, unlike introduced species that have two pairs.

Red triangles are found in humid zones along the east coast of Australia, from north Queensland to the Victorian border. They inhabit heath, woodland, moist forests and, unexpectedly, urban areas.

The red triangle slug is another example of a native animal that has adapted and taken advantage of new environments created by humans.

If you are lucky enough to have them in the garden, don't worry about your plants. Red triangles are benign, and feed on microscopic algae.

Red triangle slugs leave marks on smooth barked eucalypts that show where they have been feeding. Look for wavy edged tracks on smooth barked trees when you're in the bush. The slugs make the tracks as they glide across surfaces on a thin layer of slippery mucus.

Fat, juicy, and almost pure muscle, these slugs look as if they would be a good feed for a frog. Think again! Red triangles produce two types of mucus. One to facilitate movement, and another to defend against potential predators. When threatened, red triangles will exude an extremely viscous and sticky mucus that can completely immobilise small predators like frogs.

Australia's charismatic wildlife has a high profile, with our unique mammals and birds getting more than their fair share of public attention. But other fascinating, diverse and unique groups like land snails and slugs don't get much attention. So, if you like photographing wildlife, point your camera at some red triangles – they're great subjects. They are easy to find, and you'll have plenty of time to set up your shot. They won't dart off like a butterfly or a bird!

Few people would be aware that Australia is known for its remarkably high diversity of endemic land snails

Plant of the month



Red gum
Eucalyptus tereticornis

Often coming into flower in winter, red gum is an iconic tree of eastern Australia and very common in Nimbin.

Eucalyptus tereticornis grows to 40m high and prefers well-drained clay soils and alluviums up high and on ridges, and occurs on grassy wooded alluvial flats and open forest lower down.

Locally it can also be found on lowland subtropical rainforest on floodplain which is an endangered ecological community.

Its presence on the floodplain in particular gives a past perspective of the vast managed open forests and the smaller lowland subtropical rainforest remnants linking our Nimbin area and village to Lismore, Kyogle and Casino but less so to the Tweed area where this species is less common.

A core koala habitat tree, red gum is a key species and deserves its place in the managed environmental plantings in the area.

I had a complaint last week with my planted red gums dominating a landholder planting. It can be quite the survivor and withstand intense summer hot and dry then frost, flood and fire, so sometimes I should keep the numbers down but sometimes it just survives and kicks on when others struggle.

There has also been a lot of talk about the funded trend and influence of koala food tree plantings on areas that were once Big Scrub and subtropical rainforest. It's certainly a good idea not to plant an environmental planting based on *Eucalyptus spp* only, and in particular eucalyptus that is not endemic to that particular area.

Closely allied to river red gum (*E. camaldulensis* of the inland), red gum holds a special place in many people's hearts and the romance of inland and regional Australia.

Cream flowers from winter attracting a lot of action from parrots and other nectar-foraging fauna.



The red triangle is Australia's largest species of slug. It can be found in moist areas in bushland, and urban areas.

Photo: David Lochlin



This spectacular hot pink relative of the red triangle slug was recently discovered at Mt. Kaputar, NSW.

Photo: Jim McLean

and slugs. Recent research shows that some areas in Australia are known hotspots for rapid speciation (evolution of new species).

Nobody knows how many species of land snails and slugs there are on the continent. The count for eastern Australia alone is at least 800 species, and new ones are constantly being discovered.

Soon I might pack my bags for a trip to Mount Kaputar. I hear they have some nice

mountains there, but when I head down that way, I'll be looking for the recently discovered fluorescent pink slug..



Shop 1, 66 Cullen Street, Nimbin



GPS collars to unlock secrets of greater gliders

Researchers are tracking greater gliders as they move through burnt forest in one of the first studies to use GPS collars on the world's largest gliding marsupial.

Greater gliders are facing an extinction threat and PhD candidate at the University of Sydney Vivianna Miritis, is leading research in a partnership the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia to understand how greater gliders are able to move in a canopy that is open and has been burnt.

Specifically, "we want to know if moving in a burnt forest exposes them to a higher risk of predation," Ms Miritis said.

Previous studies of greater glider movement used older equipment such as radio transmitters which provided important but limited information. By contrast advanced technology in the form of GPS collars that are small and light can be safely used on greater gliders.

The project, underway in Tallaganda State Forest in New South Wales, requires ecologists climbing to nesting hollows up to 60 metres high to capture greater gliders. Back on the ground, GPS collars are attached to 15 greater gliders from burnt and unburnt forests to compare their movements.

The GPS collars record their movements by measuring their location every 30 minutes,

from dusk to dawn, for 30 days before the animals are recaptured and the collars retrieved.

The research is expected to generate up to 200,000 individual tracking locations providing a level of detail impossible to obtain with just radio transmitters.

Such precise data could transform what is known about these mysterious animals and help guide efforts to recover populations.

In 20 years, greater glider numbers have declined by up to 80% due to land-clearing, logging, and climate change impacts including droughts, heat waves and more severe bushfires.

Nearly a third of greater glider habitat burned in the 2019-20 mega fires. In just six years, greater gliders have gone from not being listed, to being classified as 'vulnerable'. Last year they were listed as 'endangered'.

WWF-Australia conservation scientist, Dr Kita Ashman, a who took part in the field work, said there were a few theories on how fire-damaged habitat alters glider behaviour.

"They could expand their home range as they're forced to travel further to find food and nesting hollows, or they could remain in unburnt patches within the burnt forest

resulting in a much smaller home range," Dr Ashman said.



Dr Kita Ashman with a greater glider

The GPS collar research will provide detailed information on glider movements and habitat use, crucial to support the success of such interventions.

Proposed conservation actions for greater gliders include translocations, installation of nest boxes, and provision of supplementary food and water.

The knowledge gained from tracking gliders in unburnt forest could also have implications for the forestry industry.

Forestry prescriptions for how much greater glider habitat can be logged are based on old data derived from manual VHF tracking with radio transmitters.

"It is highly likely that greater glider movement and habitat requirements are being underestimated as a result,"

said Dr Ashman.

"Saving these special animals is really important because they're an indicator species. The presence of greater gliders is a sign of a healthy forest supporting a diverse range of species and that's what we all want to see," said Ms Miritis.

Given the ongoing loss of forest, WWF-Australia is calling on the federal government to pick up the pace on the EPBC nature law reforms, which are falling behind schedule at a time they're urgently needed.

The NSW Environmental Trust has provided \$40,000 for this project, and WWF-Australia has provided \$25,000 through Regenerate Australia.

Video, interviews and stills here: <https://dams.wwf.org.au/resourcespace/?c=5050&k=19234ec263>

In loving memory



Oregano growing with thyme behind

by Nerelle Draisma

The celebration of the winter solstice is often associated with an inward gaze of self reflection.

With the return of the light in the deepest darkest night, memories of loved ones who have shed their light upon us and left the earthly plane can bring a tear to the eye.

The pain associated with the loss of furry friends and loved ones can be a hard one to shake.

Healing grief through the creation of a memorial garden can bring back that loving joy associated with those near and dear to us.

It can be as simple as a potted garden, a person's favourite tree or bush, or

maybe even a garden around a favourite sitting place.

Wherever you choose and whatever you create, it ensures that loving memory is nourished, growing joyfully, and lives on in both your heart and the soul of the earth from which we have all been born and to where we shall return.

To get your memories growing, come down to the Greenthumb Nursery located at Nimbin Building Materials, 50 Gungas Road, Nimbin. We are open six days, and nursery advice is available on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

You can also follow us on facebook at Nimbin Building Materials.

See you soon and happy gardening.



Speaking from the heart

by Dr Gary Wohlman

I'm so looking forward to be returning to Nimbin after my first visit ever during the Aquarius 50th anniversary.

When I first visited, I was grateful to be invited to offer what turned out to be an outrageously fun and transformative 'Speaking from the Heart' session at the Church of Aquarius.

From the enthusiastic response with what we co-created that day, where one person after another felt encouraged to stand up with ease and reveal their own authentic, vulnerable and heartfelt nature, I've felt moved to return and offer a deeper dive - with a full-day workshop on Saturday, 15th July at Nimbin Town Hall, 47 Cullen Street, costing \$100.

A number of participants from our first session are also returning for this full-day

immersion, and some amazing souls I've known since I first moved to Australia 26 years ago are travelling from Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, Bellingen, Northern Rivers, and beyond. The workshop is nearly full, yet a few spots are still available. Come JOYn us!

For more details and to book in, visit: www.mypresentationdoctor.com/events

To access videos of live presentation breakthroughs, visit: www.youtube.com/@masteringpresentationskill4125

Have some queries? I'd be happy to speak with you directly so you can get the most value out of attending, as well as to explore the possibility of having a one-to-one session when I'm in town from 13-17th July. Phone me on 0433-126-019.

I'm delighted to share this moving experience with you, and looking forward to having the opportunity to making a difference in your life.

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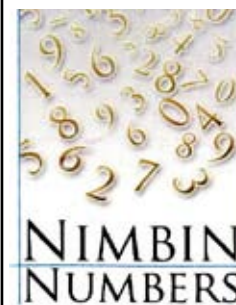
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We need to fund aged care properly!

Mum is 92 and as she dutifully reports to me each morning she is 'still here' and we are joyful for each day she stays with us.

I'm also grateful for the meagre carers supplement I receive, and for the home care aged package that allows mum to stay at the home during her palliative period.

That said I would like to point out some of the frailties and pitfalls of the present aged care system.

It's shot to the shithouse.

By my reckoning we are seven years into a 20-year baby boom aged care bust. At present the care provided by some of the organisations is so dubious, that I am pondering charging them for looking after their workers while the overarching bureaucracy was stretched well past its breaking point years ago.

Here are some examples. We applied for an urgent review because mum had suddenly changed from someone who cooked, cleaned and ran a musical festival into someone who couldn't stand unassisted. The review of her condition took two months to happen and we are now waiting another month for the promised upgrade. That's an urgent request ... how long would a necessary or appropriate review take?? And that's with me rattling cages and pulling strings like a deranged monkey on meth amphetamines.

It's not just the government that's broke though – the marketplace of aged care franchises is riddled with top heavy bureaucracies and their telemarketing client contact systems, who employ not just untrained workers but government subsidised employees who are almost as incapacitated as their charges. I had one bloke who spent his hour and a half complaining about his own aches and pains and then left without folding a towel or washing a dish.

If and when you face the choosing between the plethora of would be Johnny-come-lately aged care organisations, make sure you choose a local provider with a proven track record and if they also have NDIS approval that means there is greater oversight of their work. Our provider couldn't even get us a female worker to help mum shower.

The big story though is this: we need to fund aged care properly. We've just started to catch a huge wave of frail aged care – a nation of people who created this amazing prosperous country. We're seriously short of workers in this sector and our governments are focused on transforming small target opposition into no targets government.

Is that enough of a spray? I'm happy to jump up and down on a milk crate frothing at the mouth if that makes some difference. Could be quite entertaining, I could sell tickets and that would help me afford a falls bracelet.



Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

A moment

by S Sorrensen

There is something uplifting about being in a church. The doorways and windows all point heavenward in that classic pointed church-window shape that brings to mind a bishop's hat. Or a penis...

Oh, sorry about that. That's just my Catholic mind. But this is a Uniting Church church, decommissioned now. I don't know if there is a paedophilic history to the Uniting Church. I mean, the Uniting Church doesn't even have much history, only being formed in 1977.

And I don't know if the Uniting Church has bishops with funny pointed hats that require specially shaped doors to accommodate their passage. But it seems to me that there's a lot less pomp in the Uniting Church than in the Catholic. It's more Parramatta Road than Oxford Street.

I'm standing on the raised floor where pastors have stood and addressed congregations of the faithful for years. I can hear the echoes of their many words that have embedded themselves in past congregations and in these wooden walls. Now, microphone in hand, I'm adding my own.

The congregation I'm addressing though is not Uniting Church faithful, but a bunch of North Coast people who have come to this funky new venue in Nimbin for a Sunday session of songs and jokes (not hymns and sermon). My job is to deliver the jokes. To spread the word, man. The good word.



And the faith here is not in a God made in man's image (Xenophanes, 580BC) but in people. Yes, people. Full stop. We who are gathered here are celebrating our humanity. We do not celebrate God, fear, faith, scripture, commandments, heaven or reincarnation, no; here and now we celebrate each other's life in holy communion on a perfect winter's day in Nimbin.

"G'day people. Settle down. Good to see you."

I have suffered at the hands (literally) of religion. I have been confused by the institutionalised distortion of a beautiful story. A story that is so human, but so dangerous to the ruling institutions.

The beautiful story is of a man preaching love and peace; of a man who chucked bankers from the temple and who said, at his big gig on the mountain, that rich people would not get to heaven; of a man who helped the sick and homeless; of a man who embraced those outcast by society; of a man who pointed to his heart when asked where heaven was; of a man who died to show that accepting your mortality is the key to liberation. (And let's not forget, got more wine when it was needed.)

Even though I'm saying "man", these actions are more those of a woman, I reckon. The wisdom is feminine. I think he was a woman. That makes sense.

The distortion of this beautiful story reverses the feminine wisdom to create macho institutions promoting the opposite: wealth is virtue, peace needs war, death is not real, heaven is somewhere else. They're using Her name in vain. Bastards.

I'm talking beautiful nonsense here on the stage, but it's more honest than all the scriptures. And it brings more joy. There was more wisdom in the chit-chat by the chai tent before the show than in any proclamation from any religion. The truth is all around.

The jokes are going pretty well. We're having a laugh. A baby cries. A phone causes a quick and embarrassed reaction from someone in the back row. The church itself, a beautiful building, seems to be enjoying itself. Soon the walls will resonate to live music. Then it's wine and bread in the pub.

I give thanks to people in this loving church on this lovely Nimbin Sunday.

Earth Love course in Byron

by Dr Antoinette Ensbey

"Climate change has been recognised as the greatest threat to human health in the 21st century by the World Health Organisation," says the Black Dog Institute (BDI) in their article *The nexus between Climate Change and Mental Health*.

It's clear we need climate action and increasingly we need to look after our mental health as the threat becomes so real.

Results from a community survey conducted by the Climate Council, 80% of Australians reported experiencing an extreme weather event at least once since 2019. These included heat waves (63%), flooding (47%), fires (42%), droughts (36%) and destructive storms (29%).

The Climate Council asserts that "climate change is ... an anxiety-inducing phenomenon."

Despite the fact that disasters fuelled by climate change leave a lasting impact on mental wellbeing, mental health services are often either absent or difficult to obtain.

"It's heartbreaking to realise that many Australians are living with significant levels of distress related to the reality of our changing climate," says climate scientist, Dr Joelle Gergis.

The Climate Council urges us to do more, as there is no more time to waste: "Every action matters and we need it all immediately."

In my personal experience, the negative effect of the climate crisis on my wellbeing seems best treated by getting active.

Bangalow Koalas, who recently took out a prestigious award, provided me with the wonderful opportunity to get my hands in the soil and together with others help plant thousands of trees as part of establishing the koala

tree corridor.

This is the type of involvement that I want to encourage through a new mental health course that I have developed to address climate stress and eco-anxiety in an immediate and accessible way.

The six-week course is about regaining mental stability in the face of climate change.

It benefits those experiencing anxiety, stress, depression and other climate change related issues. According to the BDI, research has shown that acknowledging and sharing these feelings with safe, supportive groups, and acting in ways that are personally meaningful, can be helpful.

Hopefully the course will bring together people with shared concerns who wish to find a vehicle out of the gloom and ride into the future of active hope. Strengthening our potential for resilience,

empowerment, hope, confidence etc is the objective of the course program.

The course encourages active environmental involvement as a form of mitigation both for the mental afflictions and the climate disasters.

Weekly fieldwork assignments direct students to volunteer their time to local conservation groups who have agreed to participate.

As there is increasing concern about the consequences of climate change on mental health, my intention is to do more research into how to support people in distress and how to prevent mental disorders and address the escalating mental health problems in our communities.

I am offering a course in Term 3 at Byron Community College, and enrolments are now open at: byroncollege.org.au/course/earthlove

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Refugee ration challenge

by Kath Greenwood

These are the contents of the Refugee Challenge Box – food rations for a week for one person.

I had put out to raise \$500 and I was pleased to raise over \$1200 from generous friends and the Nimbin business community. Thanks to the *Nimbin GoodTimes*, Nimbin Hemp Embassy, the Craft Gallery, Perceptio, Funky Corner, the Mad Hattery, Tribal Magic, Nimbin Church of Aquarius, Heart Connexion and Nimbin Herbs.

My practice run recipe from the *Act for Peace* recipe booklet was rice crackers. In a refugee situation there would be no margin for error or waste in the preparation of food. These 30 crackers were made from one cup of rice and one tablespoon of oil. I had the luxury of using sesame oil.

Throughout the cook, I was very aware that I was taking for granted a clean kitchen and utensils, fresh water, an automatic oven, baking paper and even a sealable storage container.

I love to cook and especially to bake, and as a single parent I have known what it means to make a food budget stretch across the days. My refugee ration box must stretch for a week, and without the benefit of garden extras, a spice rack or flavouring sauces.

Meal planning will be an important part of managing the rations. All the time I am preparing the crackers I am mindful of the stories women and children share with us about how they came to be living in refugee camps.

On this practice run, I could eat my rice crackers with avocado gifted to me by a neighbour and limes from my own garden. I could share them with friends, and some bought hummus.

I thought that during the challenge I would not use my 125g of dried chick peas to



make hummus but rather I would use them to make a felafel mix. I had never made rice crackers before, so now I have a new recipe to improve upon with either savoury or sweet additions from my pantry.

The first day I made rice and kidney beans and while it was filling and nourishing, I was aware that many refugees are parents living without access to vitamin-rich foods for their children.

I was also very conscious that eating limited portions of the same dishes reinforces an awareness of loss and the lack of personal autonomy in the circumstances of displacement and dependence on NGOs for the most basic provisions.

On the second day, I made Assala's lentil soup and I thought that I had not fully appreciated the taste of lentils before because I was so used to the accompanying flavours of miso and garlic and vegetables.

By Day 3, I had been able to raise over \$1,000 in sponsorship and I was gifted the "reward" of a 200g can of tomatoes, which made a huge difference to this soup. Also, I made a flatbread with my flour ration and this made the meal stretch to three servings. My heart was full for Assala, who said, "I feel relieved receiving the food pack because it contains the food we eat...we're thankful to the people who are helping us..."

I am very aware that while

the food in the package is food I eat, I am not usually limited to eating those foods without vegetables and spices. Later, when I pick up and bank more generous community donations, I decide to gift myself some garlic, onion and spices to add to future dishes. When my daughter made a donation online, I gifted myself some spinach.

The next day, I used Fatima's flatbread recipe and added tumeric for flavour. Then, I added some leftover kidney beans, a spinach cube, garlic, chili and tumeric to the last of Assala's lentil soup.

Fatima's story inspired me because after fleeing Syria and crossing the desert with her children to a refugee camp in Jordan she trained to become a volunteer for NGOs in the camp. She says the amounts of food and coupons are getting fewer.

"People who come here are already broken on the inside. We should not add to this. I've made big changes to help people keep their dignity. I want to distribute packages with love and a smile."

On Day 5, I made Eden's kidney bean rolls. I used the last of my flour ration to make four flatbreads. I mashed some kidney beans and rice with garlic and a cube of spinach and rolled the mixture in the flatbreads to make small burritos.

They are brushed with oil and fried until the bread is toasted.

Two of these were a meal with a small serving of rice and the last quarter of my onion ration. There are no leftovers. The discipline of stretching the contents of the ration box was sweetened by knowing that I was only committed to the challenge for a week.

I am more aware now of my privileged access to a garden where I can grow food and a village where I can buy fresh, local and organic foods, the luxury of food choice and the waste of leftover foods that go uneaten, that I share with birds and goannas and possums.

When the challenge week was ended and I reflected on the experience, I think the most difficult aspect of the agreement was social, to be in the company of friends and be unable to share wine or birthday cake or a meal in a restaurant.

It was a great pleasure to eat at the Wolf and Lamb, even though the foods on the menu were not too different from the foods in the refugee package! At home, even though I had really missed dairy and fish, I still felt to finish the last of the lentil soup and to use the last of my kidney beans for wraps.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart to the generous Nimbin businesses whose contributions were three times my fundraising target.

Especially I thank Caroline from the Hemp Embassy and Chrissie from Perceptio for their engagement with the challenge and the depth of their thoughts about the food and also the realities of the mothers who rely on the donations to keep their children fed.

Most particularly, while Dr Alex had praised kidney beans as good protein and vitamin B, Caroline made me think about the limited amounts and the quality of the food in the ration packs, and her thoughts made me exchange some of the foods for organic products.

Nimbin GROW: A new peer-to-peer mental wellbeing support group



GROW group members on a bushwalk together.

Nimbin is set to welcome a new GROW peer-to-peer mental wellbeing support group this August.

The Nimbin GROW group will open its doors from Wednesday, 2nd August at the Nimbin Community Centre, meeting each week from 12.30 to 2.30pm. The group is free, confidential, anonymous, and no referral or diagnosis is required. Anyone over the age of 18 can join at any time.

Mental health struggles can be isolating and overwhelming, and many individuals find it challenging to seek help. Joining a GROW peer-to-peer support group has helped tens of thousands of people get the support and practical tools they need for better mental wellbeing.

Longitudinal research shows that being part of a GROW group helps people build lasting friendships, achieve greater autonomy, learn to cope with life's challenges, grow self-acceptance, social skills, and a sense of community.

GROW groups use a proven 12-step program that is peer-reviewed and created from people's living experience of recovery from

mental distress through mutual help. GROW began in Australia in 1957 and has become a world-wide, grassroots mental wellbeing movement, with weekly groups all over Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and the United States.

The new Nimbin GROW group will be supported by a peer program worker and visiting members from the Lismore GROW groups who all have lived experience of mental health recovery using the GROW program.

Experienced GROW members will help new group members learn how to run the meetings and use the program for themselves. Past GROW group members from the Nimbin group that ran through the 1990s are very welcome to join.

GROW is funded by the Northern NSW Local Health District and accredited under the National Standards for Mental Health Services.

For more information on the Nimbin GROW group, contact Jo on 0483-888-844 or visit: www.grow.org.au

Don't struggle alone, join a GROW group today.

Bundjalung women to take Durangen to Japan

A group of Indigenous women plant artists will be representing Australia and the Gondwana Rainforest region in the JAALA biennial exhibition in Japan alongside others internationally.

In a world first showcase, this year six senior women artists from the Bundjalung Nation are participating in JAALA with a group exhibition titled 'Durangen' which means grow in their language. The artwork highlights the contribution of women's work in growing culture, alongside some of the many native plant companions revered in daily living for Aboriginal people since time immemorial, but are now under



threat from recent floods, fires, drought and pests.

The artists representing Australia are featured in collaboration with cyberTribe

in the 23rd Biennial exhibition, hosted by JAALA and the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. Euphemia Bostock (Munanjali), Tania Marlowe (Nyanbul), Deidre

Currie (Minjungbal), Faith Baisden (Yugambah), Jasmin Stanford (Githabul), and artist curator Jenny Fraser (Migunburri) will feature in Durangen curated

especially for the 2023 JAALA Biennial in July.

This is the fifth time Aboriginal artists have been invited by JAALA and curated by Dr Jenny Fraser since 2012, in the official Japan, Afro-Asian, Latin American Artists Association International Art Exchange exhibition that has been running overall for around 50 years. The 2023 self-funded group collection, titled Durangen, features a range of weaving, textiles, ceramics, photography, film and text, with a focus on traditional plant uses for the matriarchs of tribal groups that make up the Bundjalung Nation on the East Coast of Australia.

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A blaze of colour and shape

by Tonia Haynes

The Nimbin Artists Gallery is always a blaze of colour and shape; a feast for the eyes of anyone who appreciates the beauty of creative talent; particularly when the creative work is made by a local populace, who all live within a 40km radius of Nimbin.

Maureen Whittaker's love of colour and flow is expressed in mysterious and sometimes naive canvases that encourage one to gaze and reflect and also to discuss with others, for Maureen's imagination is perceived differently through different eyes.

Ms Whittaker said, "I started painting about 12 years ago as a retirement hobby. I found I could express myself well with colour, texture and imagination.

"Over the years I immersed myself in art workshops of various styles and mediums, and have discovered I get the



'Mornig Mist' by Maureen Whittaker

most joy from bright acrylic works with an abstract and whimsical feel.

"My connection to the Nimbin Artists Gallery as a volunteer has supported my creativity, while the encouragement of fellow artists has inspired me to keep making art."

The most valued attribute of any art piece is for it to remain interesting, not only to its carer, but also to any others that might have the opportunity to



'Rosie Reworked' by Maureen Whittaker

look upon its grace. And there is no doubt that Maureen's artwork is forever interesting.

The gallery is open seven days a week, from 10am-ish to 4pm-ish, at 49 Cullen Street. See us also on Facebook.

Rumination and intimacy at Roxy Gallery

by Ruth Tsitimbis

Currently on show at the Roxy Gallery is a fantastic exhibition by Jason Farrow titled 'Ruminations'.

Jason's body of work comprises of sculptures in sandstone, bronze, marble and fibreglass, all of which challenge the viewer to focus on many forms.

Like the act of ruminating something, the sculptures in this exhibition engage the onlooker to give each piece deep and considered thought on the shapes within the overall form. 'Ruminations' will be on exhibition until 23rd July.

From this point exhibitions in the Roxy Gallery will move from deep, considered thought about something to close familiarity in the upcoming exhibition 'Intimacy' by artists from the Practising Artists Network (PAN).

The Roxy Gallery has supported this fantastic group of regional artists over the years and each exhibition they have produced vibrant approaches to creative expression. 'Intimacy' will be a showcase of the latest



'Doomed Love Mr & Mrs Prokofiev' by Rick Molloy

works of PAN members beginning 27th July and running through to 27th August.

Our lives are certainly more turbulent and complex than ever before and, in this exhibition, PAN artists pause and reflect upon the value of family, relationships and the environment, and the increasing importance of our intimate connection to each of these elements of our lives.

Intimacy is both a thoughtful and a physical experience, and intimacy

with the land and people within our orbit is important towards sustaining ourselves in a troubled world.

PAN is a locally-based non-profit incorporated association committed to the visual arts in the Northern Rivers and provides an opportunity for artists to hold group exhibitions. They have successfully exhibited in the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle, Northern Rivers Community Gallery, Ballina and Lone Goat Gallery, Byron Bay in the recent past. PAN also gives members



'Twisted' by Jason Farrow

the opportunity to participate in social events such as Life Drawing and Plein Air activities, and offers the opportunity to participate in exhibitions and promote their art.

For further virtual information, check out the PAN Website: www.panbyronbay.com but for real 'Intimacy' come along to the official launch for this exhibition on Saturday 29th July from 1pm, providing people a great afternoon's opportunity to mingle with PAN members.

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local beanieologist wins prize

Meggan Jack has taken out the Alice Springs Beanie Festival's Acquisition Prize at the 27th Beaniefest competition held 23rd-26th June, with this year's theme of 'A Traveller's Tale'.

Her winning beanie titled 'An Emu stole my Beanie', has around 30 mini-beanies nestled on the floppy emu-body/beanie - which by chance, has a tail-like scarf, crocheted onto the back.

Megg has been crocheting beanies for 36 years, having made her first, by accident, after being taught just the basics; chain stitch and loops of chains. Adding a treble stitch to a crystal pouch, it flared the shape into a mini-beanie, evolving into her first Gumnut Pixie Hat.

Megg has been involved with the Beaniefest since 2003, when her beanie with tapestry crocheted emus, on a



green and gold-foliaged background, won the Flora and Fauna Award.

The following year, the first of what became her 'signature' beanie, a Sunset Silhouette, won the Spirit of the Land category.

She has now won six first place awards, seven special mentions (2nds) and two acquisition seconds. This latest one, is her first, 1st place Acquisition Award, and she continues to try and work her way through all the different categories.

Look out for her Blue Ribbon Plarn Beanie at this year's Murwillumbah Show, being entered by Adrian of Blue Ribbon Meats, where it is on display on the front counter: made from five blue plastic carry bags, cut into 'plarn', plastic yarn.

You can find out more about her beanies and custom order your own via her QR code.

Celebrating the fabric of life



'Fungus Head' by Courtney Heffernan

The afternoon opening event for 'Fabric of Life – The Fibre Show' was well attended, and it was great to see the young fibre artists come along to see their work in the gallery.

As always, the excitement and conversation between the artists when seeing other works and techniques makes a great atmosphere.

The next generation of felt-makers and fibre artists were able to meet and talk to some of the felt/fibre artists who came before them, and who were intrinsic to the start of the felting movement in Australia.

Sachiko Kotaka's Felt Wrap, and one of the next generation of artists, Courtney Heffernan's 'Fungus Head' felted hat, were talking points. They are stunning examples of the ability for felt to be both delicate and strong.

River Moore's piece 'Plastic is the New Ocean' shows once again that mixed fibres and crochet can make a powerful statement about the destruction and pollution of the environment.



Felt Wrap with Weft Felt features by Sachiko Kotaka

There is a huge variety of work, with Craig Walton's sculptured Bangalow Palm piece, beautiful and masterful weaving by Robyn Stewart and Wendy Cartwright and much, much more.

It is a feast of fabric and fibre, and one of the best fibre shows in recent years for its colourful and imaginative works.

It will run until Saturday 22nd July.

Blue Knob Cafe

The café has an all-day breakfast menu, meals, specials, cake and coffee. Monthly Sunday morning music is ongoing from 10am. For info re dates and who's playing, check our facebook page.

Back-Yarders at Blue Knob

The Back-Yarders table at Blue Knob continues to add that extra bit of local



'Plastic is the New Ocean' by River Moore

interest on Saturday mornings from 9am to 12.30pm.

For more info or enquiries on what's happening at Blue Knob, go to facebook: Blue Knob Gallery, Cafe & Ceramic Studio, web: www.blueknobgallery.com email: bkhgallery@inet.net.au or phone 02 6689-7449.

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Acknowledging Indigenous Elders

by Artis Tree

In honour and recognition of our Indigenous artists, Serpentine Gallery is hosting 'For Our Elders', an exhibition celebrating culture.

This exhibition will feature Indigenous artists who are currently living in the Northern Rivers.

Artist Keith Berongal, who is studying design at SCU, describes his work titled 'Identity Dreaming' (pictured) as "a painting of swan wing with a prayer depicting corroboree, of once many moons away, of returning Indigenous Australians, of spirit of Gnibi College knowledge, and who identify as Bundjalung nation."

Lismore TAFE runs art and culture courses. Exhibiting student Wish Hamilton commented, "It's been a beautiful experience doing monoprints and other art forms with fellow Indigenous artists at Lismore TAFE. Binding our culture together with love."

This is a diverse and powerful exhibition celebrating culture and community. An invitation was extended to Indigenous artists in the Northern Rivers to exhibit at Serpentine, and over 30 artists came forward with many diverse art works, from traditional to contemporary including paintings, print making, woodwork and sculpture.

The opening of the For Our Elders exhibition will be held on Saturday afternoon 15th July from 3pm to 7pm, and will be on show until 28th July.

Heads up

The next exhibition is a members show exploring the concept of 'spirit'.



If you would like to participate in this group show, please contact the gallery. Spirit will open on Friday 4th August, 5.30pm – 8pm, and will run to Friday 18th August.

Serpentine Community Gallery is located at 3/104 Conway Street Lismore and is open Monday to Friday 10am-4pm and Saturday 10am-2pm.

The gallery is an inclusive space that welcomes new members and artists to exhibit in group shows, or to hire the gallery for solo exhibitions. If you would like to be part of our member shows, please contact the gallery for instructions on how to apply.

For more information, or to become involved with the gallery, please contact: gallery@serpentinearts.org or phone 0492-964-819.

Serpentine Community Gallery acknowledges that we are located on the lands of the Bundjalung nation and



'Warriors' by Eric Ferguson
(left) Print-making by Wish Hamilton



'Identity Dreaming' by Keith Berongal

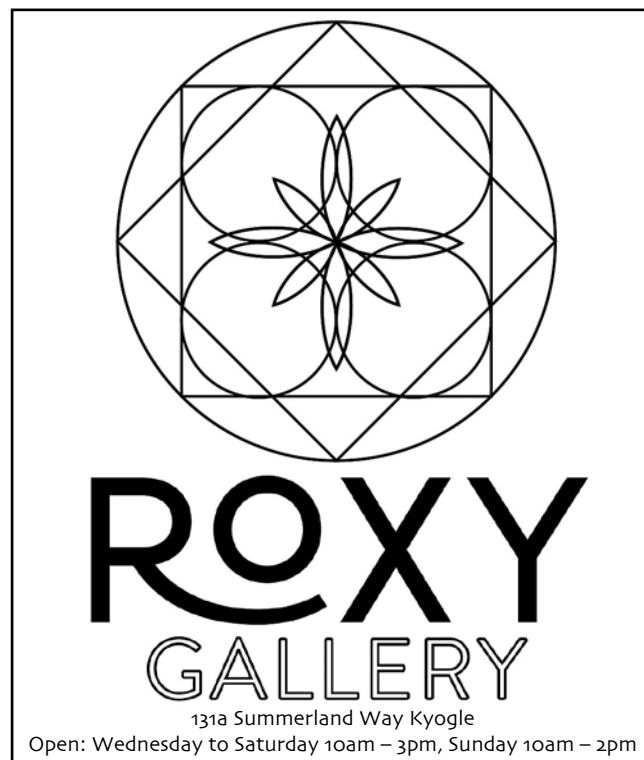


'Judgement Day' by Peter Faulkner Roberts

pays respect to all Aboriginal people past, present and emerging.



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