



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

To me, Australia Day is an opportunity to hear the stories of all Australians and give thanks for living in the best country in the world. It's also a chance to thank the many volunteers in our community who freely give their time to make our community an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

# Australia Day awards

That's the spirit behind Council's annual Australia Day Awards which I presented at Council's Australia Day celebrations at the Goonellabah Sports & Aquatic Centre. Thank you to all the nominees and congratulations to our winners who are: Citizen of the Year Mieke Bell, who has run the Winsome Soup Kitchen for the last 33 years; Services in the Community (Individual) Rod Gibson; Services in the Community (Group) U3A; Sportsperson (Junior) Daisy Smith; Sportsperson (Senior) Ned Cain; Environment Doug Blythe and Shaen Springall from Goonellabah Tucki Landcare Group and Arts/Culture Arts Northern Rivers. Our Australia Day

Ambassador, Dr Clio Cresswell, who is a best-selling author and mathematician, gave a very interesting speech. I would also like to welcome the 20 new citizens who joined our nation on Australia Day. They hail from the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Africa, the United States of America, Fiji, New Zealand, India, Cambodia and Canada. **Wayfinding Project** Council has been receiving lots of calls asking for an update on the Nimbin Wayfinding Project, so here you go. **Pedestrian Link:** The new footpath from Cullen Street to the Western Carpark has recently been completed in a way to mitigate the site restrictions and gradient.

The inclusion of two new stairs along the footpath were required to ensure the gradient was compliant with Australian Standards for Footpaths. The second stage to this project, currently underway, will see the inclusion of high visibility paint along the step treads and solar light bollards installed to enhance and increase visibility both day and night. Feedback from the community highlighted the need for enhanced signage and improved accessibility access from the Western Carpark to the village, currently located at the Northern end of the carpark. Improved signage is being pursued as a priority project for Lismore City Council in 2024. **The Parklet:** The project



The Mayor with Citizen of the Year, Mieke Bell

includes the establishment of a new parklet next to the Green Bank on Cullen Street. This parklet is being constructed along the roadside verge, and does not impact car parking numbers. The parklet is currently under construction and is scheduled for completion by the end of March. Prior to the completion of the overall project, both sites will see the introduction of plantings, drainage management and a thorough site clean-up. Council will be conducting post-delivery feedback in April 2024 to obtain feedback regarding the project including addressing any concerns the community may have.

## Time for a closer look at supermarket pricing



by Janelle Saffin MP  
State Member for Lismore

It is clearly time for an investigation into what's happening with supermarket prices, and I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of an ACCC inquiry into retail pricing and allegations of price gouging. We have all seen the price of the weekly grocery shop going up at the same time as the big supermarket chains are reporting massive profits. (In the 2023 financial year, Woolworths reported a total net profit after tax of \$1.72 billion, and Coles profit was \$1.1 billion.) I've had a lot of local farmers ask me what's going on. They want to know why the prices they are getting for produce have dropped so much, but supermarket prices haven't come down. While supermarket pricing and competition is a Federal Government matter, I am raising it here because it affects all of us.



Janelle shopping

The Federal Government had already announced an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct which is a voluntary code supposed to improve how supermarkets deal with suppliers. But the latest announcement of a pricing inquiry by consumer watchdog, the ACCC, is the most powerful action yet. This is something that farmers wanted to see because it can force supermarkets to reveal their farmgate prices and contracts. The inquiry will include an investigation into the competitiveness of small and independent retailers, including regional and remote areas. To help shoppers be better informed, the Government is funding consumer group Choice to

provide quarterly reports on price transparency and the comparative costs of grocery goods at different retailers. I welcome this ACCC price inquiry because, as the Treasurer says – we want a fair go for families and for farmers. **Save on power bills** If you have suffered power bill shock lately, there are a few things you can do that could bring your bill down. Electricity retailers are not allowed to charge exit fees or early termination fees when you decide to switch your supplier. You are free to find a better energy deal at any time. And there is a quick on-line method for finding out the best deal. The Australian Energy Regulator has a website: [energymadeeasy.gov.au](http://energymadeeasy.gov.au) where you pop in your suburb, and provide the code from your latest power bill, and it calculates the best deal based on your usage. One of my staff did the calculation and found she could save \$400 a year by switching to another provider, so it's worth investigating. Also remember to check for any rebates you may be eligible for – there are a range of NSW Government energy rebates for low-income households, families, independent retirees and others. Go to: [www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-grants-and-schemes/find-energy-rebate](http://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-grants-and-schemes/find-energy-rebate)

## On the same Page

by Kevin Hogan  
Federal Member for Page

### Opening of Nimbin Road

Great to see this \$14.9 million project open back in December. This road had two significant landslips in the immediate aftermath of the flood. This project required 239 piles to provide support, before building a 4.5-metre-high retaining wall. A lot of work done on this very important road. I thank everyone involved. Great to secure funding from the Federal Government.

### Nimbin Central School congratulations

Congratulations to Blair Morisey who received my book award for 'Reader Extraordinaire', for borrowing the most books

in primary school, 2023; and Natalie De Zwart as 'Reader Extraordinaire' for borrowing the most books in high school, 2023. Great school in our community.

### Class of 2023

Congratulations to the Year 12 Graduation Class of 2023: Ellen Adlington, Benson Arundale, Bridie Ashfield-Cubis, Mia Demkin, Rosella Gulizia, Jade Higgins, Delfin Hughes, Zali Jobson, Ruby Robinson, Eve Rutley, Tilly Smith, Savannah Trezise, Ayla Wakeman, and El Wolstencroft. Thank you to all the teachers, staff, parents and carers for supporting the students. I wish you all the very best.



Opening of the re-built section of Nimbin Road in December



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# It's time to control killer cats



by Sue Higginson,  
NSW Greens MLC

Responsibility for, and control over, domestic cats in Australia and NSW has been a running issue for jurisdictions and communities for decades.

While politicians have ignored the crisis of roaming cats, and the billions of native animals that are killed by them every year, we have moved further and deeper into the extinction crisis. It is actually unbelievable that other than being required to be microchipped cats and their owners are not regulated in NSW at all. Every year that goes by without Governments acting to ensure domestic cats are controlled is another disastrous year for native wildlife. The data is shocking. Pet cats alone are responsible for 390 million animals being killed in Australia every year, just in Sydney 66 million native animals are killed by domestic pet cats annually. Feral cats are an even more colossal killer, with 2 billion native vertebrates and 1 billion invertebrate animals killed in Australia every year. Cats are a huge problem, no argument, but irresponsible pet ownership has been an ignored crisis for too long and it's time to correct this historical and ongoing mistake. The Greens want to see new responsibilities introduced for all cat owners to ensure that cats cannot roam outside the property where they are kept. We expect that dog owners, graziers and other animal owners are responsible for where their animals are – but cat owners have, until now, just shrugged their shoulders and argued that you can't control cats. This is nonsense and we will no longer accept it. The simple fact is, that if a person cannot control their cat, and ensure that it is inside and not a risk to other animals, then they should not have a cat. Of course, there needs to be education and support provided to people in vulnerable circumstances, but we cannot allow cats to continue to massacre native animals in their billions, we just need to tackle the problem. This is why I have now given notice of a Bill that will give council rangers the power to pick up cats that aren't on the property where they should be. If a person allows a cat to leave their property uncontrolled or does not take action as necessary to prevent a cat from leaving their property, then that person should be held to account. There are



so many Councils that want to do the right thing so we are working to give Councils the power to ensure that the most sensitive environments in their local government areas have the greatest protection from cats that is possible. Keeping cats inside is the safest and most humane option for cats as well as native animals and the broader ecology of NSW. We desperately need to act and that's what we are doing. The Greens are here to do what is right and what evidence dictates, not what is easy. I hope you will stay tuned and support our campaign to get cat containment laws for NSW. Please sign up on my webpage: [www.suehigginson.org](http://www.suehigginson.org) if you would like to follow this very important campaign.

## Spare no expense to stamp out fire ants – vigilance needed

Tamara Smith MP is calling on the Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty to take further action to eradicate imported red fire ants in the Northern Rivers Region. Ms Smith said, "We must take urgent action to stamp out fire ants and prevent a potential environmental catastrophe." Fire ants were discovered in January by a local farmer in Wardell, just months after they were sighted further north in South Murwillumbah in late November. "These ants can kill wildlife, kill pets, and devastate our local agriculture industry," Ms Smith said. "We should spare no expense in stamping these ants out, or else we're looking at much more expensive implications for the community down the road." Ms Smith is particularly concerned that construction materials, imported at increasing rates following the 2022 floods, have enabled more ways for fire ants to be quickly transported across long distances.



"It's important that the NSW government inspects every post-flood inspection site to make sure fire ants have not spread further," she said. "I'm confident Minister Moriarty will treat this issue with the urgency it deserves, and I look forward to working with the government on this issue." Residents who suspect they have seen fire ants should call the Department of Primary Industries on 1800-680-244 or go to the DPI

website: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/bfs/insect-pests/rifa](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/bfs/insect-pests/rifa) for more information. **Emergency response** The next part of the emergency response in South Murwillumbah is to treat and look for fire ants within the 500m to 5km section of the designated Movement Control Area. It is vital that fire ant teams can check and treat 100% of properties in the 5km zone, whether fire ants are visible or not, to protect residents and businesses from the harmful impacts of this invasive pest. The National Fire Ant Eradication Program requires the consent of landowners to access their properties. Treatment can only be applied with the written consent of the property owner. Mayor of Tweed Shire, Chris Cherry urged landowners and tenants to support fire ant treatment activities and provide teams with consent to access their properties by signing the consent form as soon as possible by filling in the form on-line. "Just one missed nest could put our entire community and way of life at risk," Cr Cherry said. Complete the on-line form at: [ants.daf.qld.gov.au/table-of-contents/property-information-form](http://ants.daf.qld.gov.au/table-of-contents/property-information-form) The treatment for fire ants is made up of small pieces of corn grit soaked in soybean oil. It contains a low concentration of insect growth regulator. The chemical used is not a poison and is safe around people, animals and in the environment. Reece Pianta, Advocacy Manager for the Invasive Species Council said, "Everyone in the Northern Rivers should be out checking for fire ants, particularly if you have had any recent material delivered to your property like soil, turf or mulch. "The new infestation at Wardell should also trigger an urgent review of the adequacy of fire ant eradication funding by the Albanese Government," she said. At present the planned funding is only half the amount recommended by a comprehensive study.



Authorised by Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina. Funded using parliamentary entitlements

## TAMARA SMITH MP

### MEMBER FOR BALLINA

#### GET IN TOUCH

- 02 6686 7522
- [tamarasmith.org.au](http://tamarasmith.org.au)
- [ballina@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ballina@parliament.nsw.gov.au)
- Shop 1/7 Moon Street

#### STAY UPDATED

- Tamara Smith MP
- [tamara\\_smith\\_mp](https://www.instagram.com/tamara_smith_mp)
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What should I focus on in 2024? Scan the QR code to have your say!





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# John Pilger: Maverick journalist (1939-2023)

by John Jiggins

In a 2011 speech defending Julian Assange, John Pilger recalled how it was always impressed upon him when he was young that Australia was a brave country: that we stood up to authority, and we stood up for justice.

Such national myths were at best half-truths, Pilger said, but in our political life, there was scant evidence of this. But now and then, an Australian came along who made such myths seem true. Julian Assange was such an Australian, John Pilger said.

"I find him an extraordinarily brave Australian. And I can't say that about many of my compatriots in the same way. I'm not saying that there aren't brave Australians, but I can't think of any that has really been so unusually brave by his standing up to a superpower. Brave in starting a project like WikiLeaks that he knew would get him into trouble.

"One of the things that of course almost has never come out of the generally appalling media coverage of Julian and WikiLeaks is the reason for WikiLeaks. It had a moral base. It was about justice. He nailed his colours and the colours of WikiLeaks to that mast. This was going to be about justice.

"It was about seeking justice through letting people know what is going on, to letting people know what those who have power over their lives are saying. I can't tell you how brave this is. Many people have tried to do this and failed. Julian succeeded actually, because the information that he has got out to people all over the world and has made a difference."

Those same moral qualities that Pilger admired in Julian Assange underpinned Pilger's own journalism. Like many Australians, I have read numerous Pilger



articles, a few of his books, and watched several of his more than 60 documentaries. I stand in awe of his enormous output over six decades of what he called "maverick" journalism.

Most of his documentaries and scores of his articles are available on his website: [johnpilger.com](http://johnpilger.com) which is an enormous journalistic treasure trove, a contrarian archive of the history of our times.

The breadth of Pilger's journalism was staggering. Over five decades he covered wars and social conflicts in Vietnam, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Iraq, Burma, China, Okinawa, the Chagos Islands, Timor Leste, Chile, South Africa, Australia (frequently), Mexico, Japan, Czechoslovakia, the UK, the US etc, etc. He produced powerful documentaries about these issues. He was truly a globe-spanning journalist.

His first documentary, *The Quiet Mutiny* (1970), was about US soldiers in Vietnam who were 'fragging' their officers, which was slang for throwing grenades into the tents of the commanding officers they didn't like. Many of the conscripted US soldiers were rebelling against the Vietnam war.

His most impactful documentaries were *Year Zero: The quiet death of Cambodia* (1979) about the Khmer Rouge, and *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy* (1994). His final documentaries were *The Coming War with China* (2016) and *The Dirty War on the NHS* (2019).

It is worthwhile visiting his website, not only for these documentaries, but for a series of interviews he did of other journalists, called *Outsiders*. Pilger interviewed two other great war journalists from the generation before him who covered the Second World

War: Wilfred Burchett, who talked about being the first Western reporter into Hiroshima after the atom-bombing, who wrote a powerful piece of journalism, *The Atomic Plague: I write this as a warning to the world*; and Martha Gellhorn, who described walking into the Dachau death camp at the end of the Second World War and documenting the horrors she saw – two revelatory and astonishing pieces of journalism.

As Chomsky and Herman argue in *Manufacturing Consent*, the mainstream media rarely give you the truth. Instead, they give you what powerful people want you to believe. As a rare truth teller in the mainstream media, like Wilfred Burchett before him, and the man he saw as his successor, Julian Assange, Pilger presented Australians with powerful counter-narratives to the war-mongering of our mainstream media and the ASPI-inspired propagandists of the ABC.

Pilger's earliest documentaries had David Munro as director and the pair had a long-term partnership which ended when Munro died in 1999 after making 20 documentaries with Pilger. Their entire team took great risks, smuggling cameras to film dissidents into military dictatorships like Burma and Timor Leste, a country where five Australian journalists were murdered in 1975. They were astoundingly brave.

Pilger wrote the scripts for the documentaries, and was the narrator and interviewer. His scripts were exemplars of modern journalism, adorned with an abundance of the most viscous irony, and a withering desire to expose the deceits of the mainstream journalism.

As front man, Pilger was handsome, eloquent, and his camera voice, though occasionally over-preachy, was magnificent even then, sounding like Moses descended from the mountain to chastise the worshippers of the Golden Calf.

## Coming events at Flourish Sanctuary

by Jagad Samuel

In the heart of Nimbin's serene hills, Flourish Sanctuary is a haven for those seeking spiritual truth and personal transformation.

January was no exception with Flourish running many activities including meditation, Satsang, chanting and more.

A heartfelt thanks to Christiano, a special visitor from Italy, for co-running Satsang with Jagad in January.

For those unfamiliar with the term, Satsang is a collective exploration of truth.

This was a special Satsang that covered topics such as what is divine light, the nature of God and more.

Satsang has the potential to profoundly alter a person's perception of life and their identity. Flourish hosts Satsang with Jagad every month on the 2nd Sunday.

In February, Flourish offers abundant opportunities for spiritual growth.

### Meditation Class

Join us for tranquillity and self-discovery at our Monday Meditation Class, held from 11am to 12.30pm, as we embark on a journey of inner peace and mindfulness.



### Sound Healing

Experience the therapeutic vibrations of sound healing every Thursday from 10.30 to 11.30am with Michael Deanshaw.

### Men's Group

Join the Men's Group on Tuesday, February 6th and 20th from 7 to 9.30pm for a space of shared experiences, and support. If a woman is interested in a Women's group, please contact us.

### Biodanza

Every Thursday evening from 7.30 to 9pm, Flourish comes alive with the rhythm of Biodanza. Bookings are essential. Contact Jazmin on 0401-397-850.

### Satsang

Sunday, February 11th, from 1 to 3pm. This month's

Satsang will be held at Mullumbimby. Join us for an afternoon of spiritual exploration and connection. For the address and other details, send a message to 0433-173-508.

### Natural Awareness Day

On 25th February, Emma Pittaway, a dedicated teacher at the Kuan Yin Meditation Centre, will guide participants through the Natural Awareness Day course. This unique experience approaches meditation as a way of being in the world, fostering a deep connection with one's surroundings.

### Silent Meditation Retreat

Responding to demand built through word about the January retreat, a Silent Meditation Retreat

is scheduled from Friday, 1st March to Sunday, 3rd March. This retreat offers a peaceful sanctuary for individuals to cultivate mindfulness. It will be led by Julian Robinson.

### Your unique contribution

Do you want to run something special at Flourish's temple? Step into a space of spiritual resonance by organising a one off or regular event at Flourish's temple. Join us in raising the consciousness of humanity by offering your unique contribution at Flourish.

Flourish extends its gratitude to Seb for contributing through WOOFing. Seb spent most of his time in the garden, but also provided valuable assistance getting the accommodation ready for silent meditation retreat participants.

The invitation remains open for those seeking to lend their energy and support to our spiritual community while picking up valuable skills on topics such as permaculture.

For detailed information on all these events and others, please visit: [www.flourishsanctuary.com.au](http://www.flourishsanctuary.com.au) or you are welcome to visit us at 449a Gungas Road, Nimbin.



# The ghost of Julian Assange

by John Jiggins

Despite being detained, silenced, and hidden from public view in the maximum security Belmarsh prison for the past five years, as the day of his extradition draws near, the spectre of Julian Assange looms ever larger over the politics of the AUKUS lands.

By exposing U.S. war crimes in Iraq in the searing documentary *Collateral Murder*, Assange, an Australian citizen, ignited a firestorm of controversy and earned the undying hatred of the U.S. and U.K. military intelligence community.

They and their Five Eyes collaborators have subjected this Australian citizen to unrelenting lawfare through the misuse of their courts for over a decade in a sickening travesty of that laughable contradiction, British justice.

As Assange's extradition approaches, as he prepares to transit from the frying pan of Belmarsh into the fire of a U.S. supermax, as his life hangs in the balance, Byron Bay filmmaker Kym Staton has been touring his new documentary, *The Trust Fall: Julian Assange* around Australia to rapturous acclaim.

The media release says the film is about the most famous political prisoner of our times, Julian Assange:

"Assange is a multi-award winning Australian journalist who has been detained in prison for more than 4.5 years and faces extradition to the U.S. with the threat of a 175-year prison sentence – all for revealing the truth."

The film examines the extraordinary significance of the documents released by WikiLeaks, the astonishing personal risk taken by Assange, the resulting

ruthless over-reaction by the spooks, and the broader fundamental threats posed to press freedom and our right to know.

It features a wide-ranging array of luminaries defending Assange, including Daniel Ellsberg, John Pilger, Tariq Ali and Chris Hedges, with the insights of experts including Jennifer Robertson, Jill Stein, Stephanie Morici and Nils Melzer, in addition to reflections of Assange's family, including Stella Assange, John Shipton and Gabriel Shipton.

The Brisbane launch of *The Trust Fall: Julian Assange* at the Five Star New Farm on 16th January was wildly successful. The film was intended to be screened in the purple room, the largest theatre in the New Farm complex, which holds over 200, so when that room sold out, they had to open a second theatre, which also sold out, so they opened a third room, which was almost full on the night!

Close to 400 people attended the opening night in Brisbane. Director Kym Staton was highly pleased with the turn out of the Brisbane premiere. "The response was overwhelming," he said.

The film has been exhibited at about a dozen festivals over the last six months. The world premiere in July at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival, Nova Cinemas, Carlton, was sold out a week in advance. 240 people attended, and the theatre put on another screening the same night.

The Mareeba Drive-In was the first cinema to book the film, so Kym Staton and his co-producer Natalia Minana travelled to Mareeba in far north Queensland to attend the theatrical debut on 28th December. They had no

idea how many people were coming on the night of the screening because the drive-in didn't do on-line ticket sales.

They were pleased when they drove through the gates to see 108 cars – 215 people attending in a small country town! And at the end, they not only cheered and clapped, they also tooted their horns!

The reception in Brisbane lacked the horn tooting, but the applause was similarly sustained and rapturous. *The Trust Fall: Julian Assange* is a powerful and important documentary, imaginatively filmed and lyrically written. My favourite line from the script? "As the Mandela of our time walks a long walk toward freedom every day around a six-metre cell."

Jonathon Sri, who is the Greens candidate for Lord Mayor of Brisbane in the forthcoming city council election, was a speaker at the Q&A that followed the film. He said:

"I guess two things that stuck out for me: just how hard the United States and their global empire will work to suppress the truth and to punish people who speak out.

"But I was also struck by the fact that in other parts of the world, people are paying a lot more attention to what's happening to Assange. And he's one of our guys. And yet, here in Australia, it doesn't quite resonate in the same way. And I was really struck by the fact.

"The movement hasn't been as strong here and I think we've all gotten distracted by other issues and there's so much going on, it's hard to keep across all this stuff.

"But I came away from the film thinking Australians really need to pick up our game because as the commentators in the film pointed out, we have a



lot of leverage here and that's the question that we all need to be asking ourselves is: How much pressure are we putting on our own governments, particularly on the Labor and Liberal parties to shift their position? Because right now they're basically bowing down to the US."

Assange said that if lies can start wars, truth can lead us to peace. Groups that represent the world's journalists, like the International Federation of Journalists, the MEAA, and Journalists Without Borders have warned the prosecution of Assange means the end of honest journalism.

We live in terrible times and witness crimes that are leading us towards a third world war. At the same time, the mainstream media and

our politicians are the vectors for these war-provoking lies: Anthony Albanese, Penny Wong, Peter Dutton, Simon Birmingham, the Murdoch press, Channel 9, the ABC, are the problem, not the solution, because they blithely ignore the mistreatment of this Australian citizen by our allegedly closest allies.

For them, Julian Assange is the unwelcome ghost of any integrity they once possessed.

What can be done? It depends on us, the people of Australia. Contact your federal MP and express your concerns and urge them to join the Bring Julian Assange Home Parliamentary Group.

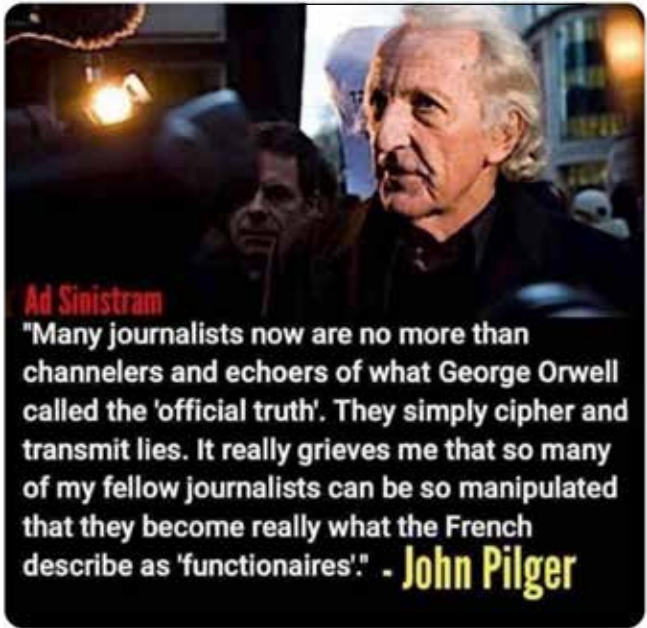
The screenings of *The Trust Fall: Julian Assange* are steadily expanding. If you

want to take friends to see this important film, go to the website: [thetrustfall.org](http://thetrustfall.org) and click on the homepage to see up-coming screenings. Encourage your local cinema people to request it.

Julian Assange will find out on 22nd February whether he will be extradited to the UK's US overlords. There will be protests around Australia in late February, early March, so find out when your local demonstration will be.

John Shipton is organising a seminar in Melbourne on Saturday 9th March at Storey Hall RMIT called 'Nightfalls in the Evening Lands: The Assange Epic'.

John Pilger was to be one of the speakers, but the list of speakers remains impressive. The website is: [nightfalls.info](http://nightfalls.info)



### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The Nimbin Agricultural & Industrial Society will hold its Annual General Meeting at 6pm on Tuesday 12th March at the Nimbin Showground.



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# Female leadership key to traumatised community ‘saving itself’

As the two-year anniversary of the devastating Northern Rivers’ flooding looms, new research by social work researchers from the University of Newcastle has shown the female-led response to the trauma prevailed where authorities failed.

Data from interviews with members of the Northern Rivers community following the event has revealed that the community-based response was spontaneous yet hugely sophisticated in its mobilisation. Unexpected findings show responsive leadership was predominantly undertaken by women.

Lead author and social worker, Associate Professor Wendy Foote, said the findings were an important representation of a region still grieving. “We know from the 2022 NSW Floods Inquiry that there was a gross failure of preparedness and negligence in the support offered to the Northern Rivers region,” Associate Professor Foote said.

The huge gap left by the government’s inability to respond to the event was filled by female community members who mobilised as the region rallied to ‘save itself’, including key coordination on social media through Resilience Lismore; the harnessing of Indigenous approaches to trauma and healing via services such as the Healing Hub; and the provision of resources through locations such as the Koori Mail hub, all led by women.

Associate Professor Foote emphasises that two years on from the devastating events, “it’s imperative we continue to advocate for better policies and procedures to prevent the same failures ever happening again.”

An expert in responses to disasters and climate change, co-author Professor Margaret Alston OAM said that historical understanding of trauma events was often gendered.

“Historically, women bear the burden of labour and the health impacts of disasters,” Professor Alston said.

“That’s not to diminish the efforts of men in these circumstances but can be due to the nurturing or support roles women often take on in response to trauma,” she said.

“In this case, the work-load imbalance, threats to self and property and trauma impacts were very gendered. Women undertook the bulk of unpaid work in the immediate response and stayed in support roles for extended periods following the initial emergency,” she said.

The research report proposes several recommendations for policy makers, as well as for those working in support roles. In recognition of the volunteer efforts, the researchers are calling for a disaster fund to acknowledge the huge personal and monetary losses of undertaking this type of work moving forward.

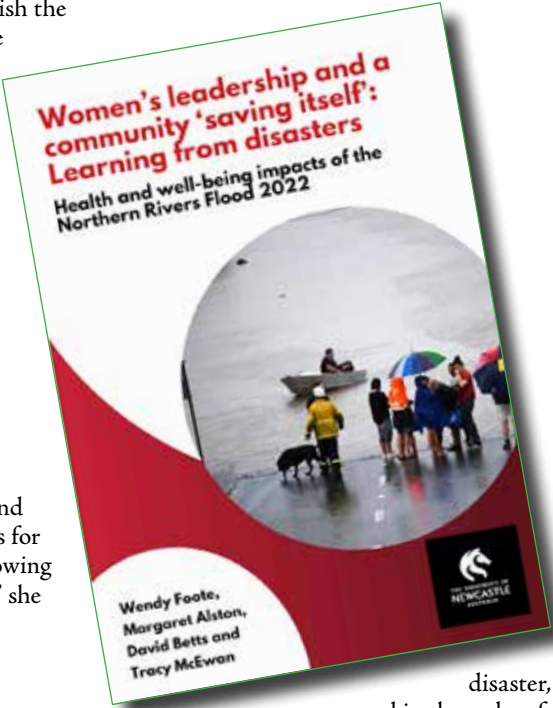
“Those in social work positions and support roles (whether formal or informal) are totally shattered by these experiences. Not only are they supporting others, but they are living the crisis, completely unsupported, themselves too,” Associate Professor Foote explained.

“This is not an uncommon response to community-driven mobilisation. Women often play a significant role in post-trauma healing, and we’d like to see funding to support those efforts,” she said.

### Sick to the stomach

The research investigated the themes of Good Health and Wellbeing, and Gender Equality, two of the United Nations Sustainability Goals (United Nations (2015)).

The study that found women were increasingly subject to sexual assault and domestic violence after a natural



disaster, and in the wake of the 2022 Northern Rivers floods.

Tamara Smith MP, Greens Disaster Relief Spokesperson said, “Reading the accounts of women in my community experiencing domestic violence, abuse, and sexual assault in evacuation centres after the floods is shocking ... I felt sick to my stomach.”

Abigail Boyd, Greens spokesperson for Gendered Violence and Abuse, said, “Given the chronic underfunding of domestic and family violence and sexual violence frontline services in our State, and the lack of prioritisation that successive governments have given to these issues, it is sadly not surprising to hear these reports of sexual violence experienced in the aftermath of the NSW floods.

“Enough is enough — we’re calling on the Labor government to ensure this is the last time the needs of women and girls are ignored in a crisis.”

The Greens are calling on the NSW Government to implement all of the University of Newcastle study’s eight key recommendations.

That includes fully funding local recovery services and prioritising



Disaster response co-ordinators Elly Bird, Resilience Lismore, and Naomi Moran, Koori Mail hub.

community-led solutions from women and First Nations peoples.

Ms Smith said, “The government must treat this issue seriously and ensure each and every point raised

by this study is addressed.” The full study can be read at: <https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/uon:53556/ATTACHMENT02?view=true>

## Lismore Women’s Festival Celebrate, learn, connect, create

The 2024 Lismore Women’s Festival will be held at Southern Cross University on International Women’s Day – Friday, 8th March from 9am.

The festival will focus on connecting the generations with an intergenerational dance workshop and many other opportunities such as yoga, women’s circle, art therapy, radio and podcast production, mindfulness, song and dance.

Music will be provided by Sistas of Spin and Matriarch Records throughout the day. Band Me Up will be back again for the +45 rock stars amongst us.

In the afternoon, attendees will be stimulated with a panel discussion focusing on this year’s IWD theme, ‘Count Her in: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment’.

The Festival will be launched by Kelly Banister, CEO NORWACS at the Serpentine Gallery Lismore on 7th March from 5pm to coincide with their ‘The Art of Woman’ exhibition, with local DJ, Louise Thompson from Sistas of Spin providing the tunes.

As part of the festival, Zonta will be hosting an IWD breakfast at Alstonville and Siri Shakti Yoga Sound will be facilitating a Deep Sound Immersion satellite event at the Apollo Hall, Lismore from 6pm.

Go to: [www.norwacs.org.au](http://www.norwacs.org.au) and follow: [www.facebook.com/lismorewomensfestival](https://www.facebook.com/lismorewomensfestival) for the full program as it develops.



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# MardiGrass forming again

by Michael Balderstone

MardiGrass meetings have started again, in the HEMP Bar from 4.20 on Fridays. Everyone is welcome as are new ideas, events and proposals. Otherwise, the website has forms for stalls, musos, entertainers and volunteers.

When we started MardiGrass 32 years ago we could safely drive here though we had nowhere to park much. Now we have the fantastic showground facilities where most people camp for the weekend, so long as they get through the roadblocks!

Roadside Drug Testing will have to be on the agenda of course, and I look forward to hearing how the five Legalise Cannabis MPs are getting on trying to make changes.

“Drug drivers, speedsters ripping our state and families apart.” That was the front page of the *Daily Terror* a few weeks ago. Then another one a few days later with similar stuff and a senior cop staring out of the pages labelling NSW drivers as a “bunch of selfish bastards”.

The new statistics detailed how one in every six roadside drug tests carried out this year in NSW has resulted in someone being caught, compared to the 230 roadside breath tests it takes on average to detect one drink driver.

Of course there is no mention of them targeting previously busted drug drivers. If you’ve been busted once, expect to be tested again and again. The only way

to change that is buy another car in someone like your Auntie’s name, as a friend just did.

“While speed had been a key factor in the weekend’s crashes, drug driving is a rising issue. When you start looking at where the community’s going and our society is going, the presence of drugs is emerging as one of our biggest challenges,” Asst Commissioner McFadden said.

I wonder how much of it was a kickback against us trying to allow prescribed medical patients to drive? These limits personally infuriate me because it’s pushing everyone to get legal weed via a doctor, forcing us into their system, when we could be growing our own.

People are free to drive so long as they are unimpaired in Tassie and the ACT, and the rest of the planet!

RDT has become a huge hurdle we cannot get over at the moment in NSW. No wonder mushrooms and LSD are booming again, you don’t get tested driving with them in your system. Nor with any opiates of course, because that’s Big Pharma’s cash cow.

It just has to be about impairment, whether it’s from any type of drugs, or mix of drugs, or old age, or mental health. Testing for sobriety makes total sense and we already have a law in place to do that, I’m told. The cops are dodging responsibility and want a machine to do it for them, like a breathalyser, rather than have to think

and decide for themselves.

Hopefully Dr David Bearman is coming to MardiGrass again this year and we can hear first-hand how they deal with drug driving in America. Some States report a clear drop in car accidents after legalising weed, possibly because less alcohol is consumed.

Every aspect of our favourite plant will be discussed again on the first weekend in May. Growing indoors and out, extracting, refining, cooking, industrial, medical, recreational, call it what you like. If experience is the true teacher, MardiGrass is Weed University.

We are expecting a big crowd because so many people now have the herb legally and finally can freely carry and use it. Do pick up any hitch hikers on the way won’t you, because that is their only risk in coming to MardiGrass now.

It will be a big weekend with something for everyone. Serious talks and panels, music and performances, extraordinary sporting events requiring great skill and fitness. Lots of comedy!

There are things you can do to help make it a joyous weekend for everyone. Maybe you want to billet someone in your spare room; we have speakers coming from around the country.

Volunteers are needed for Jungle Patrol and much more. Sites have to be prepared, tents erected, stages built and so on. If you’d like to help, email me: [head@hempembassy.net](mailto:head@hempembassy.net) or fill out a form on: [nimbinmardigrass.com](http://nimbinmardigrass.com) or come to the HEMP Bar Friday for 420.

## The transformative powers we all possess



by Antoinette Ensbeys

It seems everyone I know is in the middle of a major transformation.

Some are forced to change, some choose to change. If you are forced into a new situation the change is by nature challenging, even painful. If change is your personal choice it does not mean it isn’t challenging.

A transformative time can make us vulnerable because we almost always have to let go of familiar thinking patterns and perhaps of accustomed ways that make the letting go process hard, even if the familiar no longer serves us and is the cause of much discomfort.

Be assured that by finding the cause of your discontent or distress you have already made an important leap in the right direction.

Looking for the source of emotional pain is unavoidably connected with apprehension or fear. Once you’ve uncovered the secret behind your dissatisfaction you can go to work.

Thinking patterns are particularly stubborn in the modification compartment. Why do I have to change?

Why not you?

Reactivity is typically cast on the pattern we are used to and we seek refuge if someone provokes us. Irritability might lead to volatile outbreaks of accusations, blaming, complaining which isn’t necessarily just directed at somebody else.

If we have carried unhappiness with us for a prolonged period of time, we tend to censor ourselves, blame ourselves for not getting on with it, driving us deeper into the mire.

That kind of self-blame is stifling our flexibility and adaptability that are needed when transforming from one stage to the next. Seen through the lens of transformative growth angry outbreaks, however irrational or unfounded, are potent releases of stagnant energy. You get things moving by purging: This is how I honestly feel!

As a control mechanism try channelling your anger, frustration and downright despondency into a communication filter by turning your fury, resentment or irritation into a message.

Communicate accounts of your mental state to yourself, in your diary, notepad, or in form of emails you send to yourself. Let it all out, no matter how extreme or irrational it may sound.

Communicate your feelings to others (yes, I mean it!). Send as emails, or talk to somebody you can trust and who may offer up some exciting new perspectives. By communicating you not only connect, you also transfer information about yourself.

It’s crucial to be open and talk without shame. By doing that the other person receives your gift (of opening up your heart), enabling your listener to give back. It’s softening the pain by diffusion.

What makes us want to change is the pressure of endured emotional pain leading to turmoil, confusion and upset.

Often we don’t know what to do and where to turn to. All seems futile, hard work, repetitive effort and then out of impatience or frustration we feel stuck because nothing seems to be moving.

People flock to ashrams to seek transformation in a guided situation together with others who look for the same thing. If that’s not

for you establish your own inner ashram by doing a little meditation concentrating on your breath, by uncluttering your mind and focusing on the one chief problem that bothers you most! If a situation becomes unbearable a course correction is a must.

Some circumstances don’t allow for change to happen for a while. You may need to grit your teeth and stand strong in your wisdom. Do not let the situation eat away at your soul. Drape a warm blanket around your innermost being, the core that cannot be touched.

By keeping your true inner self away from harm as much as possible your senses stay tuned to the gentle breezes of change that inevitably will reach you, subtle at first, and then suddenly with the usual gusto of the divine powers of the connected universe you receive the answer.

“No amount of negativity can withstand the purifying power contained in the field of unbounded consciousness.” – Adam Brady, [chopra.com/articles/2023](http://chopra.com/articles/2023)

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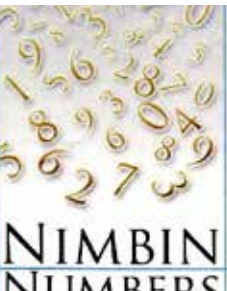
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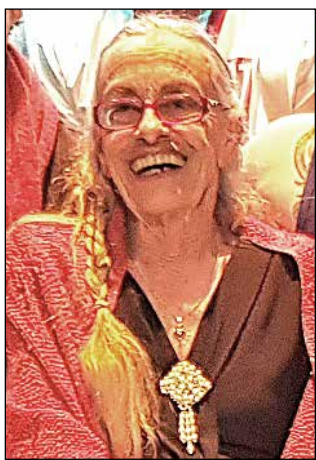
# Performance Poetry World Cup Fundraising Trivia Night

As a major fundraiser for the annual Nimbin Performance Poetry Cup, we will be having a trivia night on Saturday 16th March at the Nimbin Bowling Club.

We will also have a monster raffle and an auction. Please come at 6pm with trivia to start at 7pm to support this unique Nimbin cultural event. Entry is a gold coin donation for each person.

Get together a team of six for a night of frivolity and fun, and test your general knowledge. The winning team will receive a \$20 voucher each from the Nimbin Emporium. If you wish to enjoy a meal from the Bistro, please book well in advance on 6689-1473.

If anyone wishes to donate



Nimbin Poetry organiser, Gail M. Clark

to the raffle or the auction, you can contact Gail at: poetryworldcup@gmail.com and she will organise the collection of items.



## LENNOX – legend in my living room

Sweet dreams are made of this – an evening of Annie Lennox’s iconic music in an intimate spectacle of pure theatrical escapism...

Melbourne based cabaret artiste Chris Burgess (pictured) stars in a thrilling hour of lamenting angels and outspoken housewives. Fabulous costume changes, gorgeous reimaginings of classic hits, and heavenly rock-star vocals, this hour-long tribute to Lennox and her rebellious artistry is a must-see.

Chris Burgess graduated from Melbourne’s VCA Music Theatre with Honours, is a mindfulness meditation and yoga teacher, and event MC. He has performed with Meow Meow and the MSO at Hamer Hall in ‘Meow Meow’s Pandemonium’, featured in Finucane and Smiths 2022 touring production of ‘Dance Hall’, and toured nationally in Boubilil and Schönberg’s ‘Do You Hear The People Sing,’ which played at Sydney Opera House.

‘LENNOX’ plunges into the anthemic songs of Annie Lennox and the Eurythmics, reviving her lyrics with poetic nuance and theatricality as if hearing them for the first time.

Featuring hit songs ‘Walking On Broken Glass’,



‘Why’, ‘Here Comes The Rain Again’ and more, Burgess’ tour de force performance is bound to leave you transfixed and transformed.

This NSW/QLD debut follows a sold-out season for Melbourne Cabaret Festival 2021 and ‘best of Fringe weekly award winner’ in Perth 2023.

Burgess will perform at to the Star Court Theatre in Lismore on Friday 16th February, and at the Byron Theatre on Tuesday 20th February.

For details, see: starcourttheatre.com.au/events/lennox, or: www.byroncentre.com.au/theatre-events

# One Billion Rising: Vagina Day at Byron

On Valentine’s Day, women, men, non-binary and children gather at dawn in solidarity around the world to dance in defiance.

Vagina, the most powerful body part on the planet, giving pleasure, giving life, experiencing pain... desired and exploited every day. Part of the One Billion Rising V-Day global revolution to end violence.

One Billion Rising is the biggest mass action to end violence in human history. Each year on 14th February, we rise up locally and globally to say “Enough is Enough.”

We rise up through dance to express joy and community, and to celebrate the fact that we have not been defeated by increasing violence.

We rise up to show we are determined to create a new kind of consciousness, one where violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable.

After years of sell-out performances this diverse collective of some of Byron Shire’s powerful, creative women and people with vaginas, present personal, professional or political stories to inform, educate, entertain, and support.

Funny, sad, challenging



and celebratory, with creator and MC Zenith Virago, the *Vagina Conversations* is a more contemporary evolution of the *Vagina Monologues*, bringing a courageous fresh local flavour to our community.

On Wednesday 14th February, we gather on Byron Bay’s Main Beach at 6.30am, and dance at 7am. Wear red and dance in defiance. Rebel. Be loud. All welcome.

Following the 7am Main

Beach V-Day protest, join us at the *Vagina Conversations*, on 14th, 15th and 16th February at the Brunswick Picture House.

The Vagina performers use spoken word, dance, music, song and comedy to share their personal, professional and cultural experiences, to inspire and empower themselves and others.

Doors open at 6.30pm and the show starts at 7pm. Tickets are \$40/\$30 from the

V-Day at Byron Bay in 2022

venue. Suitable for 14+.

All proceeds go to the Women’s Resource Service, Byron Escape Fund and the Tweed DVIRC Impact Fund supporting local women escaping intimate partner and family violence.

Financing women in crisis to pay for emergency needs, keeping women and children safe, together we have raised over \$90,000.

## Masquerade Extravaganza

Beyond Venice 2024 is Lismore’s Modern Masquerade Extravaganza.

After the resounding success of the Beyond Venice dance parties in 2016, 2017 and 2023, the Lismore Friendship Festival is thrilled to announce the masquerade dance party on Saturday 17th February.

Beyond Venice is an annual event, which helps promote and fundraise for LisAmore! It promises to be a night of glamour, music, and modern Italian flair. Stepping into the enchanting world of Beyond Venice we encourage participants to embrace the Venetian carnival spirit.

The dance floor will pulsate with traditional Italian dance moves, led by the charismatic Brisbane entertainer Domenico and his son Marco from the Latin Mafia Band. Guests are encouraged to don dazzling masks and dress to impress as they dance the night away ‘til midnight.

Guests can anticipate an authentic Italian experience, with doors opening at 6pm to a fusion of Italian flavours, music, and atmosphere. Tickets are available at \$75 per person, with the option to reserve tables of eight. There will be Italian nibbles upon arrival and an Italian three-course meal will be served.

For those who go the extra mile, prizes await the most creative and enthusiastic individuals and couples. Elaborate costumes and infectious dance moves will be in the spotlight, adding an extra layer of excitement to the night.

Beyond Venice 2024 is not just a night of mystery and mayhem; it’s a vital fundraiser for the upcoming LisAmore! festivities. The masquerade dance party serves as a prelude to the much-anticipated LisAmore! event on Sunday 16th June, promising an indoor and outdoor entertainments that showcase the talents of local creatives.



For bookings and enquiries, contact Julie at 0493-631-611. Stay tuned to our social media channels for more details on how to secure your spot and add a touch of sparkle and panache to the Italian celebrations.

## The Necks in concert

Improvised music trailblazers and one of Australia’s great cult bands, The Necks (pictured), return to Byron Bay for the first time in a decade.

Renowned for creating immersive, hypnotic concert experiences, Chris Abrahams (piano), Lloyd Swanton (bass) and Tony Buck (drums/percussion) slowly conjure luminous soundscapes over the course of their live performances that leave audiences mesmerised.

Before stepping on stage,

nothing is planned or discussed between the trio. They walk on and they start playing.

The Necks’ commitment to the simple concept of truly ‘letting the music take care of itself’ is at the core of their unique sound and their ability to create exciting, engrossing music for themselves and their audiences for more than 30 years.

No two Necks concerts are ever the same.

Long-term fans of this unique band come back time



Photos: Devin Oktar Yalkin

and again for their concerts, but if you haven’t heard them before, catch The Necks at Byron Theatre and discover why *The New York Times* describe them as “The greatest trio on earth” and

*The Guardian UK* as “One of the most entrancing live acts in the world.”

The Necks will perform on Friday 1st March, 7pm at Byron Theatre. Tickets: [www.byroncentre.com.au](http://www.byroncentre.com.au)



# First Blue Moon Cabaret for the year

Nimbin School of Arts' wondrous succession of Blue Moon Cabarets continues with the first big show for the year on Saturday 23rd March. The extensive program includes singers Broadwaters and Hanna Pearl and the finale act the Tania Balil quartet from Brisbane. They are joined by dance ensembles Scarlett Ruffles and the Nia-Pixies, cabaret artiste Diva, comedian John Peacock, classical pianist Stephanie Hamlet and jazz pianist Kyle Watson, hip hop poet Daniel "Triple Nip" Pearson, performance poet Cat Kidd from Montreal and poet/host David Hallett. The show is fully catered by Reign with doors opening for dinner (a bit earlier) at 6pm, and there is the cabaret bar (no BYO). These major fundraising cabarets continue to be popular sell-out shows, so book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets and table reservations can be made at Perceptio Bookshop (6689-1766). Entry is \$40, or \$35 concession. Future shows include the Great Green Cabaret on Friday 3rd May, followed by the Blue Moon Cabarets on Saturday 24th August, and Saturday 9th November.



## Sound From the Ground 2 for inter-tribal Palestine solidarity

Save the Children US says: "More than 10,000 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground operations with thousands more missing, presumed buried under rubble. We need a definitive ceasefire now." In response, Sound from the Ground 2, an event for Indigenous Palestinian and inter-tribal unity, is planned to follow the highly lauded Sound from the Ground 1, held in January (see story p.20). Join together in solidarity, using the universal language of music to advocate for peace and justice in a



powerful expression of cross-cultural solidarity, allyship, and humanitarian fundraising. Juman, our point of connection with the on-going plight of the Palestinian people, will once again share the poignant Arabic songs of her ancestors. Eshua Bolton, Murrawarri man, will infuse the evening with the mesmerizing tones of the didgeridoo, creating a unique fusion that transcends geographical boundaries. Also featuring: Jennifer Williams - Githabul, and the dynamic duo Imuna & Nyanu - Pitjantjatjara. Additionally, Future Elders, Mob Family, and Bands will grace the stage alongside inspiring speakers. With Elders and representatives from more than five different countries, this event is more than a concert; it's a profound moment of inter-tribal unification. Funds raised by this event will be donated to Olive Kids, an Australian Foundation dedicated to support the children of Palestine. Hosted by Northern Rivers Friends of Palestine, @northernrivers4palestine Facebook events: Sound From The Ground 2.

## Strum 'n' Sing in Nimbin

Mullumbimby resident Stu Eadie, aka Stukulele, has been teaching people music via the ukulele and holding wonderful inclusive Strum-A-Longs all over the Northern Rivers for over 10 years. You show up with a Ukulele (or just your finest singing voice), the songs are projected onto a screen so everyone can strum and sing along. It's the best medicine for any community. Stukulele is bringing Uke Mullum to Nimbin this February. Why, you ask? Stu immediately admired Andrea Soler and her fabulous uke

playing and singing on first discovery in 2013. Since then, Andrea has been invited to play at the Mullumbimby Uke Night and so far both attempts have been dashed by unforeseen circumstances. So, this time Stu is going to her neck of the woods: the Nimbin Bowlo on Saturday 24th February, a great venue that needs some ukulele lovin'. The food at Sibley's Bistro at the Nimbin Bowlo is exquisite and you are invited to come early to dine before settling into a fun night of Strummin' and Singin' led



by Stu and Andrea, backed by a killer rhythm section with Rod Coe on bass, and Tim Tonkin on drums and percussion. Sibley's Bistro opens at 5.30pm, and the strummin' starts 6.30pm to 8.30pm. Tickets available at: <https://bit.ly/Strumbin>

## Nimbin's Spiritualist and Psychic Expo returns



Coming back for the first time after Covid lockdowns and floods, this year the spiritual and open-minded will congregate to enjoy the Spiritualist and Psychic Fair at the Nimbin Town Hall, from 9th to 11th February. Nimbin, being a stunningly spiritual location, is sure to get you in the mood to connect with your inner

self. Choose from a fabulous showcase of mystics, psychics, tarot readers and the like to get answers for yourself and into the future. A selection of Australia's best psychics including Monica Ward ([www.monicaaward.com](http://www.monicaaward.com)) and Kathleen Tysoe ([akashahhealinghaven.com.au](http://akashahhealinghaven.com.au)) will be on offer, along with many other readers and

presenters. Be entertained by dancers, buy some crystals and jewellery, even indulge in a massage, and enjoy scrumptious food from the Café throughout the days and also into the candlelit evenings. The event will be catered internally by Nimbin's Maltese Vegan ([www.instagram.com/themaltesevegan](http://www.instagram.com/themaltesevegan)) bringing the event a range of organic, splendidly flavoured and filling fare of the Mediterranean and beyond. Jazmin Theadora, co-organiser of the fair, has a long history in the business of mysticism. She has worked as a medium, astrologist, tarot reader and clairvoyant and has also immersed herself in psychometry and herbal lore since the 1960's. Ms Theadora said: "The years since our last Fair have been dark, lonely and chaotic for so many, we wanted to ensure that we could provide the village, our neighbours, friends and friends we haven't met yet; with a magical, mystical, loving and altruistic, spiritual time this year. "People out there are always seeking answers and asking what's in store for the year ahead and into the future." The three-day Fair will begin on Friday 9th February at 9am.

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