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New muralist in town

by Ian Wickham

An emerging mural on the side of the Hemp Embassy alerted me that a new muralist has arrived in town, Marta Kimberley.

I was working next door in the Embassy watching it go up – thinking this deserves a story. So I talked to her about the highs and lows of the task.

The lows?

She said she started it just as Cyclone Alfred was passing through, and following that there were weeks of rain. And when the sun finally was out it would hit her from sunrise to sunset.

And the uniqueness of the situation, being on a slope with a very long ladder that was very rickety was a challenge.

And the highs?

"I received lots of love from the community, delicious coffees from the Hemp Bar, and plenty of hands supporting me in the preparation area with scaffolding etc. I'd like to thank every beautiful soul that stopped by to say something nice."

So what's her history?

Marta is from Spain – she was working in the corporate world in an ad agency but wanted something more.

"I wanted to use public spaces with more reverence and for everyone. I knew I would be committing to a journey."

"I landed in Australia painting a spaceman in Chopper Lane, Melbourne, thanks to Mike Makatron. I am looking forward to paint anywhere around the earth



where there is a project aligned with my work."

So why pick Nimbin?

"I believe it was the other way around. The universe showed me the way here. It happened when a friend from

Canada who was visiting a friend here invited me to come by.

"I was dreaming with living in nature and growing my own food surrounded by beautiful humans, and here I am."

Well Marta, welcome aboard. I hope you can make a go of it here. There are certainly plenty of decaying mural spaces around Nimbin that could use some of your tender loving care.

Legal weed soon, surely

by Michael Balderstone

Jeremy Buckingham, the Legalise Cannabis NSW MP who won a seat in the last election, tried to get the government to make a move on the cannabis laws but Premier Minns dug his heels in.

Next best option, Jeremy chaired an Upper House committee inquiry he initiated which has released its final report into "The impacts of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales".

There were nine MP's on the committee, three from Labor, two from the Liberals, John Ruddick from the Libertarians, Cate Faehrmann from the Greens, and Robert Borsack from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers who was the deputy chair.

There were 360 submissions and five public hearings and the result was seven Recommendations from eight Findings, many of which reiterate what we have been saying for years. No-brainer stuff like just because cannabis is in your system does not mean you're impaired and the driving laws need to be altered to reflect this.

Basically, the committee recommended a "staged law reform process towards a legalised, regulated model for cannabis in NSW", exactly what we've been

dreaming up for decades.

It also recommended Canada as having a good system for us to learn from and made a point of saying the government needs to support the local medical cannabis industry which is being overrun by imports.

I like that in the Chair's foreword, Jeremy says that while recognising that the current availability of medical cannabis was a significant step forward it also now means that a person's criminal status depends on whether they can afford a prescription.

I've also liked watching Jeremy, who I'm sure would often rather be home in his garden near Bellingen, plug away on his major mission, which is all in the name of the Party. He moved his whole family to Sydney after getting elected.

We get a lot of pressure to develop other policies, which is often tempting but it's a fact that re-educating people on the potential of the cannabis plant is more than a full-time job.

By the end of this committee's hearing virtually all of the committee had to agreed it's time for the laws to change because of what they had seen and heard from all sorts of people involved with weed, from scientists and hippies to police and gardeners.

Most members of Parliament have such an endless list of demands and

responses to deal with every day they barely get time to focus long enough to dig deep into issues and with cannabis there is a lot of bullshit to unpack, like a century of lies and propaganda.

That's why Bob Carr had a weeklong Drug Summit in 1999 and insisted all MPs attend. With the Legalise Cannabis Party's single issue focus we hope we can finally get some movement.

The committee recommended a staged approach to cannabis law reform. To start, the Government should remove draconian custodial sentences for possession of small quantities of cannabis, then decriminalisation of cannabis use and possession, and ultimately move towards a safe, regulated, legalised cannabis market.

His case for change got a good boost this week with Roy Morgan releasing their new data after asking 69,000 Australians if, "In your opinion should the smoking of marijuana be made legal - or remain illegal?"

The data shows 48% said yes, while 41% said no, with 11% undecided. In 2019 it was 42% yes, and 49% no; and in 2015 it was 33% yes, and 56% no; so clearly it's a big and steady change. Roy called it, "a decisive shift in national sentiment towards legalisation."

Finally, the majority of people are ready, but are the politicians?

The living memory of North Lismore

Living Lab Northern Rivers presents 'Living Memory: Stories and Portraits', celebrating North Lismore, an exhibition featuring voices, images and histories from North Lismore (Banyam/Baigham), where many properties are part of the NSW Reconstruction Authority's Resilient Homes Program, Australia's largest disaster adaptation program in response to a flood.

The exhibition captures and preserves the place-based knowledge, cultural heritage and community ties that continue to resonate far beyond its boundaries.

The project was designed in response to community calls to preserve North Lismore's legacy, and is a collaborative effort shaped by the generous contributions of people connected to the area.

Participants have shared their time, memories, photographs and personal objects to create a rich and layered portrait of a unique and resilient community.

The project was brought to life by historian Adele Wessell, Jo Kijas and Kate Gahan, and photographic artist Cherie Fahd and photographer Elise Derwin. Their combined expertise spans oral history, portraiture, archival research and creative community engagement.

"This is a celebration of place and community — of how communities' deep connections to place and each other have shaped our region. It recognises that storytelling helps us adapt, fosters belonging and



learning," says historian and project contributor Adele Wessell.

The exhibition reflects the area's diversity – from Bundjalung Cultural Knowledge and dreaming stories to the histories of Chinese market gardeners, Italian and Lebanese families, artists, students and environmental protectors.

It also highlights the practical ingenuity residents brought to living with the natural environment, including homes designed to adapt to flooding, and the strong social networks that supported neighbours through crisis.

Living Lab exhibition concludes on Thursday 7th August. Opening hours are from Tuesday to Thursday, 1-4pm, at Living Lab Northern Rivers, 11

Woodlark Street, Lismore.

The Living Memory project is funded by the NSW Reconstruction Authority with in-kind contributions from Southern Cross University and the University of Technology, Sydney.

As part of the on-going Living Memory project, members of the wider North Lismore community are invited to contribute to a growing archive of stories, images and objects that reflect the suburb's rich history and deep sense of connection.

For those who have lived, worked or hold strong ties to North Lismore, two upcoming portrait and memorabilia sessions at the Living Lab Northern Rivers shopfront offer an opportunity to sit for a portrait, share personal

memories, and bring along items for scanning that speak to their connection to the place.

Photographer Elise Derwin and historian Adele Wessell will be on site to welcome participants, take portraits, and assist with the digitisation of memorabilia that will form part of the Living Memory digital archive.

Session times are on Thursday 31st July, 1-3pm; and Saturday 2nd August, 10.30am – 12.30pm.

Participants are encouraged to bring photographs, documents or other personal items for scanning, as well as a USB to keep digital copies. Individuals, families, and groups are all welcome to contribute to this important record of North Lismore's people, history and community spirit.

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New federal battery rebate launches

by Matthew Wittemeier

The new Federal Government solar battery rebate is now live, helping Australians cut energy costs, promote renewable energy, and contribute to national climate targets.

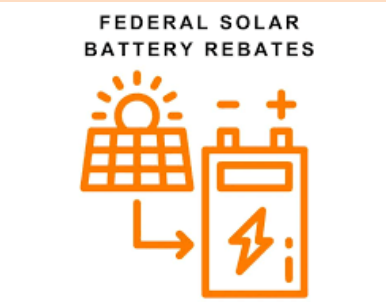
The rebate is generous. A 50 kWh battery attracts a rebate of over \$17,000. There is no means testing or income limit; every Australian household and business is eligible.

The rebate can be claimed once per household or business for battery systems ranging from 5 kWh to 100 kWh. However, while you can install up to a 100 kWh system, the rebate only applies to the first 50 kWh of battery capacity within the system.

Importantly, both small and large businesses can benefit from the program as well. Now is an ideal time to build power redundancy into your business operations. Imagine life without blackouts every six months impacting your bottom line.

If you already have solar, now is the perfect time to add a battery. If you already own a battery, you can expand your system, claim the rebate, or upgrade or replace existing batteries. However, each household can only claim the rebate once.

With demand surging since the announcement, it's important to act quickly. The value of the rebate will



decline on 1st January each year (similar to the solar STCs).

By securing your battery now with a deposit and preparing your installation documentation, you can avoid supply chain delays, decreasing incentives and rising costs.

Industry experts warn that supply chains are likely to be the key bottleneck as demand increases. Booking your installation now is the best way to ensure you do not miss out.

The rebate works through the Federal Government purchasing battery-eligible Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs) to help stabilise market prices. For grid-connected batteries, Virtual Power Plant (VPP) capability is required, though joining a VPP is optional. Off-grid batteries do not need to be VPP-enabled and are fully eligible, provided they are installed by a certified installer.

All batteries installed under this scheme are regulated by the Clean

Energy Regulator (CER), the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and state energy authorities and installers must be Clean Energy council (CEC) approved. The program builds on the highly successful STC program that has supported solar panels since 2011, ensuring the highest standards of safety and quality.

Rainbow Power Company will continue to provide updates as further details are confirmed, but in the meantime, we recommend getting in touch today for a quote and to lock in your installation ahead of the rush.

Whether you are considering adding batteries to your grid-connected home, enhancing your off-grid system or starting from scratch, Rainbow Power's systems are designed to meet program requirements so you can take full advantage of the rebate.

Rainbow Power Company is not only your local qualified solar specialist, they have been leading Australia's solar revolution since 1987. As an unlisted public company, most shareholders are locals (many of you reading this article now) and they employ 27 members of the community. In this case, 'supporting local' truly means supporting local.

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Taking it to the streets

by the team at
Reclaim Our Recovery

Back in May, following a rally to protest demolitions in Baillie Street, and another outside Janelle Saffin's office, we rallied again at the Transit Centre to stop the demolitions and save our Big Scrub homes.

We gathered together to tell stories, hear solutions and demand better outcomes for the floodplain community. There was even a surprise presentation by an LCC councillor, or maybe their much hipper doppelganger.

Together we stitched an alternative story about the recovery we want, one without needless demolitions, as we continued to grow our solidarity and strength.

The following week some staunch reclaimers took some of those cardboard houses to the RA's new office in Molesworth Street, to 'gift them' to the Authority. Apparently one of the security guards did take the houses upstairs in the lift, but they couldn't be handed over directly because apparently the new office is now "tied up like Fort Knox", in the words of one of the ROR team.

We have been involved as citizens in the work of the LCC, by making submissions to The Reimagine Lismore Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 and The Community Engagement Strategy 2025. The ROR submissions sought to bring together the concerns echoed by the community on social media, in past community conversations and in face to face conversations.

We are gearing up to respond to the latest moves by the RA who seem to be trying to tie up loose ends. They have been sending notices to all those who have been residing on the flood



Transit Centre rally

plain with licences to occupy managed by North Coast Community Housing.

The notices advise that they need to leave for a variety of trumped up reasons, including that the property (perfectly liveable until the day before) was uninhabitable, partially destroyed or being compulsorily acquired (even though the properties were already acquired).

In other moves, one of the buildings to be served 'writs of possession' by the RA, is a building in Bridge Street; currently used by different community groups for meetings, workshops and craft.

Note that the building is not used as a residence and is attached (shares a wall with a current business). It therefore sits well outside the usual 'unsafe for human habitation' and 'urgently' needed as part of the Resilient Homes Program arguments of the RA.

ROR have always committed in good faith to a negotiation process that would include some basics like: a flood plan; insurance and payment for utilities.

Sadly our recent attempts at communicating with RA have gone unanswered.

The 'Lismore People's Assembly' (LPA) continues to engage the community in conversations about democracy and what we want out of it. The Thursday project was intended to create an ongoing presence at the Thursday Produce Markets by having pop-up conversations with market customers about the question of the day, or about their key concerns.

As an extension of this, LPA held two mini-assemblies as part of the embassy project, a pop up venue for conversations about the things that matter designed by artist Richard Bell at the Lismore Regional Gallery.

Also following the May rally, LPA held a Democracy Drop-in at the Sherwood Hotel. The event attracted about 25 people to share their ideas in response to the question: What makes for real democracy?

While the RA is continuing in their determination to declare many quality homes as only fit for demolition, we now know that the RHP, involving buybacks and all that went with it, will not be rolled out in the Mid-North Coast.

Apparently that was a bit of a failure, and according to the Minister for Recovery, Janelle Saffin, people just want to get back in their houses. Like Janelle, we always called for pause, for slow down, for deep consideration, in terms of the buybacks and land programs.

When the NSW government-initiated Reset came, we thought that also meant slow down and make time to think and plan better. Actually, it was just a word. If slow down meant anything to the minister, she might have responded with more concern and actually listened when ROR and

others called for a pause to demolitions.

We have been asking and advocating for the RA, local and state government to engage in a genuine consideration of the future of Lismore with all stakeholders, especially the community. Instead, what we got was policy by announcement, or made ad hoc according to funding realities or political dictates. That was a sure road to a certifiable stuff up.

Now Prof Elizabeth Mossop, probably tired of trying to convince the governments and their agencies of the need for a plan, said on ABC that she's "furious about there being no plan whatsoever for the future of Lismore from any level of government."

We have also tried in vain to seek support for and lobby for the use of empty commercial buildings as community spaces. Despite the RA's claim that they were "working on a policy about that", nothing seems to have come from it.

No surprises that those in the social services frontlines, including CEO of NSW Council of Social Service Cara Varian, have spoken up about the "need for 'social infrastructure' to match the new building targets set by the NSW Government, fearing what will be built is a future with lots of new buildings but very little community". Because community and neighbourhood spaces are, as it turns out, vital for resilience, preparation and recovery.

So where should we go next? We want to continue the work we have been doing and make sure it supports the aspirations and hopes of the community. But we need your help.

Please join up for updates and information about our next campaigns and activities. Contact us at: ReclaimOurRecovery@protonmail.com

The end of an era

After nearly 30 years of legal practise in the Northern Rivers, Lismore's legendary lawyer Steve Bolt is retiring.

No stranger to Nimbin, Steve has been a fierce advocate for drug law reform and has attended many a MardiGrass, where he has proffered legal advice about roadside drug testing and medicinal cannabis.

Steve is also the author of *Drugs and the Law* and *Rough Deal: Your Guide to Drug Laws*.

A generous man of integrity, Steve will be missed by everyone in the legal profession. Daniel Haig will be taking over as principal of the firm and is looking forward to a



new chapter working with colleagues Joshua Enoch and Cheree Alexander.

Thank you, Steve, we wish you all the best for your retirement.

Why I support the Rising Tide protests

by Megan James

On Monday 9th June at Byron Bay Courthouse, I appeared with four others for sentencing over a protest action on Sunday 24th November 2024 when, along with over 150 others, I was arrested for paddling a canoe in Newcastle Harbour, the largest coal port in the world.

On the advice of our lawyer, the wonderful Cass Bennett, we had all pleaded guilty 'with reasons' for 'not following a direction' given under the *Marine Safety Act*, Section 15.

I am very glad that the magistrate appeared to have read our reasons and responded by sentencing us all under Section 10: first offence, no fine, no conviction recorded. (Two people had one-year good behaviour bonds applied.)

The whole process has taken up court and police time and resources, as well as mine.

I'm a law-abiding citizen activist who has taken part in many direct actions and marches over the years.

In company with over 5,000 concerned citizens, I saw the Rising Tide mass protest at Newcastle as an opportunity to gain global media attention to the issue of coal exports as a major contributor to climate change – and to galvanise politicians into taking positive action.

I've been writing to politicians, attending rallies, signing petitions and doing my best to ensure that the scientific causes of these natural disasters are known and understood to be the result of fossil fuel extraction and use.

But even though our current government recognises the reality of climate change, the coal industry appears to wield more power than the electorate.

When political will appears absent or ineffective, it's historically been proven that direct civil disobedience is necessary to get attention for serious



The defendants, Dave, Chris, Meg, Cassa and Chels with their lawyer Cass following the court proceedings.

concerns. I have no criminal history, I am a mother, a grandmother and a retired community welfare worker.

I also like to think of myself as a professional protester, as almost every protest movement I have been involved with has ultimately proved successful. I'm still waiting for the nuclear industry to be banned.

The dangers of climate change have impacted me personally since November 2019 when my home, which backs onto the rainforest of Nightcap National Park, was threatened by an unprecedented bushfire.

The fire burnt right to the back wall of my house and destroyed my water supply as well as many trees. My young neighbours in the RFS saved my home.

In Feb-March 2022 my home was again impacted and damaged by a massive landslide less than seven metres away. On the other side, my neighbour's home was washed 30 metres downhill.

I lived in a caravan for almost three years after this event. I had lived in my small, solar-powered home for over 40 years without experiencing such disasters.

What I wish for most of all now is to safeguard the futures of my children and grandchildren from further such terrifying events.

Since the 1970s, I've been aware of global warming and its effects – that's over 50 years!

In those 50 years, consumption and resource extraction has massively increased, to our peril. It's beyond disheartening.

I've lived my life consciously attempting not to contribute to climate change. I love the practice of 'living simply, so that others may simply live'.

It would be so good if the coal barons and corporate shareholders could see the sense in that. We are all wasting so much precious time chasing the capitalist dream of endless growth and consumption.

Coal mining and exports must stop now, and I fervently hope that governments and corporations take notice of our direct action protests.

Our survival is totally dependent on looking after the earth and each other. Fossil fuel extraction and exports must very soon be a thing of the past.

The next 2025 Rising Tide event is planned for Thursday 27th November to Tuesday 2nd December.

The event organisers do the most excellent work of inclusion, education and peaceful protest.

For more information, go to: www.risingtide.org.au/pb2025

New ideas in waterway and riparian restoration

by Kirsten Hartshorne

There's a quiet revolution in the rehabilitation of waterways and forests occurring in parts of Northern NSW that has the potential to transform natural area restoration methods.

A property at Tuntable Falls is experimenting with novel ways of weed removal and creek bank stabilisation that not only protects new native growth and provides a carbon source but kills woody weeds where they stand.

The use of mycoherbicides for inhibiting germination and seedling growth of weed species has been around for decades. However, these products are not so useful when you have large stands of woody weed forests.

But there is an exciting method of myco-mediation using naturally occurring fungi to cause weed dieback in old-growth weeds.

I was privileged to see this method in action on the property where Pierre Loiseau of We Forest Earth and Osmar New are repairing what was once thick tobacco



Fallen logs and timber along creek bank

tree and devil's fig infestations to native riparian forests.

The method involves inoculation of weed species with naturally occurring fungi causing weed dieback. The first step is to identify all weed species occurring in the regeneration area to match the weeds with the most suitable mycelium culture for the tree.

The weed species are then ringbarked and a hole drilled into the ringbark spot for the mycelium-inoculated wooden dowel to be tapped into the drillhole.

The hole is sealed with beeswax and selected pioneer species such as brushbox, kurrajong and native mulberry are planted beneath the weed canopy. The weed canopy acts as a support

species for the young trees and is an important step in the regeneration process.

The time it takes for the mushroom cultures to start fruiting is seven months. A canopy of devil's figs can start to die off in about 4-5 months which allows for canopy transfer to the fast-growing pioneer species which eventually replace the weed canopy.

So instead of cutting and burning, which removes the stored carbon within the weeds, the carbon stays in the forest to fortify the next succession of the forest.

Another area of eco-rehabilitation occurring on the site is the creek bank. Here Osmar is using materials found on site to create self-sustaining and

resilient creek banks.

A foundation of timber is placed along the banks, to protect the bank from erosive flows and the riparian species planted between the timber. The timber has two jobs; to create a resilient bank and riparian zone, and to provide carbon and nutrients to the riparian species and the creek aquatic ecosystem.

The timber is not meant to be a permanent feature but will eventually move downstream assisting in slowing flood flows and creating opportunities for riparian repair elsewhere, imitating the dynamic nature of a natural headwater creek.

The aim is not for permanence, which is not a natural artifact, but to emulate the cyclical nature of natural ecosystems.

There are added benefits of regenerating forests and rehabilitating waterways. They can provide landowners an income stream by way of carbon credits or participation in the nature repair market.

For more info, see Pierre Loiseau's website: www.weforestearth.com.au



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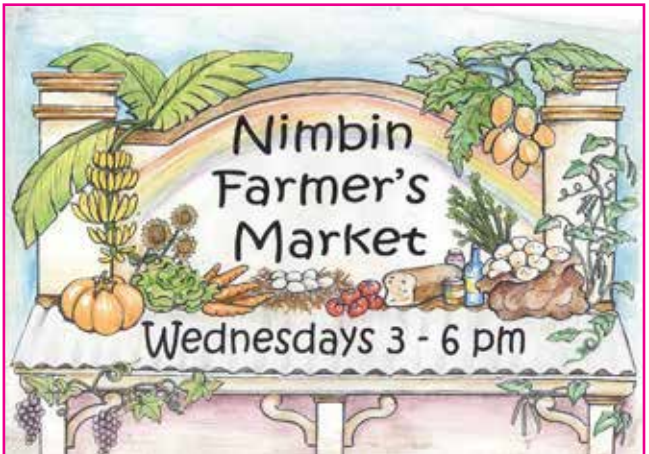
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Landsharing, affordable housing and community

by Talisha Kendell, Jeni Kendell and Megan James

"The time for action and change is right and the door is open."

On 24th May, more than 100 people gathered in Nimbin Town Hall for the first annual Aquarius Talks. Inspired by the spirit of the 1973 Aquarius Festival and the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, this day brought together local legends, national housing experts, and intentional community pioneers to ask: What now? What next? And what can we do together?

With the housing crisis reaching emergency levels in the Northern Rivers, with some flood-affected homes demolished, rents unaffordable, and once-thriving landsharing communities buried under regulatory red tape, the time has come again for bold thinking, shared purpose, and co-ordinated action. And that is exactly what the Aquarius Talks sparked.

Speaker highlights

The speakers brought not only personal insight but decades of lived experience, technical knowledge and practical models that could help shape a new future for landsharing communities. Aidan Ricketts, educator, lawyer, activist and author, opened the event by reminding us that the MO movement emerged alongside the campaign for free speech. He spoke about the original Multiple Occupancy campaigns that paralleled Lismore's fight for protest rights. Landsharing, he said, should be seen not as a nostalgic ideal but as a living model of participatory governance. Without asserting the right to live differently, we risk losing it entirely.

Carol Perry, co-founder and 52 year member of Dharmananda farming



Aidan Ricketts



Carol Perry



Megan James



Gai Longmuir Photos: Peter Derrett



Rob Doolan



Wendy Stone



Shane Sylvenspring



Nick Sabel

community, followed with a grounding in history and intention. She emphasised that simply sharing land does not guarantee bonded community. On-going communication, non-oppositional dialogue, collective renewal, shared values, and collective responsibility are essential. Cultural infrastructure – the invisible fabric of trust, dialogue and shared purpose – is just as vital as roads and sewage.

Megan James, a 50-years member of Tuntale Falls Co-ordination Co-op, and Gai Longmuir, 48-year co-founder of Bodhi Farm, shared deeply personal reflections and hard-won lessons from decades of communal life.

They described the labour of intentional living, from building homes with salvaged materials to navigating intergenerational transitions and council planning hurdles.

Their message was simple: idealism is not enough. A thriving bonded community takes daily commitment, conflict resolution, and open-hearted communication.

Rob Doolan brought decades of planning experience, long-view

perspective and deep ties to the Northern Rivers. He affirmed landsharing as a viable model when legally recognised and properly managed.

He recalled how SEPP 15 once opened up possibilities for rural living and low-impact development.

Although SEPP 15 was repealed in 2021 and some of its provisions merged into the broader Housing SEPP, many councils no longer permit new Multiple Occupancies.

Rob urged the community to work both within and against the system. Planning frameworks are not set in stone. With knowledge, patience and coordinated advocacy, they can evolve.

Professor Wendy Stone, one of Australia's leading housing researchers, shifted the lens to a national and international level.

She spoke about the financialisation of housing, which often stifles innovation, and offered policy tools like rent-to-buy, shared equity, and co-op finance models.

Wendy encouraged partnerships between government and communities and called for systems that put people, not profits, at the centre.

Shane Sylvenspring, planner and landsharer at Afterlee (west of Kyogle), brought clarity to the planning and legal side of community. The Afterlee model includes different lot sizes, manufactured dwellings, and flood-affected house reuse.

Shane explained how forming as an MO first and transitioning to Community Title later allows communities to start small, stay affordable, and still access finance.

Nick Sabel, CEO of Common Equity Housing Ltd, shared the inner workings of co-operative housing. With over 30 housing co-ops under their care, Common Equity supports culturally aligned groups to govern their own housing.

Nick highlighted the potential of Community Land Trusts to provide lasting affordability and revealed that some NSW ministers are already open to scaling these models. Co-op housing, he stressed, is not theoretical. It is real and ready to grow.

Together, the speakers made one thing clear: the solutions exist. What is needed now is legal reform, community coordination, and political will.

The call to action: What comes next?

The Aquarius Talks was not just a talkfest. It was an ignition point.

We are calling on the NSW Government to commission a new report to replace the outdated 1987 Multiple Occupancy Manual.

That original document changed lives by creating a legal framework for shared rural living. But it no longer reflects the complexity of today's challenges, especially post-flood realities, climate

adaptation, or contemporary housing models.

A new version could include:

- Options to modernise and reinstate planning pathways for rural landsharing, drawing from the original SEPP 15 framework and the current Schedule 5 of the Rural Lands SEPP;
- Preservation for existing MOs, addressing current challenges and offering a clear legal framework for the future;
- Guidance for replicating revised MO models in other parts of NSW and increase the current Schedule 5 to all of NSW;
- Planning strategies and practical descriptions for Community Title, Community Land Trusts, shared equity housing, co-operatively governed land, closer-to-town housing hubs, and other shared living models;
- Legal reforms to allow secure leasehold co-operatives and borrowing against long-term leases;
- Pilot planning reforms and flexible compliance for flood-affected local government areas.

The report must involve the thought leaders and practitioners already doing the work, including those who spoke at the Aquarius Talks.

In this time of housing crisis, we should reflect on the huge contribution that multiple occupancies have made in housing people at very little public cost. We

have five decades of lived experience and much to offer.

Next steps

We propose:

1. Cross-regional coalition working with all communities collectively and other aligned groups, like Housing Matters Action Group, Women's Village Collective, Grounded, the Nimbin Interagency Group and others to build a united front and shared goals for change. The Rural Housing Alliance is already being set up to do this work, and has invited us to join.
2. Creating a community-led flood taskforce with real authority to advise state and local governments on community-led relocation, house recycling, and flood-resilient development.
3. Looking into models of affordable housing, renting and dealing with homelessness and get assistance in setting up selected models up in our community.
4. Legal and government pathways for landsharing, pushing for reforms that replace and modernise SEPP 15, enable pilot planning programs in affected regions, and restore a state-level policy. Communities and aligned groups must work together to present our agenda to state and local governments, just as State Housing Minister Landa supported in the 1980s.

Join us

This is not the end. It is the beginning.

Aquarius Talks will now be an annual event. But the real work happens every day. We have started compiling a network of people ready to be part of this next chapter. If you want to get involved, please email us at: secretary.nafi@gmail.com

You can also watch the full video or excerpts of the event at: www.youtube.com/@nimbin-aquariusfoundation/videos

With creativity, solidarity and persistence, we can shape a better future that honours the land, uplifts our communities, and makes housing a right, not a privilege.

The time is right. The doors are open. Let us walk through them together.



NIMBIN BOWLING, SPORT & RECREATION CLUB Pty Ltd

2025/26 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 3rd August, 9.30am
in club rooms at 25 Sibley Street, Nimbin

- Nominations for Office and Notices of Motion close at 9.30am on Sunday 20th July.
- Vacant positions may be filled from the floor.

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A planning meeting: Jenny, Gill, Jagad, Kitty, Greg and Franca

by Greg Bork and Megan James
Aquarius Archives Working Group

The precious cultural heritage of the Rainbow Region is getting a lot of love at Aquarius Archives. We've been busy laying the groundwork to look after Nimbin's stories in perpetuity. We are acutely aware of the problems facing the cultural heritage of this region. Some archives have gone out of the area, some lost in floods, some lost to fire, some worn out from overuse. Plenty are gathering dust and mould, and in precarious states of neglect. We're making every effort to be responsible caretakers of our community's precious heritage with Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc, understanding that people may be wary of our efforts, given prior experiences when archives have been lost or neglected. The former 'Aquarian Archives' was sadly neglected for over a decade, but is soon to come into our care. Several of the original custodians of that archive are assisting us, thank you.

Items to donate

Storage space will soon be ready to receive more treasures that spark and illuminate the Aquarius awakening and counterculture movement that coalesces in Nimbin. Please look for items that shed light on the Aquarius story and think about setting them aside for the Aquarius Archives. If you have items that you may like to donate, please familiarise yourself with our Collections Policy, on-line at: <https://aquariusarchives.org.au/collection/collection-policy> or for a hard copy, pop in to our headquarters on the Cullen Street front of the Community Centre on Thursdays, 11am-3pm. Only items within the scope of our collection policy can be accepted. Understanding what we take into consideration before accepting donations will give you a great start. The Collections Policy includes a Donation Agreement. You can also email us at: mail@aquariusarchives.org.au We'd love to hear from you and talk about the process of assessing your intended donation. We are laying the groundwork for looking after diverse objects in various states of preservation and organising to accept donations in the near future.

We have a donated chest freezer which provides insect control for most newly donated items. After that, a measured dose of sunlight to kill mould, and a careful brush or gentle vacuum, before cataloguing, transfer to archival quality enclosures, and finally sorting into a climate-controlled storage nearby. Then comes digitisation and community access. So, we hope you can appreciate the mammoth task ahead for a few caring volunteers, and the challenges we face in establishing a viable and thriving cultural meeting place in Nimbin.

Exhibitions

Aquarius Archives provided two exhibitions for the Aquarius Talks event on 24th May. One was Rainbow Dreaming, a "photo-documentary of the alternative movement in the Rainbow Region of Australia", on-line at: www.rainbowdreaming.org The other exhibition was Rainbow Posters, celebrating posters that bring together the community and culture, which is now on display in the Community Centre, Acacia Building, adding to the archival display that has been a fixture outside the Dance Studio for over twenty years. We also put out a selection of display books on Thursdays and are glad to have visitors stopping by to spend time in our fledgling museum.

Planning

We are also working on a 'Strategic Plan', required for access to some grant funding streams. What are the goals for Aquarius Archives, and how to reach them? We've begun brainstorming, and are looking for someone skilled, preferably a museum specialist. Please get in touch if you know someone who can steer us towards sustainable, secure and accessible Aquarius Archives in Nimbin in perpetuity. We're chuffed to have met or exceeded many of our goals, thanks to the generous support of everyone who's chipped in and/or volunteered. Stay warm, share your stories around the fire, and please have a think about keeping the Nimbin Aquarius story alive with a donation you may like to make to our collection.

RPC welcomes new CEO

Matthew Wittemeier brings nearly 20 years of expertise in marketing, sales, strategy, and management, having worked across industries such as technology, AI, finance, and the creative sector.

Throughout his career, he's written more than 70 articles, authored several books, and has lived and worked on four continents.

He is the co-author of the multi-award-winning 2038: A Smart Port Story, a novel exploring the future of technology and the social challenges it may bring.

His work has earned him recognition as an award-winning designer, and he has served on several boards.

Matthew is also a member and judge at The Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts (AIVA) and the Australian



Marketing Institute and holds the title of Certified Practising Marketer (CPM).

Originally from the United States, Matthew migrated to Australia in 2007, earning his Bachelor of Business Administration from Southern Cross University.

After living in Brisbane and Germany, he settled in the Northern Rivers in late 2022, where he now

embraces sustainable off-grid living as part of a local community.

"I'm excited to bring my global experience home to a company that's owned by locals, run by locals, and dedicated to serving locals."

"Rainbow Power Company's rich history has been grounded in community, and that's where our future should be too," Matthew said.



As winter sets in, the pulse of community life in Nimbin remains strong and connected.

Despite on-going economic pressures – from inflation to rising fuel and transportation costs, compounded by the global ripple effects of international conflict – we're seeing the spirit of our village shine through in the way we collaborate, adapt, and support one another.

Recent activities

On 31st May, the Chamber had the privilege of chairing an Interagency Meeting, bringing together more than 20 community organisations. The room was filled with energy, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to Nimbin's future.

From that gathering, a plan was formed to hold three interagency meetings per year, providing a consistent space for collaboration on shared goals and preparing unified messaging ahead of Council engagement. It's a powerful development that strengthens our collective voice.

Meanwhile, the Bowling Club hosted a well-attended community meeting last month to explore how we might secure and revitalise this important local asset.

The building holds enormous potential — not just as a licensed venue, but as a place for connection, culture, and community service.

The Chamber encourages all stakeholders to stay engaged as options are explored for its future.

In May, MardiGrass once again drew thousands of visitors to Nimbin, with estimates suggesting around 3,000 people attended the

celebration.

The event was a boost for local businesses and a reminder of how unique gatherings in our village continue to attract and inspire.

Amidst all of this, the Chamber continues its regular advocacy, networking, and planning behind the scenes.

School marketplace

The Chamber continues to value and support the youth of our community, recently attending the market held on the school grounds – an educational initiative designed to help young people understand the commercial realities of operating in a trading environment.

We applaud the creativity and enthusiasm of our young entrepreneurs and are committed to supporting them as they explore pathways in business and innovation.

We also applaud Nimbin Central School for facilitating and promoting this market initiative, helping to foster real-world learning and entrepreneurial thinking among students.

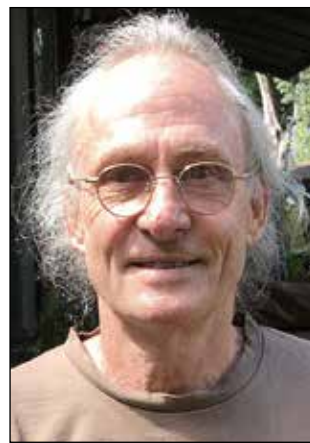
Your presence matters

We are preparing for our next general meeting and several exciting initiatives for the second half of the year, including a celebration of local business excellence.

Whether you're running a business, working in a community group, or simply living locally, your presence matters.

Nimbin thrives when we all contribute to the shared rhythm of village life.

This spirit of collaboration reinforces our circular economy – when we support local businesses, dollars



Chamber Chat

by David Hyett, president

stay within our community, flowing through wages, services and on-going investment.

It's not just good economics, it's a commitment to shared prosperity.

We also continue to uphold the values that make Nimbin unique: a focus on health, wellbeing, artistic expression, entrepreneurial spirit, and a culture that encourages free thinking and innovation.

Whether it's through fitness, food, arts or local enterprise, the thread that runs through our village life is one of connection and care.

Alone, we are faster. Together we are stronger.

New Members

We would like to welcome our newest Chamber members:

- **Naturally Native** – specialising in Australian native fruits and nuts, Naturally Native promotes sustainable practices and a deep connection to country.
- **Nimbingym** – providing a supportive space for health, fitness, and community wellbeing.
- **Piccolo Edibles** – creating small-batch, handcrafted edibles that celebrate local ingredients and innovation. We welcome the diversity you bring and thank you for your confidence in choosing Nimbin as the base for your business, as well as for your engagement in our community.



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7 Sibley Street
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July What's On!
For bookings, email: sibley@nnic.org.au or text 0475-135-764

Community Tools Library: Every Wed and Sat 10.30am-2pm, for home repairs, garden tools, food and craft equipment. Join at Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre Mon-Fri. Basketballs and pump available: with \$5 refundable deposit.

Regular Workshops: Gold coin donation

- **Wed 9th: Spinners and Weavers** (Every 2nd Wednesday of month.)
- **Tues 15th: Knitting Group** (Every 3rd Tuesday of the month.)
- **Wed 16th: Water Collective, 2pm** (Every 3rd Wednesday of the month.)
- **Wed 23rd: Crafters** – Bring a project or learn something new, we have lots of toys. (Every 4th Wednesday of the month.)

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

Healing community post-Covid

In recent years the community has been deeply divided over Covid vaccination and mandates. I'm not writing to rehash old arguments but to ask for something simpler and more human: let's start listening to one another with respect again.

I initially chose not to be vaccinated due to a history of severe allergic reactions. Despite this, I was shouted at, called a "conspiracy theorist," and even told "I hope you die." Losing my job was devastating, but the cruelty from some in the community hurt even more.

Beyond my own medical reasons, what hurt me deeply was the way the government pushed one-size-fits-all solutions and used fear and pressure to enforce them.

The constant threat of losing work, being excluded, or being fined wore people down. It didn't feel like public health, it felt like punishment for thinking differently.

Watching the police enforce these rules, sometimes in ways that were outright cruel, broke my trust even further. We all want to feel safe in our communities, but I saw people treated like criminals for simply trying to make their own choices or speak out.

I understand many people were afraid. We were all trying to protect those we love. But fear shouldn't turn us against neighbours who had different medical needs, fears or concerns.

Name-calling – "cookers," "anti-vax idiots," "sheep" – shuts down conversation. It



stops us from understanding why someone made their choice. We don't have to agree on everything, but surely we can talk without insults.

The Northern Rivers is known for its diversity of ideas and lifestyles. Can we honour that by listening first? By asking questions before judging? By remembering that behind every choice is a human being with fears, hopes, and reasons?

Thank you for reading this. I hope these words can help us begin to heal some of the hurt, and to talk with one another with care and respect. Our world needs much more of that!

Susan Johnson
Nimbin

Vested interests bin R2P

When the most lethal regime in the Middle East is backed by the most lethal regime on earth, in a project to exterminate a besieged and defenceless population, the outcome is the horror we see unfolding in Gaza and the West Bank today.

Those who try to justify or condone this project are quite clearly morally and intellectually destitute.

These self-declared champions of human rights and the rule of law,

prove to be habitual liars and shameless hypocrites, corrupted by an unholy alliance with genocidal sociopaths.

Their commitment to the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, only applies when they can use a "humanitarian intervention" to further their hegemonic ambitions, as was the case with the destruction of Libya and Syria.

But if it suits their degenerate agenda, they'll happily permit the total annihilation of an entire population using bombs and starvation, with utter contempt for international law and the rights of others.

This is the world we live in today, the West's so-called leaders are the worst humanity has to offer, and our mainstream media peddles pro-war propaganda to profit a few at the expense of many.

John Scrivener
Main Arm

Grieving dead men

I read the article in the June issue about another vigil held in Nimbin for women and children who died as victims of domestic violence.

Official BOSCAR statistics on victims of DV murders in NSW since 2005 reveal that last year, 16 women and 13 men were victims of DV related murder,

and 10 children (genders undisclosed). That's three more women than men. In 2021 and 2022 there were actually more male victims than females in NSW, but that never made a headline anywhere.

I am not a feminist, I am an egalitarian, and every single death resulting from DV is abhorrent to me, but for some reason society only seems to value female lives (and children), and evidently so do the organisers of this vigil.

As such, having experienced domestic abuse myself from female partners and knowing many other male friends who also have, I cannot support or attend a vigil that ignores male victims.

I do not by any means intend any disrespect or to trivialise women killed in DV, but merely wish to express how sad it is that male victims of DV are apparently not considered worthy of being mourned at these vigils.

It is crystal clear to me that men are still typically always blamed as perpetrators and women mourned as their victims, but that narrative is not in fact supported by the official NSW government and police statistics.

Not all women are wonderful, or innocent victims of male abuse. Recently there has been

Changing times

Aboriginal lingo has no word for 'Yesterday' or 'Tomorrow'
For them the past, it is their sorrow
But we all see in our world today
Where our humanity has to pay

For wars, greed, selfishness pollution
With environmentalists desperate for solution
Cures for diseases never had before
With plastics washed on every shore

Gadgets we never had a need
To give us time to feel us 'freed'
Work and life was all as one
Married together for our fun!

Children sometimes visit me
Oblong phones upon their knee
Thumbs go at a tremendous pace
To contact friends and see their face

Chainsaws make an eerie sound
As trees sigh and hit the ground
Our air is stolen by plane and car
And soon we will not see the star

To guide us to our future moon
Our earthly life be over soon...
Unless we stop our greed and strife
And choose ourselves a better life?

– Bett Taylor

Karma is coming

Everything equalises and balances
maths and morality,
beauty, depravity.

We are
the words of Shakespeare,
the music of Beethoven,
the hate of Hitler,
the sins of Stalin,
the triumph of Trump.

Democracy at work,
media madness
fear and ignorance,
a lingering sadness.
The hollow crown empty,
cursed insanity,
devoid of love and hope,
our humanity,
but this cycle will pass
as we cleanse our soul
with universal truth,
pure and wholesome, whole

– John Stuart

a spate of news reports of female perpetrators of violent acts. Grandmothers killing children, mothers setting fire to houses while their children sleep, women stabbing and setting their male partners on fire to mention just a few.

Women also make false allegations of abuse as a tactic in family law proceedings or simply for the various financial benefits, which skews statistics and

is disrespectful to every genuine victim, depriving them of scarce resources.

The number of males killed in DV incidents in NSW is far from insignificant and these victims do not deserve to be treated as though they are worthless.

I find it tragically sad that nobody in Nimbin apparently cares about these dead men.

Andy Gough
Larnook

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

Bookkeeper Lyndal Gray
Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com
And find us on Facebook

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NEXT DEADLINE:
Friday 25th July

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Remembering Dr Ros Irwin 3.4.1943 – 15.6.2025

by Diana Roberts OAM

Ros Irwin was a dear friend, a trailblazer for women in leadership, and for me, as for many, a mentor and touchstone for over 30 years.

Ros and I were elected to Council together in 1991, but her story with local government began before that. She'd worked as a consultant to Lismore Council, helping develop their corporate plan. What she saw behind the scenes – the lack of transparency, the poor quality of debate – appalled her.

So, she ran for office. Not for a party or a vested interest group, but as part of the Lismore Community Independents, committed to opening up Council to the people it was meant to serve.

Ros campaigned hard with sharp ideas, strong policy, and a serious door-knocking effort. She came second in that election, just behind the sitting mayor and former police chief. It was a remarkable result. Her support came from across the district. It was time for change.

Alongside Lyn Carson, we were three women in a chamber that had only ever seen three women since its establishment in 1879. The media called us "history shakers."

Others weren't as kind, calling us "the girls" or, behind closed doors, the "hairy-legged lesbians." Ros didn't blink. She knew exactly what she was doing, and why it mattered.

From the start Ros was deeply respected, even by her political opponents. She was highly experienced, well-briefed, and always motivated by the public good. In a council plagued by debt, she focused on financial responsibility, often at the expense of her dreams.

She supported and/or initiated reform after reform: votes recorded against decisions, public question time, real community consultations, and rural contact forums. She believed in empowering people to act, rather than acting on their behalf.

The three of us were trailblazers, a powerful team engaged in an experience that changed all our lives, but especially Ros' life.

Ros described her first year as a baptism of fire. Initially we women went in boots and all, determined to make good our promises. We didn't always agree but we always respected



and valued each other's views and used our strong support base for feedback.

There were clashes, of course, with our fellow councillors: quarries, brothels, cattle dips, McDonalds, multiple occupancies, flood levees and more.

However, we worked hard to build relationships across the chamber rather than being noisy voices in opposition, using heart politics and strategic questioning to shift the culture.

We also worked hard on building relationships with key staff. Ros used all her skills to help build a council that, for a time, really did better reflect its community.

In 1993 the Community Independents were forced to form a political party if we wanted to be grouped under the name 'Lismore Community Independents', and Ros became the registered officer.

She also ran as an independent in the Federal election that year, a very brave move reflective of the teal movement of today, and one we all supported. Ros never hesitated to put herself forward.

I always admired that in her, as I did her ability to remember everyone's name and her powerful presence in a room.

Ros was later elected Mayor – the first woman ever to hold the role in Lismore, chaired Rous County Council at a critical time, and was appointed to NOROC.

Her advocacy on issues like multiple occupancies, floodplain development, koala protection, flood management, and the arts was unwavering.

Her appreciation of everything that is special about Nimbin was of particular value to me, and she became a regular attendee at Blue Moon Cabarets.

Ros was principled, progressive, and strong. Her feminist values, her commitment to social justice, her opposition to war, and her desire to tread gently on the planet guided every decision she made.

And yet, Ros was always deeply human. A young grandmother when she was elected, she always found time for her family. Her loving relationship with Bill was a joy for me to observe. She supported and mentored many, quietly and generously, through their own campaigns, projects, and personal challenges.

She often brought wisdom, wry humour, and kindness into the room. In the male-dominated environment of local government it takes a particularly gifted female to get to the top. Ros did just that in so many ways.

In recent years, like me, Ros became disheartened and disgusted by the direction Lismore Council was taking. The closed doors, the tokenistic engagement, the financial distress – all felt like a return to the days that had inspired us to run in the first place.

She eventually stopped attending meetings but never stopped caring. How could she? Her heart was always in it.

Our friendship began through Council but grew into something much more enduring. Ros was one of the very few people I could talk to about the inner workings of local politics. But we also shared laughter, life's twists, and an enduring admiration for each other's values.

I'm so glad I was able to express that admiration at her 80th birthday. I told her then what I'll say again now: Ros Irwin was a woman of extraordinary integrity, intelligence, and compassion. Her energy seemed limitless, until it wasn't, and I will miss her.

Ros has left us, but her legacy will continue through the many lives she changed, the doors she opened, and the better future she never stopped fighting for.

Now it's her time to rest in peace.

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