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by Kevin Hogan, MP for Page

It is very humbling to be re-elected with an increase in my primary vote. I thank everyone for their continued support.

I acknowledge the other candidates, who were a great and interesting group of people, all reflecting our

wonderfully diverse community.

I thank all my helpers and supporters, I literally couldn't have done this without you. To my staff, who go above and beyond in helping people in our community, they are a great team, thank you.

To my family, Karen, Bridget, Sean and Ruby and Rosie, your love and

support sustains me in this role. I love you and thank you.

We have a world leading democracy, I wish the government well. There are many challenges we face but I am always optimistic about our future due the character of the Australian people.

Again, thank you.

New amenities block open for your business

After 15 years of lobbying by local Sue Edmonds from Friends of Nimbin Pool, and the Nimbin Advisory Group, the much-anticipated amenities block at Nimbin's Peace Park has finally been completed.

The \$400,000 shower, toilet and changeroom facility funded by the NSW Government and built by Bennett Constructions, was officially opened on 22nd April by State Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin, who was joined by Lismore Mayor Steve Krieg.

Its location is ideally suited to service the swimming pool, skate park, playground, the new Nimbin Rainbow Walk and surrounding areas.

Nimbin artist Julie De Lorenzo has been commissioned to create a mural artwork following an expressions of interest process assisted by Nimbin Artists Gallery committee members Pauline Ahearn and Karen Welsh.

She is currently working with the project team to finalise details prior to commencing artwork, which is expected to take six weeks (weather dependent).

The funds were made available through the Department of Regional NSW. Minister for Regional NSW Tara Moriarty said, "The new facilities will allow families and tourists a more comfortable and enjoyable experience when exercising or socialising at Nimbin's Peace Park.

"The NSW government is committed to building community



Sue Edmonds (centre) with Mayor Steve Krieg and Janelle Saffin MP

infrastructure that supports cohesion and wellbeing in regional NSW."

Janelle Saffin said, "This has been a labour of love for many.

"I was delighted to secure the funding for the Nimbin community as one of my key election commitments, and to have Lismore City Council agree to handle the project and agree to its maintenance."

Lismore Mayor Steve Krieg said, "This facility is built with resilience

and practicality in mind, ensuring it can be easily cleaned and maintained, even after potential flooding or damage."

Adjoining footpaths, access to drinking water and more mural artworks are being considered, but according to Cr Krieg this will be subject to when funding becomes available.

Twenty-three public toilet upgrades are planned across the Lismore LGA.

Bringing Nimbin community organisations together

by Diana Roberts

Nimbin has a myriad of community organisations that rely heavily on volunteer input.

Following the demise of the Nimbin Advisory Group, the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce has compiled a list of over 50 organisations and is seeking interest from each in forming an interagency.

The initiative arose from the Sustainable Nimbin planning process and the idea is for a group that meets twice a year to share what they are doing and to hear what other groups are doing.

In the process, we might

find things we can work on collaboratively or avoid reinventing the wheel.

The Chamber agreed to organise the first meeting to canvas interest with the hope that it becomes a regular opportunity to connect, share vision, and maybe collaborate.

While the list is limitless, things we could be working on if there is interest include:

- Build community resilience through co-operation;
- Identifying funding opportunities and help with grant writing;
- Ideas to run meetings efficiently; and
- Identifying community-based initiatives we can

work on together.

Currently community information is shared through the Nimbin GoodTimes, Nim-FM, social media and word of mouth. While these are really useful avenues the most valuable way to exchange information amongst us all is often face-to-face.

How the interagency works to optimise its benefits could be refined over time by those groups who participate.

It's a first step to gauge interest and the first meeting is planned for Saturday 31st May, 9.30am at Birth & Beyond. We're visualising a three-hour meeting maximum, with length

dependent on how many groups attend.

The Chamber is inviting every known local organisation to nominate someone to represent them or, if not interested, to let us know so we don't bother them going forward.

If your group hasn't received an invite or you want more information, can you please contact: chamber@nimbinaustralia.com.au

Alternatively, touch base with someone on the Chamber's management committee. Details are on the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce website: www.nimbinaustralia.com.au

ANZAC Day ceremonies: Lest we forget

Students from Nimbin Central School are frequently offered positions in each year's ANZAC and Remembrance Day ceremonies by the various veterans and local officials.

School captain Livio Gulizia was Master of Ceremonies this year, Jasinter Lail gave the Commemorative address, and there were recitations by Winter Matheson and India-Rose Frith.

Livio said, "The students of Nimbin Central School proudly lead the way in ensuring the ANZAC spirit lives on for many more generations, imbuing the ANZAC ethos of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork."

Kyogle Council Mayor Danielle Mulholland paid tribute to past and present service men and women, honouring their sacrifices and courage.



ANZAC Day parades in Nimbin and Kyogle



"The ANZAC story has helped shape Australia's identity and we should all take a moment to give thanks for the contribution and suffering of those who have served.

"We should also honour the qualities of those original ANZACS that helped forge the legend of the Australian spirit which centres around resilience, courage under fire, larrikin humour and mateship."

ANZAC Day services were held throughout the Kyogle LGA including at Kyogle, Woodenbong, Bonalbo, Old Bonalbo, Tabulam and Mallanganee.

Kyogle Council joined with the rest of the community in honouring past and present service personnel, with Councillors attending and laying wreaths at all the official ceremonies.

Aquarian Archive poster display

by Greg Bork

"Thank you, brings back wonderful memories," from Paw Paw, and "How wonderful! A beautiful selection of memorabilia" from Helen Otway, were two of the comments left at the Rainbow Posters exhibition in the town hall lobby during the Nimbin Art Fair.

Thanks to the Nimbin Artists Gallery for offering that space to the Aquarius Archives for our first exhibition. The exhibition was first shown at Southern Cross University Library in 2007, as prepared by Graham Irvine and Rhonda Ellis of the (now defunct) Aquarian Archive Inc.

We added Katie Cawcutt's fabulous Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc collection of Aquarius anniversary event posters, and altogether had over 80 posters exhibited on our newly donated blue display boards.

To bring it all together, Gillian Jones created a banner, installed with the help of Jane Mari (pictured). Look out for this banner whenever we're doing something in town.

Since last month, we've decided to move our open day to the public to Thursdays, due to volunteer availability. Pop by and say hello at Nimbin Community Centre. You can now purchase our 'Nimbin Aquarius' fundraiser tote bags at the Nimbin



Environment Centre too.

Following a demonstration by facilitators at our Archiving Basics workshop in March, participant Pauline Ahern was inspired to sew and donate small weighted bags to hold down the corners of posters during handling, and they immediately became worth their weight in gold.

In the coming month we'll be devoting our energy to cleaning and preparing our storage space, a major step towards reaching our goal of being able to accept archive donations in the near future.

We're also applying for a grant to digitise the Graham Irvine audiovisual collection, a series of radio documentaries and interviews recorded during his five-year period at 2NCR-FM and for ABC Radio National.

This collection is considered

a highly significant record of the "new settler" movement, with Graham's 'Wednesday Town Meeting' in particular as a live-to-air community forum about education, forestry, drugs, politics and more.

The formats this collection are recorded on are deteriorating and becoming obsolete, placing it at the top of a preservation report prepared by the former Aquarian Archive in 2009.

Of course, if we had heaps of capacity, resources, volunteers and dollars, we'd be snapping up the old Vinnies building in Nimbin and creating a museum and cultural hub. For the moment, we're grateful to be part of the conversation and have our fingers crossed that a worthwhile project for the community comes to life in that space.

We love our volunteers and welcome newcomers with creative skills who are interested in the cultural heritage of Nimbin. The manifesto for the 1973 Aquarius Festival was that "the festival itself be an artform".

Our new "About Us" intro at: aquariusarchives.org.au reads: "Most volunteers at the Aquarius Archives are creative artists in their own right, with the passion, drive and understanding to keep our rich and diverse stories alive. We thrive in the generative synergy between best practice archiving and participatory creativity, with the community."

A big thanks to everyone for their contributions so far, as we gather momentum towards the capacity to accept collection donations.

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Community members and housing advocates gathered in Lismore on 16th April to demand an immediate halt to the ongoing demolition of structurally sound homes by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

The rally is the latest expression of growing outrage across the Northern Rivers at what locals are calling a betrayal of the Government's recovery promises. Greens MP and spokesperson for the North Coast, Sue Higginson,

who joined the rally, said "The people of Lismore were promised a recovery that was community-led, compassionate and future-focused. "What we are witnessing instead is the senseless destruction of homes that could still offer hope,

safety and shelter – all in the middle of a housing crisis." "These homes are not just timber and tin, they are part of people's lives, memories and futures. Many of them have been lovingly maintained and were previously

identified as suitable for relocation. "The decision to crush, shred and dispose of them without proper oversight is an insult to this community and a failure of leadership." "It's even more distressing to learn that people who offered to take and relocate these homes have been turned away. There's no transparency. There's no fairness. And there's no compassion." "We've also now seen aerial footage of a facility where some of these homes have been taken and it's shocking. "Homes being dumped and further torn apart by industrial machines, with Big Scrub hardwood timbers crushed into piles of general waste or maybe turned into mulching products. The government is trying to spin this as recycling, but it's greenwashing, plain and simple," "This is not what recovery looks like. This is a waste of viable homes and a breach of trust. The government must immediately pause the demolitions, release the assessment criteria, and honour their commitments to deliver a just, community-led recovery. "If the premier and Minister for Recovery want to rebuild trust, they need to start by listening to the people of Lismore – not bulldozing over them," Ms Higginson said.

The crying clowns

by Kitty McMahon

Lismore protesters interrupted Janelle Saffin MP (Minister for Recovery & North Coast), Mayor of Lismore Steve Krieg, Reconstruction Authority's Karen Clarke as well as various other local members and politicians at *Circular Timber: From Salvage to Showcase* at the Living Lab in protest at the demolitions that began this last week in North Lismore on Baillie Street.

The exhibition, purporting to focus on "timber reuse, combining historical context, global case studies, and insights into deconstruction versus demolition" was sponsored by the Reconstruction Authority. It seemed disingenuous of the organisers to launch this exhibition right at the time when the RA had commenced their latest round of demolitions and the community had begun to rally in protest against the continued demolitions to come. The first rally on Tuesday 8th marked the beginning of this demolition project and the beginning of community taking action to halt it and to call for other solutions.

"At Tuesdays' rally the community watched, many in tears, in protest against the destruction of beautiful historical homes and Lismore history; blood and bone, pulverised to a pulp at Tuesdays rally..." according to one of the rally organisers.

Some local protesters, performing as clowns decided to disrupt this Reconstruction Authority sponsored event on 'sustainability', with a circus flavour, calling out the government delegates for their negligence in keeping their word to the community regarding the recovery process following the 2022 floods.

In the midst of the worst housing crisis this country and region has ever seen, it seems beyond a joke to be demolishing perfectly good

homes, especially when sponsoring events that are focused on 'deconstruction versus demolition'.

The protest took place the same day as ABC North Coast morning show featured a segment which opened with the statement "some of the community are beginning to question the reconstruction authorities commitment to reusing the homes themselves and the materials used to build them, including big scrub timber..."

The ABC then questioned Amanda Leck, the commissioner of the Reconstruction Authority Head of Adaptation, Mitigation and deconstruction who stated clearly that:

"The RA has a clear priority to relocate, reuse, recyclable buy back homes WHEREVER possible..."

This certainly was not the case at Baillie Street at last Tuesday's rally, and in the days and destruction following. ABC reporter Bridie Tanner questioned where the recycled material was actually going/ how it was being recycled, and then called out Amanda Leck for "greenwashing", as they were unable to state how much of the materials were actually being reused, and how much was being recycled.

She responded by saying, "Well look I'm not actually able to give you a breakdown of what has been recycled of those first 30 odd homes..."

So local protesters decided to create a theatrical demonstration and interruption of this event for local politicians and dignitaries, to highlight the truth of what happened with the demolitions on Baillie Street in North Lismore.

Participating artists of the exhibition were in solidarity, as they too could see how the Reconstruction Authority was taking advantage of the exhibition to promote their pledge to the



community on prioritising 'reuse, relocation and relocation'.

Janelle Saffin and the rest of the invited guests walked back to their office in Lismore during the interruption, followed by the protestors, with people holding banners that advocated for a fair and just recovery and asking how anything on Baillie Street was genuinely recycled. "Turning perfectly liveable houses into mulch during a housing crisis is not recovery" was the call by one of the protestors.

The clowns were joined by community members, bystanders, banner holders and those handing out flyers. Nearly everyone who walked by stopped to have a chat.

According to one of the protestors, "It was an extremely positive response from the community, no-one asked us to leave or stop, instead everyone was very eager to learn more about the destruction of Baillie Street, and were in solidarity."

Many of the artists were also upset to see the demolition of perfectly good big scrub hard wood, high quality materials that should be and could be instead used for the community. Some advocating for the use of low cost tiny homes, ideas that had been discussed with the

Reconstruction Authority, and the Living Lab.. ideas that the RA has failed to help create in the three years it's been working on its recovery processes.

The clowning took place after another protestor saw Janelle Saffin MP outside Social Futures posing for Youth Homelessness Matters Day. The protestor asked the MP, "How do you pose for youth homelessness while knocking down perfectly good houses in North Lismore? How do you justify that?"

The protestor continued to follow

the MP through town, asking the MP, "Why are they demolishing the good houses that can be relocated?" The protestor asked, how can they be demolished if they have been assessed for relocation. The MP clearly stated, "They have not been reassessed for relocation."

"Our own MP for recovery has clearly stated that they have not even been reassessing the houses for relocation before demolishing. This clearly breaches the assurances given to the previous owners in the buy back process," said a member of Reclaim Our Recovery.

The 10th of April was a busy day in Lismore, there were actions that took place calling out the Reconstruction Authority and local government for their negligence in providing a genuine, sustainable recovery process. "The community deserves better."

Protests have continued all month, both in and out of the demolition sites.

To find out more information and to get involved, look into Reclaim Our Recovery, sign the petition at: www.tinyurl.com/SaveOurBigScrubHomes or come along to weekly activist meeting SOAR: Socialise, Organise, Art, Resist at 17 Bridge Street, North Lismore from 6pm Wednesdays.



Land sharing, affordable housing and community

by Jeni Kendell

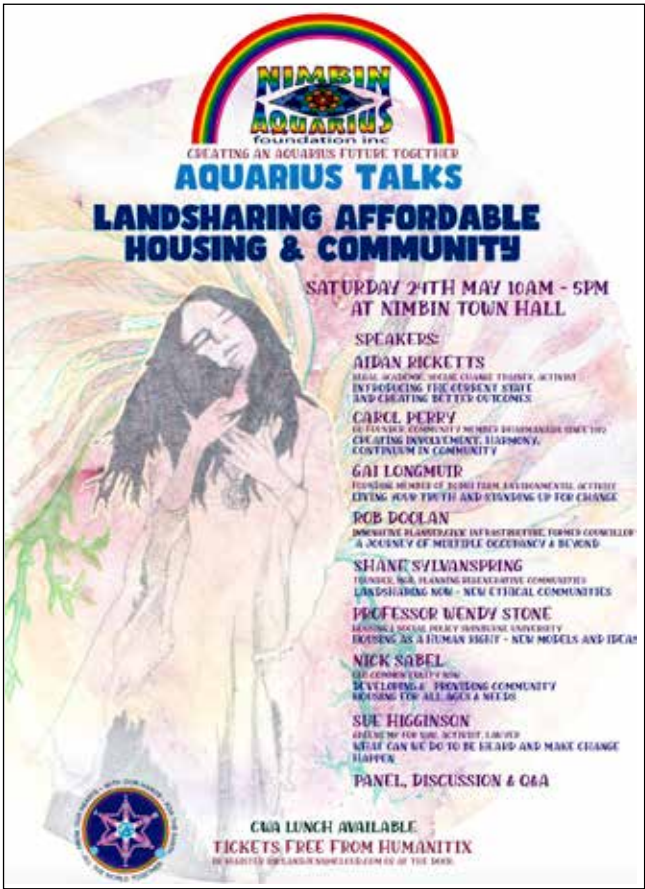
Each May, the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation is planning to put on an event to celebrate the original Aquarius Festival in 1973 which helped reawaken and renew our wonderful town of Nimbin and ripple out in so many ways to far corners of this country.

This annual event will resemble the 'Festival of Dangerous Ideas' that has become a landmark for people thinking outside the square. The first of these Aquarius Talks will be on 'Landsharing, affordable housing and Community' to be held in the Nimbin Town Hall on Saturday 24th May from 10am-5pm. It is a free event and we really want you to come along, to hear and participate.

Housing has become a huge talking point in the Australian election with incentives being put forward to try and help what is a desperate situation. Having a house is a human right and yet it has become largely unaffordable and renting a nightmare of unavailability and inflated prices.

The day will be introduced by Aidan Ricketts, legal academic, social change trainer, author and activist. He supports many social movements and protest groups and wrote 'The Activist's Handbook' on organising ourselves and our communities and how to take political action. Aidan will talk on 'The current state of housing and creating better outcomes.'

We can learn from our own experiences of Community and as part of Aquarius Talks will hear from Carol Perry, co-founder and community member for 52 years at Dharamanda community. She is an extraordinary mediator and has much to teach us. Her talk will be 'Creating Involvement, Harmony, Continuum in Community'. "...it is easier to learn living skills than work skillfully with people when things go wrong. Nothing is going to



happen if people can't resolve the issues in front of them."

Next Gai Longmuir, founding member of Bodhi Farm, community member for over 45 years. Her talk 'Living your Truth and standing up for Change'. In 1977 Gai's aspirations were to share the land in "Voluntary simplicity".

"We were very undemanding of what life might serve us, and grateful for what we got".

However back then Bodhi Farm was not "quite legal" and after the Terania Rainforest Protests Lismore City Council wanted to bulldoze down 15 buildings not meeting building codes. 650 people protested, it went to court, then appeal and the Bodhi farmers won the day. Laws and building codes changed.

Rob Doolan will take this further with his 'Journey of Multiple Occupancy and Beyond'. Rob has lived on a multiple occupancy for over 30 years and has been involved in the planning/approvals process of over 120 intentional communities in the Northern Rivers. He was also involved with Col James from Sydney University to prepare a Multiple Occupancy Manual

for the state government to assist Councils and would-be communities.

Rob's thoughts are that our region with its five decades of lived experience has made a huge contribution to the creation of multiple occupancies contributing to housing many people. We have much to offer. Throughout NSW, countless rural towns and villages could benefit from a modern version of the model.

Shane Sylvanspring, founder and manager of 'Planning Regenerative Communities' has assisted development of ecovillages, intentional communities and alternative land ownership models. He has also successfully established a new community at Afterlee, west of Kyogle. He has first-hand knowledge of many communities throughout the world. Shane will talk on 'Landsharing now - new Ethical Communities' and offer further ideas on planning, DAs, consent, models and ways of getting results in reasonable time.

We are honoured to have Wendy Stone, Professor of Housing and Social Policy

at Swinburne University. Wendy's research is generational and gendered housing, precarity and wellbeing, innovative housing solutions and aspirations across generations and citizen engagement through Public Policy.

Her talk, 'Housing as a Human Right - new models and ideas.' Wendy says - Home ownership - the great Australian Dream is out of reach for so many people who have become anxious, overwhelmed, trapped, crushed, worried about having children and feel hopeless because of their housing situations. Time for more investment in public housing, stronger rental regulation, special needs housing and Life Skills taught in schools.

Nick Sabel, CEO of Common Equity NSW, whose mission is to lead and grow co-operative housing for the independence and well-being of people and communities. His talk is called 'Developing and providing community housing for all ages and needs'.

Through the co-operative model, people are connected to long-term, safe and secure housing, training, education, employment, community engagement opportunities and improved quality of life.

So after these talks, suggestions, models, ideas it will be time to decide what it is we might want and need in landsharing and housing and community and do this together again. It can be done.

Sue Higginson, Greens MP for NSW, activist, lawyer ex-CEO Environmental Defenders Office, will be speaking on 'What can we do to be heard by Government and make change happen?'

Please come along and participate in what we expect to be a lively and stimulating discussion with Q&A.

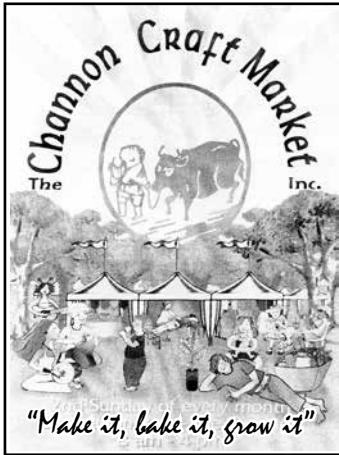
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The protestor sculpture project

by Benny Zable

Last year's Land Forces International "Defence" expo protests, Graham Dunstan introduced me to his friend Cameron McIndoe, a sculptor who runs a sculpture-making outfit in Melbourne/Naarm.

The idea arose to have a life-size sculpture made from the masked costume I have been wearing at protests. To raise funds to pay for this project, Fundere Sculpture Foundry is casting 20cm statuettes that are individually numbered and signed by me. They are on sale for \$500 each.

A sample statuette is on display at the Nimbin

Environment Centre. Weather permitting, one will also be on display at the Rainbow Chai Tent at the next Channon Market.

We ask for those interested at the moment to send your name and contact details to: info@funderestudios.com.au

For reference, the number of your statuette will be sent to you.

"The Protestor" sculpture is dedicated to all who seek to question authority.

Cameron McIndoe said, "Benny Zable has been an anti-nuclear, anti-war, First Nations justice and environmental activist for over 40 years. Benny's costume at rallies and protests

has become an icon of the movement for social change.

"Benny and friends have a dream to get a bronze statue of his 'iconic activist' permanently placed in the forecourt of the UN building in New York. We hope that visitors to the UN would view the statue and respond in a manner supportive of the ongoing and increasingly urgent call to respect, protect and care for our planet.

"Fundere Fine Art foundry is working with Benny to create a statuette (maquette) version for fundraising for the life-size bronze. We are in the process of casting the 20cm high version using recycled aluminium and setting up a



method of receiving funds/donations that can be tax deductible.

"The foundry is not charging for the statuettes, but it is intended that money raised through sales, grants and general donations will cover costs of the large version."



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New life for Lismore Cinemas

A beloved Lismore institution is set to come back to life, as the town's cinema has officially been purchased and will re-open as Lismore Cinemas.

Under new private ownership, the cinema will undergo a multimillion-dollar refurbishment and return as a state-of-the-art venue celebrating shared experiences, local pride and the power of storytelling.

The new Lismore Cinemas owner, Luke Mackey, has over 30 years of experience in the industry and is passionate about delivering a world-class experience, striving to exceed Lismore's expectations.

The revitalised Lismore Cinemas will feature superior seating, cutting-edge projection and sound, amazing food and beverage offerings, and a reimagined design focused on warmth, accessibility and community connection.

The goal is to restore the cinema not just as a place to watch films but as a vibrant gathering place for locals of all ages.

"Regional cinemas are more than just entertainment – they're where stories are shared, friendships grow, memories are made, and importantly, where communities come together," said Luke Mackey, the new owner of Lismore Cinemas.

"We're proud to bring back a cultural cornerstone for Lismore and deliver an experience the whole region



From left: Cr Electra Jensen, Cr Gianpiero Battista, Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan, Lismore Mayor Cr Steve Krieg, State Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin and Lismore Cinemas' new owner Luke Mackey.

can be proud of."

State and local support

The project has received strong backing from community leaders, including State Member for Lismore, Janelle Saffin, and Mayor of Lismore, Steve Krieg.

Janelle Saffin, State Member for Lismore, said: "This is wonderful news for Lismore. A cinema is much more than screens and seats – it's a place of joy, escape and connection. I commend this investment in our community, and I look forward to seeing the doors open again soon."

Mayor Steve Krieg added: "The return of Lismore

Cinemas is a powerful sign of our city's strength and renewal. It's a much-loved venue that will once again serve as a meeting point for friends and families.

"Supporting local jobs and lifting local spirits – this is exactly what Lismore needs."

Local employment

The new owners are committed to refurbishing and reopening the cinema as quickly as possible, with plans to be open in time for *Avatar: Fire and Ash* in December.

They are committed to employing locals across cinema operations, food and beverage, technical and

leadership roles, with the aim to develop a new generation of industry leaders through training and mentorship.

Updates, job opportunities and community engagement will be available through the new website: www.lismorecinemas.com.au and via social platforms: @LismoreCinemas on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

"We're building something special – but it's nothing without the community," Luke Mackey said. "Every ticket bought, every story shared, every smiling face through the doors – it all helps rebuild this cherished part of Lismore."

Generate this! Let's talk AI at M-Arts

by Richard Hil

This article has not been generated by AI. But how do we know? Is there a way of telling?

I have to be honest – and this really is me – I have started to use ChatGPT, albeit sparingly, and with the utmost caution. It's easy to get sucked in, to do the 'hard' work, to invent stuff.

I have friends who are liberal with its use. One such friend wrote an entire love poem to his ex. I told him: "Well mate, you didn't write it then, did you? It was scripted by an algorithm." "So?" he replied.

Most of us are a bit nervous about AI, the little we know about it. We're aware that it has enormous potential, but we're also cognisant that it harbors danger.

Celebrated physicist and cosmologist Professor Stephen Hawking told the BBC in 2014 that, "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race..."

It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate.



Bill Simpson-Young (left) and Peter Waters

Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete and would be superseded."

This form of autonomous AI is chilling, as are the many other dangers identified by futurists, such as job losses resulting from automation, algorithmic biases, deepfakes, privacy issues, weapons automatization, political manipulations, and so forth.

On the other hand, the more optimistic among us point to AI's potential in enhancing healthcare, climate mitigation, transportation, customer service, financial services and scientific discoveries.

Either way, people like you and me will be dipping into

AI to see what it can offer us. One thing's for sure, generative AI in particular (which draws on existing data to create content) will alter the world as we know it, just as the internet has transformed everyday life. Each new technology of course has its ups and downs.

Consider social media. While it has opened up new communication pathways it has also rendered our society more fragmented, generated mental health problems and allowed corporations into our private worlds as never before.

It's also deepened social and political divisions and fermented lots of hate, crazy ideas, grievances and nativist

anger.

My view has always been that the introduction of each new technology should be accompanied by open public debate about its merits in terms of social impact and wellbeing. It's also important to ask who really benefits from these technologies, and who loses out. How should they be regulated, if at all?

To discuss this and a host of other issues, This Stuff Matters – The Politics of Life will host two leading experts on all things AI: Peter Waters and Bill Simpson Young of the Gradient Institute. They'll navigate the vexed world of AI and help us understand its strengths and limitations.

Peter and Bill will discuss the crazy world of AI with Laura Conlon at the M-Arts Centre, Murwillumbah on Thursday 15th May. There will be a poetry reading at 6.45pm by Jedda Winkworth and the event will start at 7pm.

Book your tickets at: <https://www.trybooking.com/DBCDFD>

Get there early to connect with others, sample refreshments and listen to some poetry.

Seniors recognised for community contributions

State Member for Lismore, Janelle Saffin recently thanked and recognised nine local seniors and a seniors organisation for their valuable contributions to their communities.

Ms Saffin presented certificates of appreciation, co-signed by Minister for Seniors Jodie Harrison and herself, to recipients of the Seniors Local Achievement Award during a morning tea at the Lismore City Bowling Club in the CBD on Thursday, 17th April.

"This is the second year that we've run these awards as a way of honouring the many quiet achievers who give their time, experience and considerable skills in the service of others," Ms Saffin said.

Work experience students Hamish Bailey and Caleb Scherrer, from Trinity Catholic College, collated the award nominations and organised the morning tea.

Seniors Local Achievement Award recipients for 2025 were:

- **Mrs Lyn Felsch**, Lismore, for volunteer work at the Red Cross



Lismore electorate Seniors Local Achievement Awards recipients with local member Janelle Saffin.

Tea Rooms, Lismore.

- **Mrs Norma Blume**, Goonellabah, for volunteer work at the Red Cross Tea Rooms, Lismore.
- **Mr Stephen Darragh**, Kyogle, for volunteer driving work done through HART Services in the Kyogle community for the past two years. The Kyogle Citizen of

the Year in 2024 is vice-president of Kyogle Lions Club and member of Lismore Lions Club.

- **Mr George Stein**, Woodenbong, for volunteer driving work done through HART Services in the Woodenbong community for the past 11 years. The Woodenbong Citizen of the Year in 2020 is president of Woodenbong Golf

Club, treasurer of Woodenbong Progress Association, and secretary of Woodenbong Football Club.

- **Mrs Heather Goulding**, Tenterfield, for volunteer work done in the Tenterfield community, including the Autumn Festival, Rotary Club of Tenterfield, Rotary-Lions

Christmas Carnival, Tenterfield High and Friends of Tenterfield Aerodrome (FOTA) Inc.

- **Mrs Sharon Tucker JP**, Bonalbo, for contributions to the Bonalbo community for over 44 years, including teacher-librarian at Bonalbo Central School, Secretary of the Bonalbo Rural Fire Brigade, fire permit officer, and administrator of local Facebook pages.
- **U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc**, founded in 1994 and recognising their home-based committee volunteers.
- **Mr Robert Dingle**, Lismore, for volunteering as a recorder tutor with U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc.
- **Mr Keith Gasteen**, The Channon, for work as a peer leader with the Older Persons Mental Health Mutual Aid group.
- **Ms Susan Stock**, Nimbin, for her work as co-editor of *The Nimbin GoodTimes* monthly newspaper for the past 21 years.

Generative AI – A counterculture perspective

by Jay Stephens

This is the first in a series of articles musing on the impact of Generative AI.

It's been a couple of years since ChatGPT was released to the public on-line. Many of us have played around with ChatGPT and similar generative-AI ("gen-AI") bots, and a fair number of us have probably employed them and their image-generating counterparts – Canva, Midjourney, Dall-E – as tools in various creative processes and for work.

In this article and the ones that follow, I'll have both bad and good things to say about gen-AI. To be very clear: none of the bad is aimed at users of Gen-AI.

Terminology note: "gen-AI", not "AI" to explicitly distinguish generative tools with very distinct tech like the AI deployed in cancer research, antibiotic discovery or astronomy.

The two most urgent critiques of gen-AI are unrelated to what they do and how they do it (intrinsic properties). They are:

1. That gen-AI is (and looks likely to remain) overwhelmingly owned and controlled by a tiny clique of billionaires, and
2. That gen-AI is (and looks likely to remain) shockingly environmentally destructive.

Let's unpack the billionaire issue first.

There is probably no group of people on earth whose interests align less with ours than the billionaire class in whose hands 100% of gen-AI ownership and control lies.

That's different from (say) Microsoft and Apple monopolising computer operating systems. Once you've purchased your PC or Mac, you take it home, and run (or write) software on it. The operating system might make that hard or easy, but it's your computer, in your home, running the software you want to run.

Gen-AI sits in massive data centres which you'll never visit, on a distant continent. It delivers words or images through an opaque combination of code and training sets, which you cannot see or question. What's marketed as 'AI' is more just an extension of the tiny clique that controls it, and their corporations.

Gen-AI is trained on data scraped from the web that represents millions of human-years of hard work by writers, artists, thinkers, programmers and inventors. It is marketed as



a tool to put the same workers out of a job. This only makes sense if you (a billionaire) see those people not as creators, but only as cost-centres that allow you to save money by getting rid of them.

Gen AI bots continue to scrape content from across the web in huge volumes, costing small websites money and

downtime as they're hit thousands of times a minute by insatiable scrapers from OpenAI or DeepMind.

Second, there's the environmental impact. The amount of water and power it takes to train AI models is shocking. The "magic" of AI lies in large part in the scale and brute force of the massive data centres that underpin it.

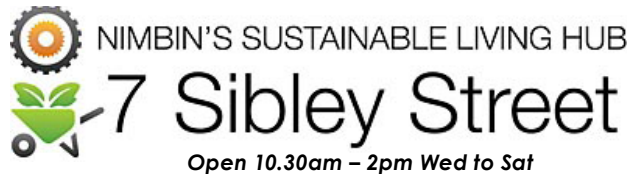
Training the models is so energy-intensive that the big players plan to build data centres alongside dedicated nuclear power stations, because the electricity grids can't conceivably keep up with the projected demand. (Next year, AI data centres alone are projected to use about as much electricity as the whole of Japan.)

This would be bad at any time, but it coincides with a critical point in the battle to cut greenhouse gas emissions, making it much harder to phase out gas and coal generation. I'll leave aside the downstream waste impact – in 2024 over 400 million GPUs were installed in AI datacentres, and they have a short operating life.

The above critiques apply to pretty much any new technology under disaster capitalism. It's no surprise for example, that technologies that have attracted funding under our economic model tend to be developed in a way that funnels more money and power away from their consumers, and up to the owners of capital who funded its development.

However, gen-AI is also a special case, because it is both centralised (in its owners and locations) and a centralising force (being able to replace workers and opinion makers across the world and across the web, with automated, standardised output).

It's positioned to act as a force multiplier for capital: it is the first technology that applies the principle of mass production to ideas and arguments, and the first technology that automates away mindwork in the same way 18th century factories automated away skilled handiwork.



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- Nimbin Women's Dinner.
- Big Community Xmas Lunch.

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Scapegoat squatters

Mayor Krieg, your response to the *Nimbin GoodTimes* coverage of the Pine Street squatters (March issue) is so slanted you'd roll off a flat bench just reading it.

Was a think tank involved in writing it? It almost seems too contrived for one mind. However, I know you wouldn't resort to AI for compositions. It felt like pure polemics with no interest in discussion. A simple "slant as much as you can your way" with no effort to present a balanced account.

Writing of this nature feels disingenuous and conjures thoughts of possible misinformation being spread.

Is this a classic case of bullying, of finding someone to attack, some kind of scapegoat for the failures of those responsible for our recovery? Or are you simply attacking freedom of the press?

Is authoritarianism your final goal? Probably not, so start addressing people of this local government area with a balanced viewpoint.

In doing so you'd help bring our community together and add depth to discussions that affect us all!

Andy Putnam
Terania Creek

Flood mitigation

A person would have to be living on the moon not to notice the ever-increasing impacts of climate change that will be part of projected changes to our local environment riverine system – namely Wilsons and Leicester Creeks and the tributaries that run directly into it.

Lismore City Council has aligned itself with the New South Wales and Australian Governments by putting the valley into writing to be better prepared for the changes we are currently facing, including increased temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and extreme events. This is called flood mitigation and reduction.

Many of our local creeks play an important part of the riverine system. For

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*.

example, Calico Creek plays a significant role in the river system. Looking at it, anyone may think it is not of great importance.

However, the creek has a catchment drawing directly from the Blue Knob mountain, flows straight into Goolmangar Creek, and then this water meets Leicester Creek. During weather events of over 270mls in under 24 hours (standard in the upper tract of the valley), water flows at great speed, around 60kph, and can rise to over 11m.

In 1974, its force smashed bridges, and Blue Knob Road was torn up in 2022, to name a few examples. It is a devil that sweeps all in its way. Many other roads and weather events in the upper tract areas of the valley have demolished infrastructure and houses.

Any overflow, pollution, earth, gravel and water run-off is carried by gravity, and the water table moves into the creeks and ads dramatically to flooding impacts.

Weather events encourage debris such as large trees falling into the creek flow, platypus, various rare birds, reptiles, mammals and fish living happily inside its banks at the moment.

If Lismore Council is serious about being prepared for the coming changing climate and its extremes, it must keep all the upper tracts clean, strong and with as much as possible a clear flow.

Any weather event, such as 2022, can have a better chance of control; all significant land alterations should always be inside the guidelines so as not



to negatively worsen floods, land slumps or turbidity, thus meeting the expectations of the Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program, various State and Federal bodies.

Flood mitigation is something that is spoken about after weather events. The point is careful planning and carrying out creek maintenance; dams dug into the sides of hills to catch run-off and the planting of more trees is important before a serious attempt is made to migrate flooding and its impacts.

Mark Pestell
Nimbin

Bypass Nimbin

Having lived in beautiful Nimbin for only six years, (prior to that in Uki for a year, and Brisbane previously), I am left wondering why I haven't seen mention of a Nimbin bypass when the roads are addressed by council (always atrocious, thanks to the Lismore councillors voting to save a few dollars via substandard construction, by the way).

Have I missed something? The mere fact locals are always keen lookouts, spray-painting beware signals near the hazardous pedestrian crossing middle of town, is very telling. And from a logistics/transport point of view, it's an absurd bottleneck and waste of time.

Is there a bypass on the table, to move the heavy vehicles and locals travelling to or from work and out of our predominantly footbound congested CBD? Heavy vehicles on poorly

constructed roads and multitudes of light vehicles and pedestrians do not mix well and are a recipe for disaster.

A bypass would alleviate unnecessary traffic flow, improve pedestrian safety, and possibly even encourage more passing tourists to drop in. And we'll see more residential development on Nimbin outskirts in the near future, adding significantly to the traffic volume.

So, if no bypass is proposed, then why not? It's an ever increasingly popular spot for tourists and in my old occupational-health-and-safety eyes a fatality just waiting to happen

K Paterson
Nimbin

Kyogle Tidy Towns

Due to changes in the auspicing body Kyogle Community Economic Development Committee, the Kyogle Tidy Towns Committee has decided to form its own incorporated association, and in future will be known as the Kyogle Progress Association Inc.

RIP David Smith

11/7/1960 – 18/3/2025

Loving husband and soulmate of Shirley for 47 wonderful years.

Devoted father to Kylie, Brendan, Misty, and Ziggy. Father-in-law to Simon and Jess. Adored pop to Miles, Liam, Zeke, and Eli.

A passionate protector of the land, who stood proudly for what he believed in.

Deeply loved and dearly missed every day by all his family.



"One love, one heart — you will live on in ours forever."

Rest in Paradise

It is hoped that this change will result in continued growth of the organisation which already manages the Kyogle Farmers Market, the Annual Summerland Giant Pumpkin and Watermelon Festival, and lobbies with other NGO's and council on behalf of the community regarding a range of issues.

The committee wishes to thank you for your support in the past and look forward to working with you in the future.

Work is already underway with planning the 2026 Festival which is proposed to be held on Saturday 17th December, 2026.

It is hoped that you or your organisation will continue to support this amazing event, 'From little things big things grow', which has been the overriding theme for the Festival for the past six years, and you would have to agree that it is continuing to grow with the

addition of new activities, eg the Watermelon Eating competition.

Robert Cullen
Kyogle

Fish in a barrel

The NSW police force has the right to randomly drug test drivers under the *Road Transport Act 2013* (NSW). Section 6 permits police to conduct random oral fluid testing for prescribed illicit drugs. The key word here being 'random'.

With drug testing vans blockading all entrances and exits to Nimbin during Mardi Grass weekend, and testing every single driver, these tests are not 'random' (made, done, or happening without method or conscious decision) at all, they are mandatory. Is this even legal?

I would encourage anyone who returned a positive test to challenge this in court.

Cheech Davison
Tunccester

Notices

Annual General Meeting

Tuntable Falls Early Childhood Centre Inc AGM will be held on Wednesday 25th June, 12.30pm at Tuntable Community Hall.

Bushwalk

Does anyone want to do The Old People's Track (gidjuum-gulganyi)? It's a 40km, four-day backpack walk from Unicorn Falls to Minyon Falls. You will have to carry your own camping gear, food and water. Contact Michael Smith at: koonorigan@gmail.com

Free notices

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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
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Australia's tobacco policy madness

by John Jiggins

Over the past month, both *Four Corners* and *60 Minutes* have done major investigations into Australia's \$5 billion tobacco black market and the criminal gangs who now dominate the industry.

Nick McKenzie's *60 Minutes* report began by squarely laying the blame for the crisis on the Commonwealth Health Department's tobacco policies.

"Where there's smoke, there's fire-bombings," he began, describing the reality for tobaccoists in Victoria, and increasingly throughout Australia.

He continued: "In the last 18 months, as many as 200 of their shops have been destroyed as criminals try to wrest control of the very lucrative illegal tobacco market."

"What's concerning, though, is not only the level of violence, but why this thuggery started in the first place by taxing cigarettes so exorbitantly in an attempt to stop people smoking. What the government has inadvertently created is a thriving black market worth \$5 billion a year."

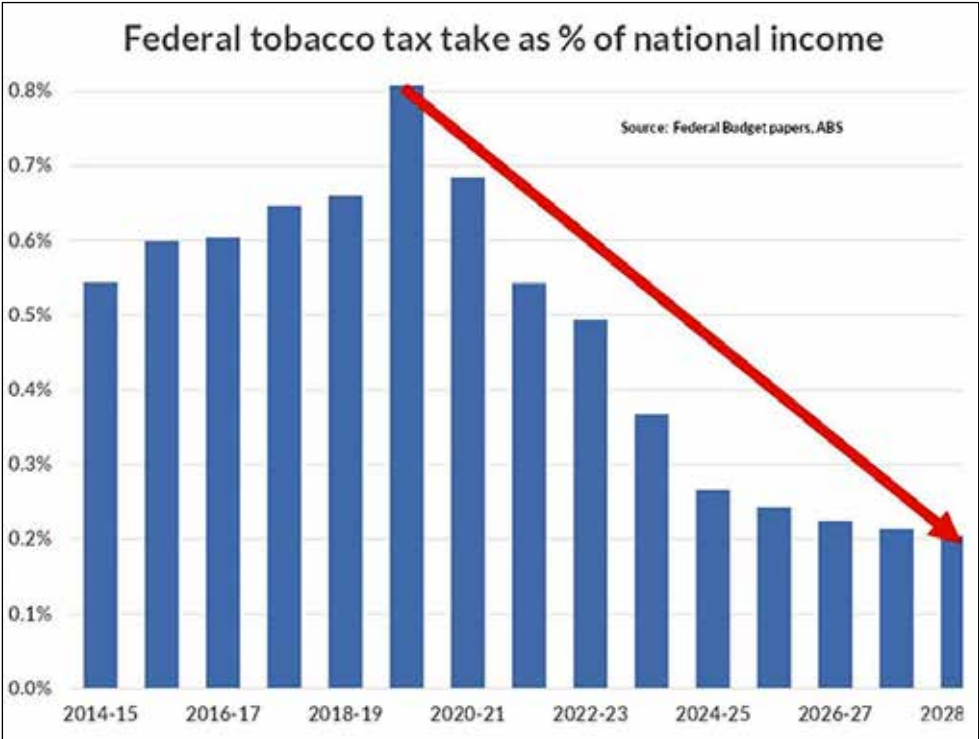
Dan Oakes' *Four Corners* report, 'Tobacco Wars', began on an equally critical note.

"Bringing death and destruction to Australia's streets, it's costing the federal government billions in lost taxes, and threatening decades of hard-won progress in the fight against deadly tobacco."

Former head of the Australian Border Force's Tobacco Task Force, Rohan Pike followed, declaring our tobacco policy "one of the biggest failures in Australian history."

Australia's tobacco policy also received a dishonourable mention in the 2025 Federal Budget with the revelation that the fall in the sale of legal cigarettes had led to a precipitous decline in the tobacco excise that was projected to blow a \$10 billion hole in the Budget's prediction of revenue collected over the next four years.

The tobacco tax peaked at \$16.8 billion in 2019, declined to \$10 billion in



2023, and is projected to fall to \$6.4 billion in 2028.

Chief executive of the Australian Association of Convenience Stores, Theo Foukkare, called on the federal government to freeze the excise on tobacco products for four years, along with legalising and regulating smoking cessation tools such as vapes, and strengthening the crackdown on illegal tobacco.

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different outcome. The government, with their policy around tobacco excise and vaping prohibition, is doing exactly that. If it is revenue that the government is after, it should legalise and tax cannabis," he said.

Australia's road to tobacco policy hell was paved with the very best of intentions – to reduce the consumption of tobacco. So how did it go so wrong?

Since the federal Health department regarded price as the best way to reduce tobacco use, they adopted the crazy policy of increasing the tobacco tax by 12.5% every year, starting in 2013, and ending in 2021.

In 2023, in his second budget, Jim Chalmers announced a further 15% increase in the tobacco tax, estimating it would bring in an extra \$3.3 billion over the next three years.

As the graph above indicates, the Treasurer's prediction was out by about

minus ten billion dollars, which shows how woefully ignorant about how excise tax works our Treasurer is.

At Bay-FM, I interviewed the Tobacco harm reduction adviser to the Harm Reduction Australia board, Dr Alex Wodak, who explained excise tax in a way even Jim Chalmers might understand.

"Economists talk about a Laffer curve. This occurs when trying to estimate what the optimal taxation rate for a commodity is.

"If the taxation rate is too low, government revenue is not optimised because the rate is too low. If it is too high, government revenue falls away and there is widespread noncompliance and people go to the black market."

"That's the situation we are in with cigarette taxation in Australia."

Four Corners' Dan Oakes also interviewed Health minister Mark Butler who refused to consider pausing tobacco tax increases to freeze legal prices and starve the black market of customers, stating that this would be "raising the white flag" and letting criminals and the industry dictate government policy.

However, he could not deny that organised crime was already controlling the market.

"They've been able to get a foothold, and I regret that that's the case, but, you know, the best time to deal with this would've been five years ago," he said. "The second-best time is to deal with it now."

Former Superintendent Rohan Pike disagreed. The best time was a decade ago when he alerted Border Force and the government to the problem, but denial reigned then as it does now, and his warnings were ignored.

Mark Butler's solution was too little and too late. The black market was so widespread and entrenched that average citizens no longer had any qualms about participating in the black market.

Mirroring the many unintended consequences associated with drug prohibition, our tobacco policies have created more harm than they mitigated.

Pike said: "Given that excise rates are the primary driver of this problem, from the start we should be looking at reducing the excise rates to a level that doesn't encourage people to go to the illicit market."



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