

The Manning Community News

AUG / SEP 2022

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

This paper is being published as a community service to provide readers with factual and independent coverage of news, people and events in our district.
If you have a story idea please contact us. PO BOX 7, WINGHAM NSW 2429 editor@manningcommunitynews.com

A SPECIAL HOUSE BREATHES AGAIN

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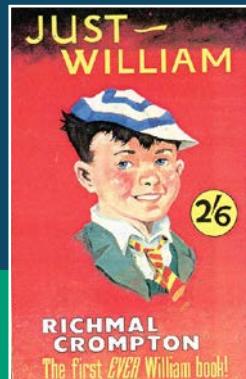
IS CLEAN POWER COMING???

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Wingham
Nursery
and Florist
turns 50!



JUST WILLIAM TURNS 100!
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Plus Nutrition News P 6

GHOSTS OF DECISIONS MADE DECADES AGO NOW HAUNT COASTAL LANDSCAPES

The potential disasters from the explosion of developments being pushed through on NSW coastal land that was frequently zoned decades ago, is shocking locals and visitors.

The proposed rezoning of 25 hectares of land at the end of North Diamond Beach close to Hallidays Point, to residential, including 10 hectares to medium density residential (R3), has created anger within the area, and not just locally.

To get an idea of the disproportionate growth in the coastal villages of our region, MidCoast Council's Planning Report shows the average annual population growth rates for Hallidays Point area and for the council region as a whole. Hallidays Point's population growth rate is approximately five and a half times the population growth rate for the council area as a whole. It is also over three times higher than the population growth rate for the state. It is understood that Harrington and Tea Gardens have similarly high population growth rates.

These proposed housing estates are considered by local communities to be highly inappropriate in all ways – destruction of habitat for threatened species, unsightly, constricting beach access and enjoyment of the beach and coastline. The NSW State Government says these homes



Council rezonings could kill the magic of living near a beach along our coastline. Photo by Ava Davidson

are needed, but there is an abundance of over-priced homes, empty houses, or others being used as lucrative B&Bs in coastal NSW.

NORTH DIAMOND BEACH

(For out of towners, it's about 3 1/2 hours drive north from Sydney, just past Forster. Ed)

At a packed community meeting at Blackhead Surf Club recently, Council staff told angry locals

that the rezoning which they had supported and put before the Council meeting in June, had now escalated and gone to the State Planning Agency by the Developer of 391 Diamond Beach Road who had led the proposed rezoning. As such it was now out of Council's hands, although staff were less clear whether they had a role to advise

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Your care is central at the HealthHub

TWO LOCATIONS

HealthHub Taree

15 Butterworth Lane, Taree

02 6552 5533

HealthHub Harrington

4, 1-5 Caledonia Street, Harrington

02 6556 1855

24/7
care

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the State Planning Agency about community sentiment.

At the June MidCoast Council Meeting Councillors voted to defer the decision of the rezoning to allow for more community consultation after a number of community members spoke against the rezoning. Councillor Epov moved the motion to defer which was supported by Councillors Miller, Sandilands, Bell, Dheera Smith, and Mayor Claire Pontin. Speaking against the delay was Deputy Mayor Alan Tickle.

Cr Epov commented 'There is widespread opposition to the development and Council really needed detailed consultation with the local community, and I was not satisfied with the substance of the proposed planning agreement. Had I not moved the deferral, the development could have been approved, which would have aggravated the situation and alienated a concerned community living under the threat of mass housing developments. The developer could have waited but he chose to go to the NSW Planning Department, and the matter is now out of Council's control.'

Several questions were raised at the Community Meeting, including the clarity of the process and the accuracy of Council assessments as this will be the first ever R3 medium density zone under the Greater Taree LEP2010.

This is a large-scale rezoning which will significantly change the character of Diamond Beach and Hallidays Point with 25 hectares which includes 10 hectares zoned R3 (medium density). It allows for a 12 metre (4 storey) height limit with no floor space ratio- FSR.

FLOOR SPACE

FSR is a term for the ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the land on which it is built. Floor area ratios are used as a measure of the intensity of the site being developed. So basically it means Council will have very little control over how many and how dense the dwellings are on the land. Think urban slum/inner Sydney city townhouses 4 storeys high, pressing up against each other with little or no community space or gardens!

The proposed deletion of the floor space is inconsistent with Council's own 2020 Housing Strategy because there is no character statement and Development Control Plans (DCP) addressing bulk and scale. This planning proposal creates a development control vacuum by deleting floor space ratio before the full suite of development controls are in place. Locals want the Hallidays Point Place Strategy to be completed before this large-scale rezoning be approved. The 2020 MidCoast Housing Strategy did propose a R3 zone in North Diamond Beach, subject to master planning of the area to encourage

walking and cycling. However there is no Master Plan, no town centre nearby, no plan to increase services, employment and community facilities, nor is there public transport available. To buy a litre of milk will require a car journey. According to the community the proposal does not comply with the Ministerial direction of 9.1 (Transport).

SETS A PRECEDENT

Locals worry once the precedent is set in Hallidays it opens the door for similar developments up and down the coastal villages in the LGA.

Previously Council promoted recognising and maintaining the style and character of individual villages, and this plan rather flies in the face of it. There are no buildings in Hallidays at the moment over 8.5 metres, or in Old Bar, or Pacific Palms. This proposal supports 12 metres.

WHO BENEFITS?

According to the locals, the rezoning will significantly benefit the four developers while locals in the community who have invested their finances and lived in the area and contribute through a wide variety of volunteer activities, get pushed aside.

Over the decades numerous Council-led studies have been undertaken with the Hallidays Point community, the most recent being the MidCoast Housing Strategy in 2018 and 2020. The community has consistently voiced its concerns regarding the loss of character, the importance of the natural environment and the provision of pedestrian and cycle paths to connect the four villages and provide access to important services and facilities like the school, shopping centre and beaches. The community feels all of this has been consistently ignored and the proposed rezoning is a result.

While it is recognised there is a need for greater diversity in housing types, the existing zoning controls for Hallidays Point (R1 -general residential) has created a locality where 21% of the housing are units or townhouses. So there is already a good variety of housing types for a coastal village.

However the development proposal appears to be based on incorrect assumptions, notably that "anecdotally there are no vacant lots for housing in Diamond Beach and significant demand" (*Council Urban Land Monitor*). There are currently 196 lots under construction at 210 and 214 Diamond Beach Road and 43 townhouse style community lots to follow.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

The community maintains there has been a marked lack of transparency in the process with Council initially refusing to release relevant documents because of potential

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community prejudice against the rezoning. So members of the community **paid** to access documents via the GIPA process (formerly Freedom of Information) and when the documents were still denied by council, they appealed to the Information and Privacy Commission (IPC21/R000790) who over-ruled Council's denial of the documents. It was only then that the proposed density (R3) became apparent to the community.

This rezoning is primarily driven by developers, one of whom is a local land owner. When the DA for this property went before Council, there were 65 submissions from community members, 63 opposing. But these submissions appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Once again community members acquired the de-identified submissions via GIPA and have since provided elected Councillors with an analysis of community objections.

When Council finalised the 2020 Housing Strategy, the NSW Department of Planning made a comment (on the record) to say that SP3 (tourist zoned) lands should not be removed until Council had prepared a Tourism Strategy to show how tourism would be catered for in the future for local villages. Tourism is a major economic driver in our community. Apparently this Tourism Strategy has not yet been prepared by Council and this proposed rezoning will clearly impact on current available and future tourist accommodation and infrastructure in Hallidays Point. (Locals point to the loss of the Red Head Caravan Park to an Over 55s Manufactured Homes Estate).

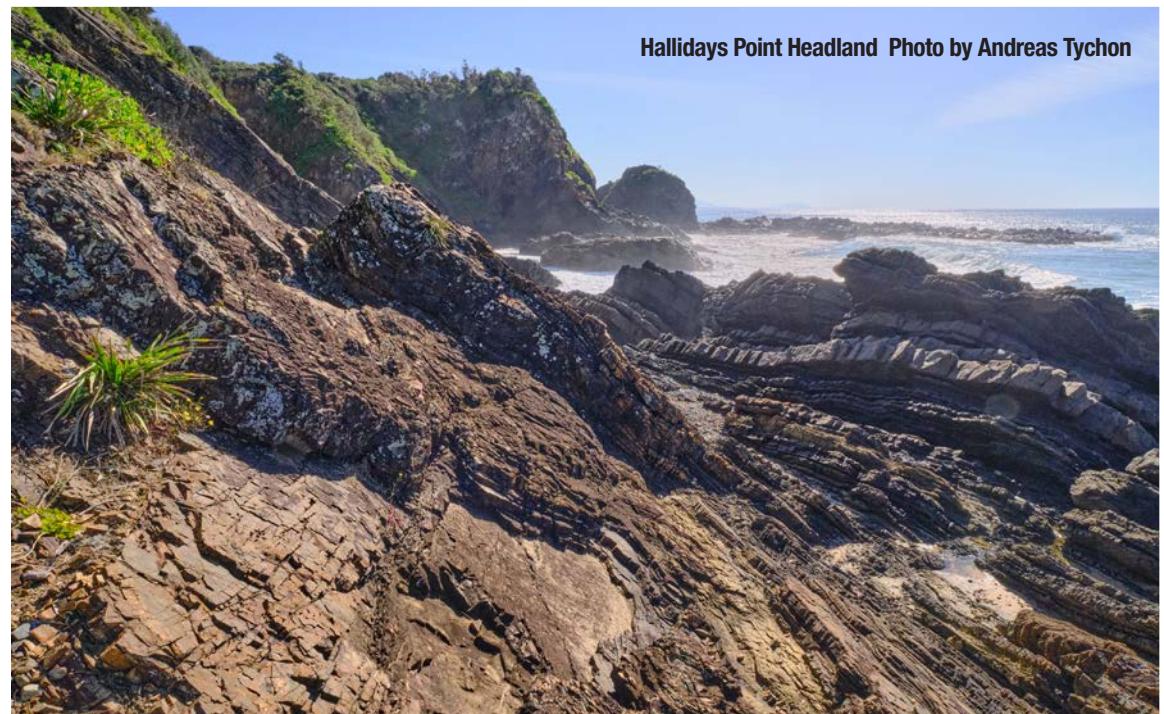
As yet there is no emergency plan for Hallidays Point and residents fear that in times of bushfire and flood there is no way out apart from the designated road which is easily cut off by flood waters and bushfires as happened in the recent floods and the 2019-2020 bushfires where people sought refuge on the beach. There is an alternative road through Khappinghat National Park but it is 4wheel drive only, heavily vegetated, and also impassable in times of flood or bushfire.

Part of the area being rezoned includes freshwater marshlands, an internationally recognised endangered ecology, but locals say this appears to

have been disregarded by Council staff (allegedly their comment on any potential impact on ecologically sensitive species or ecologies was "Not Applicable").

Residents worry about the potential impact on Khappinghat Creek and Saltwater Lagoon water quality. Saltwater Lagoon has high significance for the Biripi Land Council. Uncle John Clarke was present at the community meeting and spoke of his concerns that the Land Council had not been consulted.

There is concern at



Hallidays Point Headland Photo by Andreas Tychon



Blackhead Beach



Part of the public "fence maze" access to the North Diamond beach put up by the developer. Looks like not all the planning requirements were harmoniously integrated!

the illegal removal of swamp mahogany forests, home to endangered species, plus trees removed in the protected Riparian zones of Moor Creek. An illegal culvert appeared on a property slated for development.

The RFS planning guide for Councils states that the capacity of existing infrastructure to evacuate current and proposed residents must be considered in any new development and population increase. This proposal places an R3 density development in close proximity to a Nature Reserve as a significant bushfire risk. Locals point out that there is simply insufficient road infrastructure to safely evacuate in times of an emergency.

Hallidays Point does not have a Roads and Traffic Strategy despite

the massive increase in traffic, including heavy machinery necessitated by the increased current developments. Add over 230 dwellings currently under construction or approved. Surely such a strategy should be considered as a matter of urgency and before another 25 hectares at North Diamond Beach are proposed for further residential development with a possible increase of 800 dwellings!

DROWNINGS

Diamond Beach, particularly North Diamond, is infamous for drownings and near-drownings. There appears to be no consideration or capacity for a surf-life saving facility in near enough proximity to a burgeoning population.

The beach is also a known nesting area for Loggerhead and Green

Turtles. Light pollution is another risk factor plus high density homes close to the National Park will undoubtedly have related issues such as dog and cat incursion, weed drift and noise disturbance impacts. Hallidays Point includes NSW Save Our Species' fauna; like squirrel gliders, brush-tailed phascogales, and koalas. The Biodiversity Survey is yet to be completed but the rezoning was ticked "Not Applicable" in regard to potential impact on vulnerable and threatened species. This appears dismissive at best.

The proposal does not take account of the latest data on potential sea rise and storm surge. Notably the AdaptNSW website predicts increase sea level rises possibly to 2 – 6 metres if global warming reaches 2 degrees and carries the additional warning that "melting of ice sheets could result in sea level rise of up to 2.3m by 2100 and 5.5m by 2150" in NSW.

What are we leaving future generations.... Once habitat is gone, it's gone forever.

Not much of a tourist destination either.

(Details supplied by some members of the impacted community. Ed)

On or about 2 July 2022, The Manning Community News published an Article concerning the MidCoast Council which made reference to the General Manager of the Council, Mr Adrian Panuccio.

In the article various statements were made which may have been attributed to Mr Panuccio.

The Manning Community News did not intend to make any false or defamatory statements about Mr Panuccio and, to the extent that it published statements concerning him that are considered false or had no basis in fact, they are withdrawn.

We apologise to Mr Panuccio for any hurt and embarrassment suffered by reason of the article.

JOIN AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST ANNUAL ONLINE BOOK CLUB *TOGETHER WE READ*

Between September 6-20 *Together We Read* invites anyone with a library card to borrow Australian author Jacquie Byron's novel *Happy Hour*, as an e-book or audiobook, and join Australia's biggest annual online book club.

HOW IT WORKS

To join Australia's biggest annual online book club, you will need:

- A local library membership – you can join for free.
- The free Libby App on your device.
- September 6-20: Download - *Happy Hour* by Jacquie Byron as an eBook or audio
- book free of charge, with no holds or waiting.



Join the author and readers across Australia for an online discussion throughout the two weeks and a live online event on September 20.

Now in its second year, the 2022 *Together We Read* selection is the novel *Happy Hour* by Jacquie Byron (Allen & Unwin) - a powerful

story about one woman, two dogs and the family next door. Elizabeth Strout meets Marian Keyes in this hilarious and uplifting insight into true love, loss and friendship, described by author Mary Moody as '*Hilarious and poignant*'.

Learn more about *Together We Read: AU* at togetherweread.com/AU/

Monthly digital book clubs now available to all MidCoast library members

Libraries around the MidCoast are offering their members new opportunities to connect with authors, other readers and a variety of fascinating guests in monthly online events hosted by bestselling Australian authors Maya Linnell and Ben Hobson.

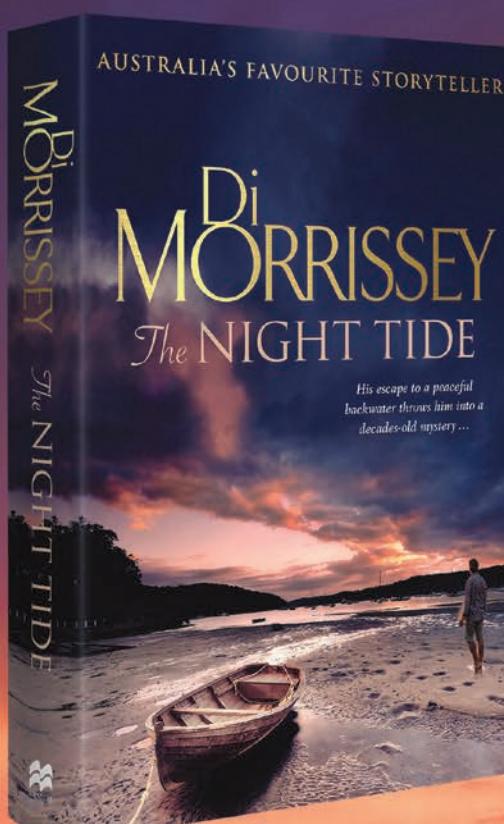
Monthly events are professionally run and presented, yet friendly and accessible. Readers can enjoy conversations and interviews during these community events each month from the comfort of their own home, at no cost.

These new initiatives are offered by library platform [OverDrive](#) for their Libby reading app. **The Libby app** features the digital books and magazines highlighted during these events along with other eBooks, audiobooks and magazines which can be accessed from participating libraries and borrowed free of charge. The books also chosen for Ben's Book Club can be borrowed by members of participating libraries with no waitlists and no holds.

Library Lovers with Maya Linnell is a free monthly program hosted by best-selling author Maya Linnell on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Each online event features a series of guests, including an author, a lifestyle expert and an Australian librarian. During this discussion attendees have the opportunity to ask questions, interact with the guests, and enjoy a light-hearted engaging conversation about books, gardening, and cooking.

Ben's Book Club is a free monthly digital book club hosted by best-selling author Ben Hobson each 4th Tuesday of every month. During the event, guests will have the opportunity to ask questions, interact with the authors, and enjoy a well-rounded bookish discussion. Participating library card holders can borrow the book chosen for Ben's Book Club with no waiting or holds on the Libby reading app.

For more information about borrowing digital books from your library, visit www.overdrive.com/apps/libby.



FROM AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE STORYTELLER

Praise for Di Morrissey

'There's no denying the beauty and opulence of Morrissey's rendering of place . . . She is a master of the genre.'

Weekend Australian

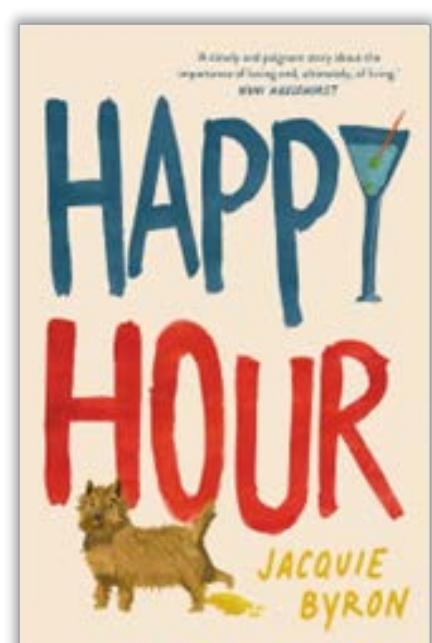
'blockbuster style stories of emotional turmoil.'

Saturday Age

When Dom leaves his twenty-year career behind, he opts to stay at a friend's converted waterside boatshed in a quiet bay in a Sydney backwater. But his peaceful retreat is quickly upended as he becomes embroiled in a tragic mystery.

With secrets exposed and old wounds reopened, can Dom unravel what really happened so many years ago, or has the truth been swept away on the dark night tide?

Get the latest novel from one of Australia's most successful and prolific authors, Di Morrissey.



IS CLEAN POWER COMING???

A local group hope they have the answer!

Mid Coast Community Renewables (MCR) is a recently incorporated, inclusive group of enthusiastic local advocates for clean, affordable power in the Manning Valley.

The recently formed group seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of community-scale renewable energy and energy efficiency projects to move towards energy security and net zero greenhouse gas emissions. MCR aims to attract renewable energy investment to the Mid Coast, share information about its advantages, build community support for renewable energy, and undertake projects to advance renewable energy as a means to develop community strength in the face of future floods and bushfires.

In June interested people came together to hear a presentation by Dr Jarra Hicks, a founding Director of the not-for-profit Community Power Agency started in 2011 which has helped establish over 50 projects country wide giving local communities more control over their energy future.

Jarra and Stuart Watson (Wauchope Solar) act as mentors to Mid Coast Community Renewables.

The group was also addressed by Pat Burrows, a representative from the Gloucester community, who shared the inspiring story of how a group of locals created Energise Gloucester, an association with impressive achievements.

ENERGISE GLOUCESTER IS AN EXAMPLE

Set up in 2016, with a \$10,000 donation from Powershop they installed community-owned solar panels on Gloucester's Neighbourhood Centre. In need of an extra \$22,000 the community donated that amount in 10 days.

The recipient of the community-owned power pays the same as was paid to its original power provider. The savings made were paid back to investors. The community loan of 22k was repaid in 2.5 yrs.

Energise Gloucester now has a solar farm project, with a 20 year



zero dollar lease agreement over one hectare of land.

To fund this initiative, three years ago Gloucester received a \$460,000 grant from New Regional Community Energy fund, (NRCE). Local people can become directly involved in community energy projects, source information, develop, own and deliver affordable, efficient renewable energy, while also addressing climate change. In light of recent electricity prices, this is an attractive prospect.

Mid Coast Community Renewables will have a stall at the next Envirofair and Multicultural Festival at Taree Park. Members of MCR will survey the public at the fair, seeking feedback from the community on renewable energy community-based needs. Survey questions will cover interest in - bulk buys (see below); government grants up to \$10,000 to low-income earners; government no-interest loans up to \$15,000 towards energy-efficient electric appliances, solar systems, electric cars and EV charging. MCR wants to know if you are interested in a community energy supplier group agreement to gain better feed-in and feed-out tariffs.

Some models for consideration include community-owned and appropriately scaled solar farms. The 500 KW solar installation being developed by Energise Gloucester, and the one underway in the Goulburn Community are initiatives that enable people who cannot set up roof solar (such as renters and apartment owners) to participate in and benefit from a local community-owned solar farm. They will create additional income stream for the region's economy, similar to a Credit Union's distribution of profits, to further social development and engagement.

Repower Shoalhaven is another successful community organisation benefiting community investors with 22 roof top solar systems on roofs of a bowling club, a dairy, a church and various other businesses and community buildings. TRY (Totally Renewable Yackandandah) has created Indigo Power, installing community-owned solar panels on a repurposed saw mill roof.

Other ideas being considered are cost reducing bulk-buying schemes for energy efficient heat pumps, water heaters, solar panels, reverse cycle air conditioners, electric ve-

hicles and quality home PV system storage batteries, to assist residents' transition to renewable energy in our region.

As the Federal government's election promises included action on climate change, it is hoped financial support will be more available for Australians and their communities to transition to renewable energy. State and Local governments also offer financial and other support in a variety of forms. Households are the fundamental drivers of renewable energy. Community-owned energy is about people and people's vision for the future.

Does the Mid Coast region have the level of social support to be enable the transition?

Mid Coast Community Renewables would like to know what engagement you would like with community-owned power, and if you would join us to participate in the local transition to clean, affordable energy.

For more information contact the MCR Secretary
0492 88 6391
(Article supplied by MCR)

NUTRITION NEWS

What is nutrition? Put simply, it is the food and drink which we need to feed our cells and keep them functioning.

From food and drink we get nutrients which are used by the body to repair and build tissue. When you don't eat adequately or with a healthy approach to food, you can become malnourished (Health and Wellbeing QLD 2018).

There is so much information available on diet and health that it can be confusing. The best analogy I have heard is that your body is like a prestige car engine – if you put poor- or low-quality fuel in its tank, the car will not run to its full capacity. Similarly, if you put poor or low health quality foods in your body, it will not function to its full potential and malfunctions can occur.

Don't think about diets but instead think about making healthy choices for your body so it functions efficiently and gives you the energy to do more and feel better.

Inadequate nutrition, or a poor diet, is strongly associated with many chronic diseases in the modern world. We are talking about heart disease, lung disease, reproductive problems, overweight and obesity as well as some cancers. These diseases are often able to be treated by modern medicine but in reality, some might cause a reduction in quality of life.

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention research says that we can live longer and also lower our risk of non-communicable health issues by eating a healthy diet plus exercising.

Genetics do play a big role in longevity, however, with the introduction of processed and fast foods over the last fifty years, the diet and health of humanity is deteriorating. So, if we start to really think about how to consume foods which nourish the body and ensure it thrives as we grow older, as well as keeping physically active, the chances of still being well and active in later life are increased.

Take a look at the image which indicates the amounts and types of food we should be looking to consume on a regular basis – this is not

saying you cannot have your favourite foods but suggesting they be limited.

Every month we will look at

ways to make healthy food choices and provide your body with the fuel it requires to function optimally. Next month we will look at

understanding food labels.
Kim@Health x Food Nutrition



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council
Department of Health and Ageing

www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.

Drink plenty of water.



Use small amounts

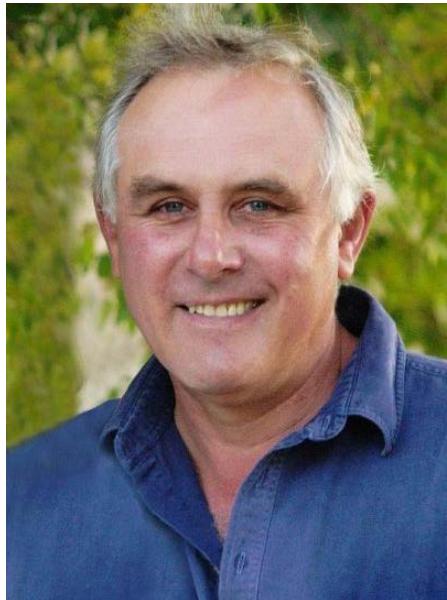


Only sometimes and in small amounts



MORRISON DEMONSTRATES HIS CONTEMPT FOR HIS COUNTRY

... in what is probably the biggest political scandal to hit Australia since the unconstitutional sacking of Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, on 11 November 1975.



Acting in secret and without the knowledge of cabinet or indeed anyone else in Australia, Prime Minister Morrison, was able to convince his friend and religious companion, the Governor General, General Hurley, to appoint him as Minister to a total of five portfolios including, Treasury and Home Affairs.

Morrison claims he undertook the extraordinary action in order to handle the coronavirus pandemic. A spurious claim as he failed it by not ordering sufficient vaccines and in fact State Premiers successfully contained the virus outbreak in their states without the help of Morrison (who is known as a terrible blow hard).

The truth relating to his usurping and willful undermining of parliamentary conventions and established practice has greatly angered, and at the same time embarrassed, the new Labor Government of Anthony Albanese. Morrison has once again made a fool of Australia internationally.

He did it most spectacularly with his ill-considered and unjustified criticism of China over the outbreak of Covid, where he was widely seen to

have acted as the stalking horse for then US President Donald Trump.

He did it over his embrace of AUKUS which included the precipitate cancelling of a submarine deal with France, consideration of which was a closely held secret in Canberra, apparently confined to a few close advisers.

Prime Minister Albanese although angry has stayed his hand, resisting calls to criticise the Governor General who was clearly out of line and who claims he did not know Morrison was acting secretly. A claim that is difficult to believe. In fact, it appears on the evidence available more likely that the two acted conspiratorially.

It is understandable that Albanese would want to minimise damage to Australia from claims of being a banana republic, but it is also indefensible. The truth must out.

There are grave matters of national security at stake. We know from information released so far that Morrison held the portfolio of Home Affairs, did he also hold the portfolio of Defence? Did he alone negotiate the ill-fated submarine deal and the framework of the so called AUKUS arrangement, understanding, or whatever it is?

To date the Australian parliament and people are in the dark, except for statements of interoperability with US forces and enhancement, amounting to takeover, of Australian bases and territory. All without scrutiny and treaty arrangements, it has been a cowboy operation, and all initially driven by Morrison. Incredibly, given its history, the Albanese government has gone along with it. No pause for thought or consideration.

The US saw the opportunity Morrison offered and played him like the fool and sucker that he is. They are intent on locking Australia into AUKUS. The aim of AUKUS appears

to be to use Australian territory and resources to threaten and perhaps attack China. The Australian people, through parliament, have been given no information on the details of what is proposed under AUKUS or indeed what it entails. No opportunity for debate has yet been provided. To say Australia has been railroaded would be an understatement.

If Morrison did not abrogate himself powers under an assumed mantle of ministerial defence responsibilities, perhaps he did it under security provisions contained within the Home Affairs portfolio. Whichever way it occurred the illegal stamp of Morrison appears all over AUKUS.

Morrison was the virtual dictator of Australia and behaved accordingly. What else did he do and commit Australia to? In the absence of a healthy and questing media in Australia, Morrison was able to capture defence and foreign policy, aided by the dangerous and complicit ASPI. The Australia media, through Murdoch's unhealthy dominance, has in fact been partisan.

The heads of Australian intelligence agencies have all claimed no knowledge of Morrisons capture of government. Quite incredible and quite impossible in the bubble of babbble which is Canberra. If true, their agencies have failed, because from one source or another they should have been informed. At another level it is absolute rubbish, intelligence agencies are such bitchy gossip venues with well-developed antennae that a Prime Minister behaving as an out-of-control freak would have been on the Monday discussion agenda. More likely they were in on the deal, which means heads should roll. They should roll anyway.

Bruce Haigh is a retired Diplomat and political commentator.

WHINGE OF THE WEEK

The Tinonee subbranch Post Office closed with four days notice.

Their service had been erratic, with closures at inconvenient times, even all afternoon on some days.

Bit of a pain letting friends/family/businesses and organisations all over the world know in a hurry about an address change. Grabbed one of the last mailboxes in dear ole Wingham.

It's a good space in the Tinonee Hub... with the thriving Tinonee General Store and the Chicken Takeaway next door. Hope we get a new smart business!

PELICAN FLIES AWAY

Had to make a rushed trip to Sydney. The staff at the airport are terrific, and little Pelican Air does its best, though we had to wait for a bad wind to abate. We seven passengers huddled together in the tail to keep her steady. And landed in Sydney to discover we had made the last Taree Sydney flight.

There are currently no more flights from Taree in or out to anywhere.

Rex gave us away after some contretemps with Council (who own the airport) Pelican say it's all too hard with fuel costs, few passengers, an ageing fleet and no more government subsidies. Obviously, the Council can't afford to subsidise the flights, putting the crew up for a night isn't enough now.

I asked Council what was going on and was told the airport isn't closed and it is still providing services to the community such as – emergency services, medical services, private charters, airmail courier services, defence force training, local commercial aviation businesses, local engineering/manufacturing aviation businesses, car rentals and the Manning River Aero Club.

We just can't fly anywhere from Taree! (Unless we own a plane.)

What else can't Council afford next ??

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE UKRAINE CONFLICT FOR AUSTRALIAN RURAL HEALTH

I never thought I would be talking about a war in Europe in the 21st century, I thought we had left that habit behind in the 20th century.

February 24 2022 has been a turning point as the Russian invasion of Ukraine created a new level of uncertainty in world affairs.

In 1989-91 we saw the end of the Cold War which had been the central defining event of the period 1945 to 1989. President George HW Bush spoke about a ‘new world order’; the Soviet Union had collapsed, China was opening up peacefully for international trade, and the US was the sole undisputed super-power.

It was then fashionable to be optimistic about world politics.

This new world order represented the ‘triumph of the Western idea’ of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. The new era created ‘the liberal peace’. There was talk of the ‘McDonald’s Golden Arches Theory of World Peace’; no two countries selling McDonald’s fast food had ever gone to war against each other, trade was creating a more peaceful world, and it was knitting the world together. Technology was shrinking distances, enabling the quick movement of goods and services around the world.

But the Russian February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has forced a more sombre appraisal of the notion of the world’s ‘progress’. Ukraine represents the best-situated, most productive piece of Russia’s former Soviet empire, and so it was the logical place for Putin to start rebuilding the Russian empire.

Optimism has now been replaced by pessimism.

THREE IMPACTS OF THE INVASION OF UKRAINE

First, there is the disruption of grain and sunflower oil (Russia and Ukraine produce 70 per cent of the sunflower oil exports). Shippers can’t get insurance to move items in and out of Russian and Ukrainian ports. In short, the world’s largest wheat exporter has invaded the world’s fourth-largest

wheat exporter.

Food shortages are helping to create increased cost of living pressures (which are exacerbating the slow global economic recovery from COVID). The UN Secretary General has warned about the risks of a global famine. For example, 80 per cent of the 100 million Egyptians rely on Ukraine/Russian food exports; 50 per cent in Lebanon (both countries are already in crisis). Hungry people become angry people. Additionally, the increased food costs will make the relief work of international humanitarian organisations even more difficult.

Second, there is the disruption of fertiliser supplies to the international market, and so there will be reduced harvest yields.

Third, there is the disruption of the Russian supply of energy to the world market (it is the world’s largest exporter of natural gas, most of which is sold to Europe). Climate change has helped produce record summer temperatures and so people need air-conditioning/ cooling. Energy prices have increased.

The invasion has also been a tragedy for Russian farmers. Tsarist Russia was a major wheat exporter. But production was wrecked by post-1917 communist collectivisation farming (and by the 1970s Russia was even having to import wheat). The collapse of communism enabled the farm sector to get back on its feet and in 2016 Russia again became the world’s largest wheat exporter. This is all now back in chaos.

Ironically, depending on how long the crisis continues, Australia may have extra markets to fill the vacuum caused by the Russian/Ukrainian supply issues. Australian farmers could see some economic benefit to the Russian invasion.

LESSONS FROM THE UKRAINE CRISIS

First, just because something is ‘mad’, doesn’t mean that a politician won’t do it. Commentators (including myself) were convinced that Putin would not invade Ukraine. But we were wrong.

Second, the world has multiple ‘realities’; what may seem ‘mad’ to one person, is not necessarily ‘mad’ to another. By Putin’s standards he has acted rationally. A Chinese attack on Taiwan may seem ‘mad’ to many Australians – but not necessarily to the Chinese leadership.

Third, ‘distance’ didn’t die. ‘Just in time’ thinking – which relied on efficient long supply chains (rather than extensive supplies of products stockpiled at the store) – made for a world of low costs. But it was also one of high danger; it has made us vulnerable to supply shocks. ‘Just in time’ will need to be replaced by a more cautious ‘just in case’ thinking.

Owing to ‘just in time’ supply lines, Australia has outsourced a lot of manufacturing to cheaper overseas suppliers. There has been the elimination of ‘fat’ in systems.

A contrasting view of ‘redundancy’ from the 1930s: Sydney Harbour Bridge will outlast many of the buildings surrounding it; because of ‘redundancy’, it can hold more transport than it currently carries. We need to get back to that cautious method of thinking.

Finally – by way of encouragement - humans have proved to be adaptable. The COVID19 pandemic has created immense problems. The UK government (which has the world’s best collection of national economic statistics) had to go back to 1709 (the year of ‘Great Frost’) to find a year of comparative sudden decline in economic output. 1709 was before the 1750 British Industrial Revolution and so farming was the key economic activity. By contrast, the two World Wars of the 20th century hardly show up in the century’s statistics.

The COVID19 pandemic has shown the resilience of many people. For example, cafés were closed and then they did takeaway food. Meanwhile, working from home has been the most significant boost to Australian productivity in many years because people could work at their own pace, and they did not waste time travelling to and from work.

AUSTRALIAN RURAL HEALTH

As already suggested, the Russian invasion contains both good and bad news for Australia’s rural sector.

On the one hand, there could be increased demand for Australian food. Australia has 26 million people and produces enough food to feed 60 million. On a per capita basis, Australia is a major food exporter. There could be a boom for Australian farmers.

Additionally, the conflict and resulting global famine is a reminder to all Australians about the importance of developing an Australian food and fibre strategy. Agriculture is on the frontline of Australia’s future. It deserves far more attention from Australian politicians and the media.

On the other hand, young people (and perhaps some older people) will be troubled by all this talk of disaster; war in Ukraine, COVID, and climate change (manifested in Australia via floods and bush fires). This crisis is exacerbated by the intensity of social media, hence, my concern with building up resilience:

Resilience is the capacity of any entity – an individual, a community, an organisation, or a natural system – to prepare for disruptions, to recover from shocks and stresses, and to adapt and grow from a disruptive experience (Judith Rodin *The Resilience Dividend*, p 3).

There is no one single key to guarantee resilience; indeed, resil-

ience may be difficult to identify in specific situations, we can improve resilience in Australia, but I doubt that we can make a 'resilient Australia' permanently because of all the emerging issues (such as climate change).

Improving resiliency in Australia will require new mindsets, from how we raise children to how governments run the national economy. 'Resiliency' in its own right should be a topic for risk committees and boards and all other organisations – we need to 'talk up' the issue. More long-term thinking is required (and not just a short-term focus)

CONCLUSION

Australia is in the quietest corner of the globe, it is surrounded by a giant moat and so don't get fooled by the politicians complaining of the 'flood' of a handful of asylum seekers. Imagine being in Poland today and helping 2 million Ukrainian asylum seekers.

By 2030, 65% of the global middle class will live in Asia – right on Australia's doorstep. We will be at the centre of global economic action.

Australia has done well responding to changing power balances. In 1945 Australia's main export partner was the UK, then it became Japan, and now it is China (30% per cent of exports go to China).

Who's next? Will it be India? Perhaps it will eventually be Africa, which is currently undergoing its own economic revolution. Africa's population has grown 11-fold since 1914 (Asia's grew about four times). Africa's population will be 2.4 billion in 2050; by 2100 Africa's population could represent 35 per cent of the world's total, Nigeria's population alone by then will be larger than the US's. There is scope for Australia's agricultural services, Australia is the only developed country to do the dryland farming seen in Africa. We therefore need to explore the economic opportunities in Africa

To sum up, the world is becoming an even more uncertain place. Yes, it has some bad developments - but there are also some good developments.

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SAME SHOW, NEW COUNTRY: HOW AUSTRALIA LED THE TV FORMAT TRADE

It's not uncommon, if you are back to travelling overseas, to flip on the television and see a local remake of a show you always thought of as American or British.

Once restricted to game shows and drama, talent contests like *The Voice*, *The X Factor* and *American Idol* are now produced in countries all around the world, often with only slight changes, and earn enormous success, and no doubt profits, with new audiences.

Yet few people realise the pioneering role an Australian played in developing today's roaring trade in the international adaptation of television shows.

THE GRUNDY FACTOR

One of the greatest pioneers in the world trade in television formats was Australian television entrepreneur Reg Grundy. He started in radio as quiz master on the game show *Wheel of Fortune*, which he adapted for television in 1959, so launching the Grundy Organisation.

He also brought the US game shows *Concentration* and *Tic, Tac, Dough* to Australia, the latter's format copied from NBC in the United States. Over the next decade, other game shows such as *I've Got a Secret*, *Play Your Hunch*, and *The Guessing Game* followed, and gained large and faithful local audiences.

Grundy then expanded into drama and sold several popular Australian programs and successful formats overseas. Jail drama *Prisoner* was an early success and was followed by soaps like *The Restless Years* and *The Young Doctors*, then *Sons and Daughters*, a show that ran to 972 half-hour episodes. It proved a very successful format, still selling 25 years after it first appeared in Australia on Channel Seven. A couple of years ago, it was remade as *Zabranjena Ljubav* in Croatia and, separately, in Bulgaria, under the same title.

The story of Reg Grundy and his format empire is told in Albert Moran's, *TV Format Mogul: Reg Grundy's Transnational Career*.

Today, the most trade-able format in global television is the talent contest. Shows such as *The Voice* and *The X Factor* have similar competitive elements, elimination techniques and reward mechanisms. Their individual sense of value and quality is largely set by the judging panel, which may vary in number.

Some judges are chosen for professional knowledge, some for more nebulous qualities like public or media notoriety, market appeal and promotional utility. The programs differences lie in the staging, presentation, publicity and hype.

Remarkably, *The Voice* has been remade for Chinese audiences. Presumably, it is a bit of Yankee imperialism acceptable to Xi Jinping.

SETS, STAGING, SIGNAGE AND THEME MUSIC: THE KEYS TO FORMAT.

Under format licensing agreements, the remakes vary little from the original production, usually given some tweaks for local cultural sensitivities and technical and production limitations. This preserves the value of the brand but also gives confidence to advertisers that the program's commercial performance is likely match the performance of the original.

However, just occasionally, things work out differently, and the best example is a talent contest of another kind: a talent for cooking. When TV production firm Shine Australia remade *MasterChef* for Australia's Channel Ten something unanticipated happened, the remake completely eclipsed the British original. There was a fortuitous intersection of location, setting, cast and contest. The runaway ratings saved, for the time at least, the competitive position of Australia's then third-placed commercial TV network which was slipping to fourth behind the ABC.

The three judges, little known outside the world of fine dining, became immediate celebrities and the final episode of the first series peaked at 4.11 million viewers, placing it fourth among the 10 most watched programs of the previous decade. *MasterChef* joined *Australian Idol* in a ratings territory previously the exclusive preserve of sporting finals and the Olympics.

Subsequently, *MasterChef*'s ratings slipped but later series recovered some of the ratings ground of series one.

LOCAL DRAMA, GLOBAL TRADE

In drama, format distinctions are

much clearer, but remakes are more inclined to be infused with national characteristics. Think of what *New Tricks* – the BBC drama about cops, brought out of retirement to crack old cases – would look like with a French cast: farce? Or a US one: social satire?

In an attempt to replicate the originals, the US remakes of North European noir, like *The Bridge* (originally a Danish/Swedish crime drama) or *The Killing* (originally a Danish police procedural drama), imitate the photographic style and studied performances of the originals. Ultimately, however, it does not work. The US versions are new programs with original, adapted dialogue, and other distinctive US cultural features.

FUTURE FORMATS?

In 1995, Grundy sold the Australian company to the UK conglomerate Pearson Television, now known as Fremantle, and their Australian arm Fremantle Australia, remains a prolific television producer and distributor of programs and formats.

A couple of years ago it produced *Wonderland*, an Australian soapie in a beach-side setting. It was criticised for its near wall-to-wall white Anglo-European casting and its self-absorbed, largely personal narratives. However, it is a perfect format. If it were remade overseas and cast with members of the local and wealthy dominant ethnic group, *Wonderland* would be equally at home on the banks of the Volga River in Russia or in sight of Yokohama Bay in Japan.

For a time, it was a valid criticism that TV was all format remakes or sequels and prequels. However, the rise of streaming services, and video on demand and the competition for audiences has driven diversity in program offerings. While talent contests will always be talent contests, no matter how glammed-up, there is now greater diversity in original drama that has ever graced our TV screens.

Vincent O'Donnell
 Media Analyst and Social Researcher.

A SPECIAL HOUSE BREATHES AGAIN

The minute I spotted a cat preening itself on the front step and a basket of petunias hanging outside the forlornly rundown heritage cottage at 1 Bungay Street Wingham, I knew something was afoot.



The feminine touch was the initial sign that a woman was involved in what I hoped would be the restoration of the once charming and romantic old house.

I was right; Leonie Cambage, a delightful newcomer from Sydney, has taken on the challenge to restore the sadly tumbling down old home to its former glory.

No small task.

Leonie grew up in Sydney but for years each time she drove from Sydney to visit her mother, then living in Nambucca Heads, she stopped in Taree for a break, ‘until I stumbled over Wingham and made it my must stop place for coffee’.

After some time, Leonie decided that rather than wait until she retired from work to buy a home



somewhere along the coast, why not do it now. Of course, covid struck which threw a spanner in the works.

'But the minute I saw the house, it leapt out at me with its character and style. I kept checking just in case, as it had been sold.'

So, each day in her unit in a quiet corner of Sydney's inner west Leonie checked on the house: 'nothing seemed to be happening, I guess they decided it was too big a job! The minute it came back on the market, I bought it in May 2021', said Leonie.

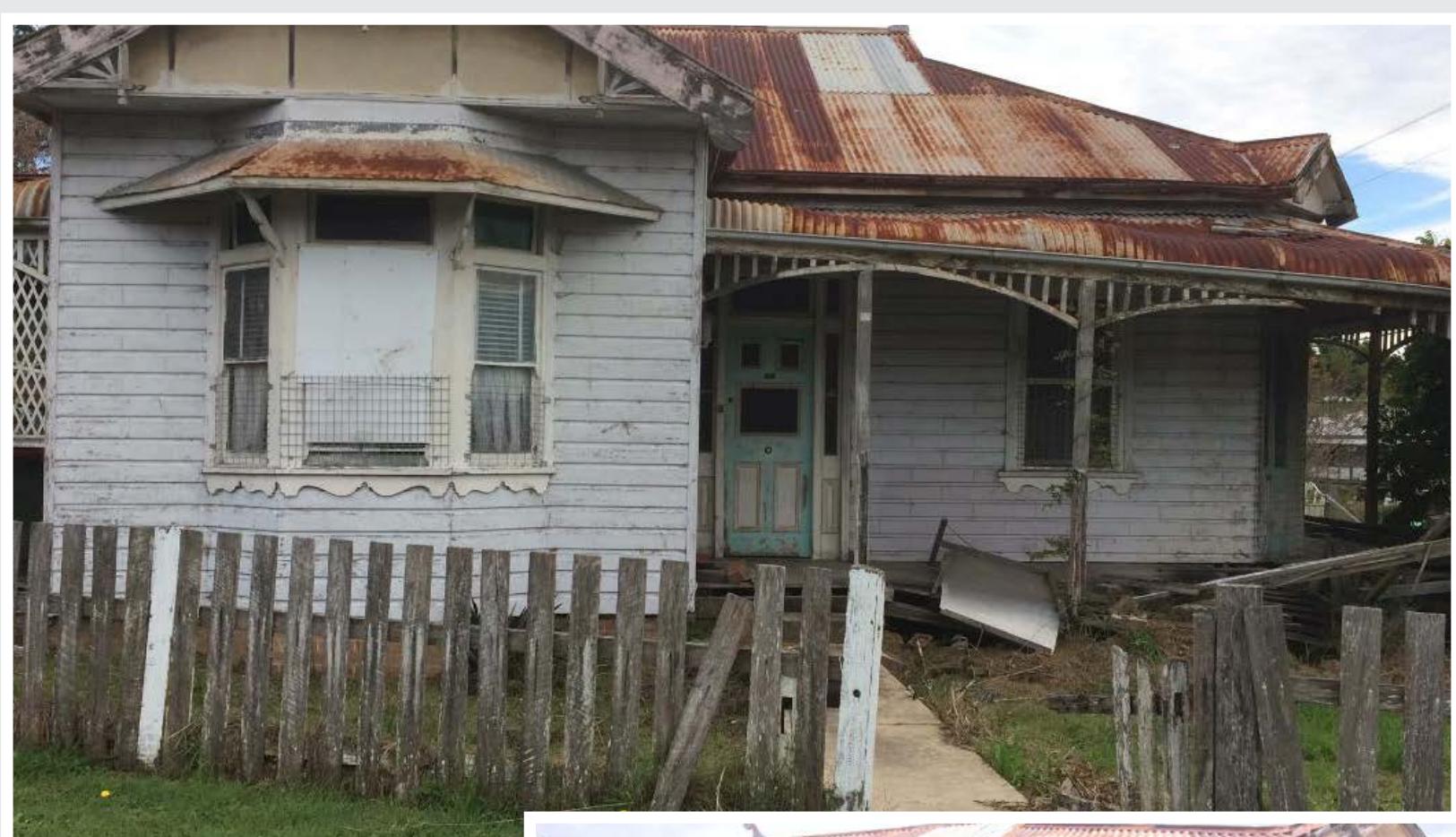
While the tired and sad exterior remained the same, Leonie moved in and 'camped' in the surprisingly large and airy rooms: 'First thing I did was make a working bathroom and kitchen, so nothing changed outside, and I don't think anyone knew I was living in there'.

I am given a tour, there's three proper large bedrooms and Leonie points out lovely details like the fretwork, the stained-glass window inserts in the big windows, the picture rails and the stunning dark wood floorboards, all in great condition.

She's kept the original old built-in woodfire stove in the kitchen as a décor feature. There's a wonderful old fireplace in the lounge room, but when Leonie points out there is no dining room, I recall my grandparents' Federation house that Poppy built in Wingham was just the same; we all ate around the big kitchen table!

Adds Leonie, 'There's also little storage, no built-in cupboards at all!'

The exterior is brick form timber (the wooden planks cut in a brick-like shape) and the house envelops you in a friendly hug the moment you go inside. It's not furnished



fully as Leonie points out it's easier to renovate with less inside.

While such a renovation to bring the home back to its former glory might be daunting, especially as it is heritage listed, Leonie only feels challenged on occasion.

'It helps that nearly every time I step outside someone will stop and chat and tell me how pleased they are that the house is being restored and saved. It seems there's a strong wish among Wingham people to preserve these beautiful heritage homes.'

The Wingham Museum was only able to provide a little information about the house - that it was known as The Kelvin Private Hospital and was established about 1920. The home had previously been built

for the O'Neil family who later went to Port Macquarie. Dr Hewer first used the home as a small cottage hospital.

'He tacked a surgery room onto the back of the house, I assume post World War 1. I'd love to know more history about this house', says Leonie, 'Especially whether it had a name. I can't find any records, yet so many houses of the era had names'.

Leonie works from home remotely for the NSW Government Regional Transport department which suits her to be on site as her carpenter/workman Danny Christie works on the house.

'To replace the roof with its bull nosed verandah is a big job,' says Leonie.

Leonie is planning on a traditional old-fashioned garden. But her

favourite part of the house?

'It has four verandahs which I love! Each faces a different direction so I can move around with the seasons. I love it'.

Having shared a pot of tea on the verandah facing the sunny north-east on a winter's day, I can agree!

Like Leonie I wish all the old homes and buildings in Wingham could be saved and restored.

DM

If you have any knowledge of 1 Bungay Road, (corner of Canget Street) Wingham Leonie would love to know!



Antiques and Collectables

Collect the past and invest for your future. A wonderful hobby that brings much enjoyment.

I have been collecting for most of my adult life and have always enjoyed the search and discoveries made. The people you meet, the stories you hear, the information you gather and the memories collected are special. Spring is in the air; hopefully some drying conditions and a fabulous season for our farmers.

There is a look-out on the Tinonee Road between Tinonee and Wingham called Brushy Cutting Lookout. The fence had been vandalised and was dangerous, our Council has finally erected a replacement. The views to the west are spectacular and I am drawn to slow or pull in as I pass, the best views I have had there are at sunset; spectacular! A wonderful piece of our Manning Valley.

COIN COLLECTING

Coins of the Australian decimal variety were introduced on the 14 February 1966, although they did not at that time include the one-dollar or two-dollar coins. The dollar was equivalent in value to 10 shillings (half a pound) in the former currency.

'Design of the Australia's new decimal currency' was first broadcast by the ABC in 1964. The coins, produced by the Royal Australian Mint, all have featured four versions of the effigy of Her Majesty Elizabeth II, on the obverse.

The first effigy was designed by Arnold Machin, the second effigy by Raphael Maklouf, the third effigy by Ian Rank-Broadley and the fourth effigy by artist Jody Clark. They have all been matched with designs by the Australian-born artist Stuart Devlin on the reverse. The set then comprised a 50c, 20c, 10c and a 5c coin, all still referred to as "silver", although they consisted of 75% copper and 25% nickel.

For many years there were also 2c and 1c coins, traditionally called "copper" coins, although they are actually an alloy of copper and zinc. The original 50c coin was circular and contained 80% silver and 20%



1992 Australian coin set sold by the Australian Mint

copper, and the metal in the coin quickly became worth more than 50c. It had almost identical dimensional specifications to the British half-crown coin. However, to avoid confusion with the 20c coin and because of its excess value, it was only produced for one year and then withdrawn from circulation. No 50 cent coins were minted for 1967 or 1968. The coin was issued in a dodecagonal (12-sided) shape starting in 1969, although the 12-sided version had been minted in 1966–67 as a specimen piece to test the design. The standard design on both versions of the coin are the same: the obverse carries the effigy of the sovereign, and the reverse shows the Coat of Arms of Australia, although, the coin has been issued with both standard and commemorative designs. 94.13 round 50c coins made up a fine kilogram of silver.

"Gold" one-dollar and two-dollar coins were introduced in the 1980s. The one-dollar coin was introduced in 1984, to replace the banknote of the same value. The two-dollar coin, also replacing a banknote, was introduced in 1988. They have

content of 2% nickel, 6% aluminium and 92% copper. The two-dollar coin is smaller in diameter than the one-dollar coin, but the two-dollar is slightly thicker.

Due to the metal exceeding face value, the minting of one- and two-cent coins was discontinued in 1991, and they were withdrawn from circulation. However, as of 1991, both coins are now minted as collectors' items. Commemorative coins have been produced for various denominations in various years with imagery representing an event replacing the usual design on the reverse side of the coin. In some years, all the coins of that denomination are replaced with a different design for that year. In other cases, only a few million coins have the commemorative design, and coins with the standard reverse are also released. No commemorative issues of the 1c coin have been produced, with the exception of the 2016 issue, there have been no commemorative issues of the 5c and 10c coins. A special 2c coin was released, showcasing one of Stuart Devlin's alternative designs. Many commemorative versions of the 50c

coin have been placed in general circulation since 1970. The first \$1 coin commemorative issue was in 1986, the first 20c commemorative issue in 1995, and the first \$2 commemorative issue in 2012. Mintages reported for these coins vary from around 500,000 to around 50 million.

In 1992 the Mint commenced production of commemorative issues which were not for circulation. Mintages reported for these coins vary from around 5,000 to around 125,000, with the notable exception of the four 25c coins of 2016 which have mintages of 1 million each.

In 2016, to celebrate 50 years of decimal currency, a commemorative design for the obverse of the coins was released. To date this is the only issue where the commemorative design is on the obverse face rather than on the reverse face.

The Royal Australian Mint regularly releases collectable coins, one of the most famous of which is the 1980-1994 gold two-hundred-dollar coin series. Australian collectable coins are all legal tender and can be used directly as currency or converted to "normal" coinage at a bank. Metals include aluminium bronze, silver, gold and bi-metal coins. Nugget coins are issued in ounces and fractions or kilograms and come in gold and platinum, some are denominated in dollars, and others by their weight value.

Most commemorative coins do not increase in value by substantial amounts. The secret is to buy low mintage coins or the more unique varieties. Do your homework!

Our shop is at 12 Isabella Street in Wingham. It is called Antiques & Old Wares, call in and say hello.

If you have items that you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals and/or sales. I love the history and stories of old and interesting treasures from the past.

**Phone Rex – 0427 880 546.
Take care and stay safe!**



It is with great anticipation that our business awaits its coming of age.

Wingham Nursery and Florist will turn 50 years old this October 22-23rd.

Our humble business has grown from a tiny back-yard garage in Wingham, selling vegetable seedlings and flowers, to an ever-growing retail business, covering 3 residential blocks.

In 1972 Ralph and Rhonda Sawyer took a leap of faith and created their small business dream - All while raising three sons and working seven days a week.

Plus weathering hail storms, floods and drought and withstanding the recent competition of multi-national companies, who've swallowed up many small nurseries and hardware stores in their wake.

Wise business sense, our acclaimed customer service and our acquired Horticultural knowledge base, have all been instrumental in our longevity and retaining a large community customer base.

Three generations of the Sawyer family are involved in its management and ongoing service to the town of Wingham and the Manning Valley.

Ralph and Rhonda were joined by Chris and Tanya, Granddaughter Caitlin in 2012, while granddaughter Tawny worked through her teens at the nursery

before finally becoming a chef. Their cousins Joelan and Tcharne from Sydney, also spent many school holidays mucking about in the soil too.

With both of Ralph and Rhonda's other sons, Michael, with his partner Jason, and Stephen and his wife Kimberley, have been regular visitors and helped out during peak season events over the years too. Michael has also weighed in on the management side more recently, as we restructure the business.

In previous decades both Ralph and Rhondas' parents - Mick and Phyllis Gam and Dallas and Fran Sawyer - had also given a helping



The early years....

hand in setting up the fledgling business. From constructing ferneries and shelving, to growing cut flowers to sell. Every single chore helped to build the strong business that remains with us today. Sadly we lost the last remaining member just recently with Ralphs mum passing away, aged 103 years young. Both of Ralphs brothers Noel and Garry were also frequent visitors to the nursery.

And we cannot leave out the nursery dogs; Max, Jedda, Cobba and Reggie, nursery mascots forever!

Since gathering all of these facts, it's not hard to see why our business has been so successful and is still going strong after 50 years.

FAMILY.....

We've also had many staff come and go as the business and family grew. Each and everyone of them have left their mark on the business and each one has helped to mould the business into what you see today. So, in that respect we have been very lucky and we thank every worker who has been through these doors over the last 50 years, we couldn't

Ralph and his Gnome....Rufus....



Todays staff members

have made it this far without you.

And then along came Covid 19....

As it did to everyone, Covid threw us a very huge curve-ball, with local residents mass-planting vegetable gardens and constructing fruit tree orchards. It was a hectic time to be sure.

We can honestly say...we've done it all now, and what a ride it's been so far!

But as Audrey Hepburn once said, "to plant a garden, is to believe in tomorrow."

And that is how we start each day. The hours of planning, seasonal challenges, and on-the-run decisions are what keep us going. Come rain, shine or hail, we'll keep plugging along and keeping those veggie patches full and the lives of our customers happy and healthy while they gain some peace and therapy while toiling in their gardens.

So without further ado.....

On October 22-23 we are planning a Garden Party!! We will have three competitions running....

BEST GARDEN-PARTY HAT.

Floral and pretty, Mad as a Hatter, or just plain Ridiculous!

You don't have to dress for the part, but there'll be more points for the-whole-outfit-effort!

Best Miniature Saucer Garden.

We'll provide a small basic kit to get you started and then you can let your imagination run wild!

Alice in wonderland, Dinosaur Den Jungle, Farmyard Fun Garden or an Ocean in a Dish!

Best Baked Goods.

That's right, we want you to cook up your favourite baked goodies. Lamingtons, scones, cakes, slices, patty cakes and sponges.

Ralph of course will be the judge, although I'm sure there will be plenty of taste testers lined up for this category!

We'll be handing out 5 prizes for each competition category. So get those thinking caps on and start brainstorming. Spring is such a fun time, so we thought what better time to have a garden party and celebrate our half century!!!

Over the two days we'll have guessing competitions, specials throughout the nursery, giveaways, lucky door prizes, food and drink and much much more.

So come along and join in the fun as Wingham Nursery turns 50 years old.

(All funds raised on the day will go to the Kidney Foundation Australia.)

Tanya Sawyer

JUST WILLIAM TURNS 100!

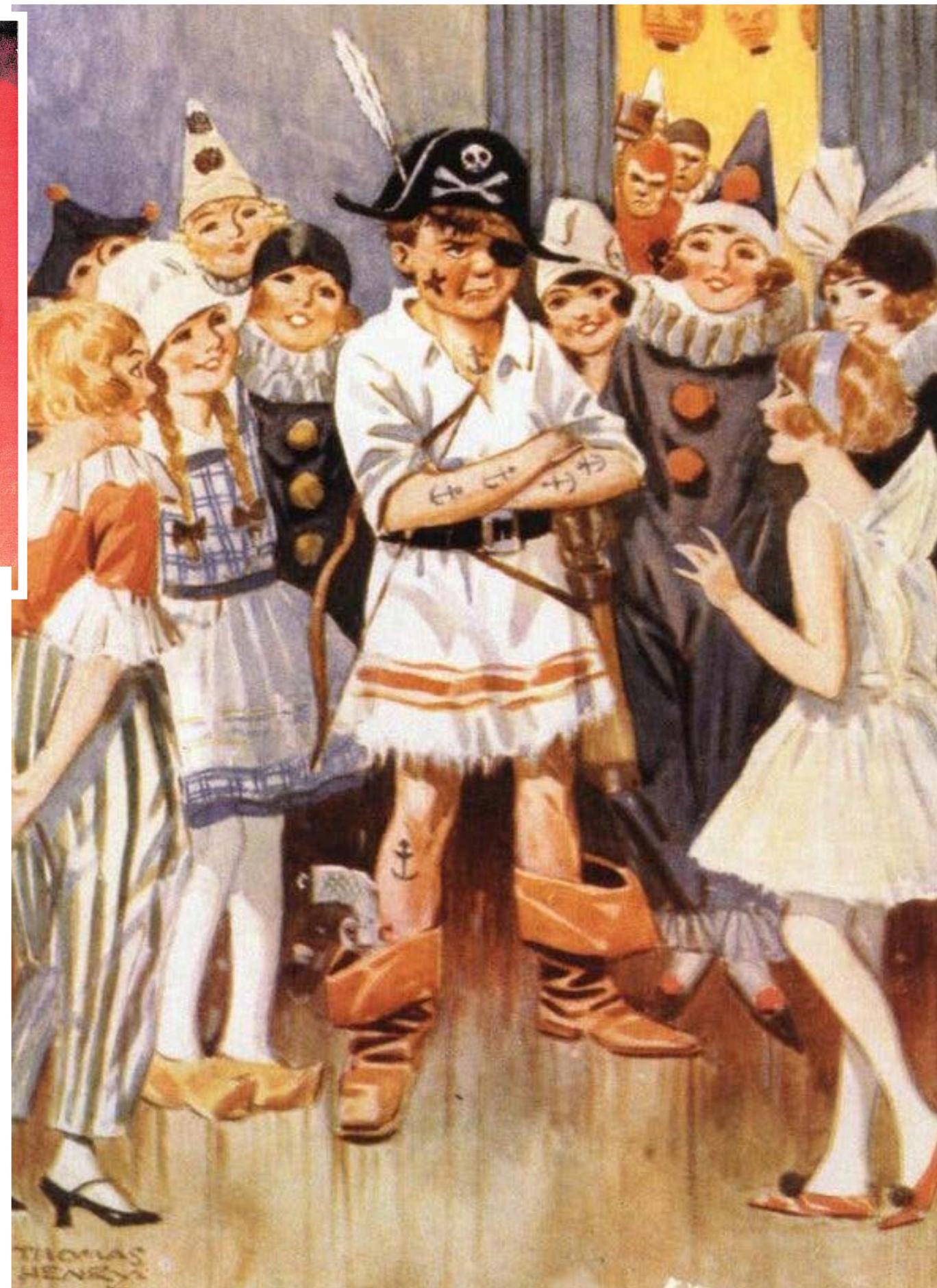
One hundred years ago, in May 1922, the first *Just William* book by Richmal Crompton was published. The daughter of a vicar, conservative and oh so English, her 385 stories were collected into thirty-eight books, written over five decades, translated into seventeen languages and at one stage were outsold only by the Bible.



I read the hilarious books as a child and still have a wallow every few years. William is an eleven-year-old anti-hero who, like Bart Simpson, remains the same age through the decades. His creator is the JK Rowling of her day. The books are a satirical take on life in a 'quiet' English village, with its ostensibly 'normal' inhabitants and 'ordinary' activities. Hypocrisy and self-importance in the adult world are exposed through William's exploits.

Being helpful was William's aim in life. Not all the recipients of his help were grateful. He would have given much thought to helping organise a centenary celebration in his village, should that ever be necessary. He might have had the brilliant idea of a party for all the children of England but after discussion with his mates, the Outlaws, that would have probably been reduced to all the children in the village. Except Hubert Lane, his sworn enemy and Arabella Simpkin, a thorn in his side. He would have liked to exclude the domineering Violet Elizabeth but he knew that would not work.

Other centenary specials William might have thought of, could have been a trip to the moon (how many people could fit in the rocket? said the Outlaws), round the world in a pirate ship (we thought you didn't like the sea, said the Outlaws – no, only the sea-side,



said William) or offering the Society for Giving Decent Grown-Ups a Good Time, a good time. He tried this once, by including Aunt Florence in his Red Injun game, but it back-fired, with Aunt Florence having morning tea with Hubert Lane's mother!

The books were not written for children; the language is sophisticated and obviously for grown-ups.

When it became clear that children had discovered the books, Richmal Crompton didn't change her style or write down to her younger readers. I remember, as a twelve-year-old, asking my mother what 'ejaculated' meant. 'Exclaimed dear, exclaimed!' I wondered why she seemed embarrassed.

A telegram from the Queen? Who knows? By 2122, William may

still be very much alive and well and planning even more centenary celebrations.

Elisabeth Middleton

(I read my uncles' William books as a kid and loved him! Would William make it on telly I wonder? Ed.)

The Idea of Australia (A search for the soul of the Nation)



Julianne Schultz

Allen & Unwin 2022 RRP \$34.99

John Watts

I always cringe a little when I hear someone say that they are on a journey to: "find themselves". I always think that they might be disappointed with the outcome.

Such introspection often strikes me as being rather self-indulgent, and when I read that this book was searching for something called "the soul of the nation" my sceptical nature came to the fore. However, this book proves the truth of the old saying that you can't judge a book by its cover, or more correctly by its title. *The Idea of Australia* is a well-researched, well considered and very well written book that will stand the test of time.

Professor Jenny Hocking had this to say about the book:

The Idea of Australia is a triumph of art, politics, literature, history, and the deepest scholarship. Grand themes of dispossession, exclusion, equality, fairness, culture, media and "the incurable flaw" at the heart of the nation, interspersed with vignettes of personal reflection spring-boarding through a formidable sweep of history.

This is a book that sparkles with curiosity, self-reflection, and sophistication, a riveting journey through the uncertain terrain of the idea of a nation.

Julianne Schultz takes us into the darkest corners of a history we would rather forget and a history we thought we knew, always with the hope for the better place we can become. History has a way of imagining the future. A towering achievement.

There is nothing in Hocking's comment with which I would disagree.

Schultz argues that much of Australian life has been shaped by silence and by not honestly acknowledging and facing up to the truth of our history. As the book cover comments, "we need to better understand our past to make sense of our present and build a positive and inclusive future." This silence approach was one adopted by John



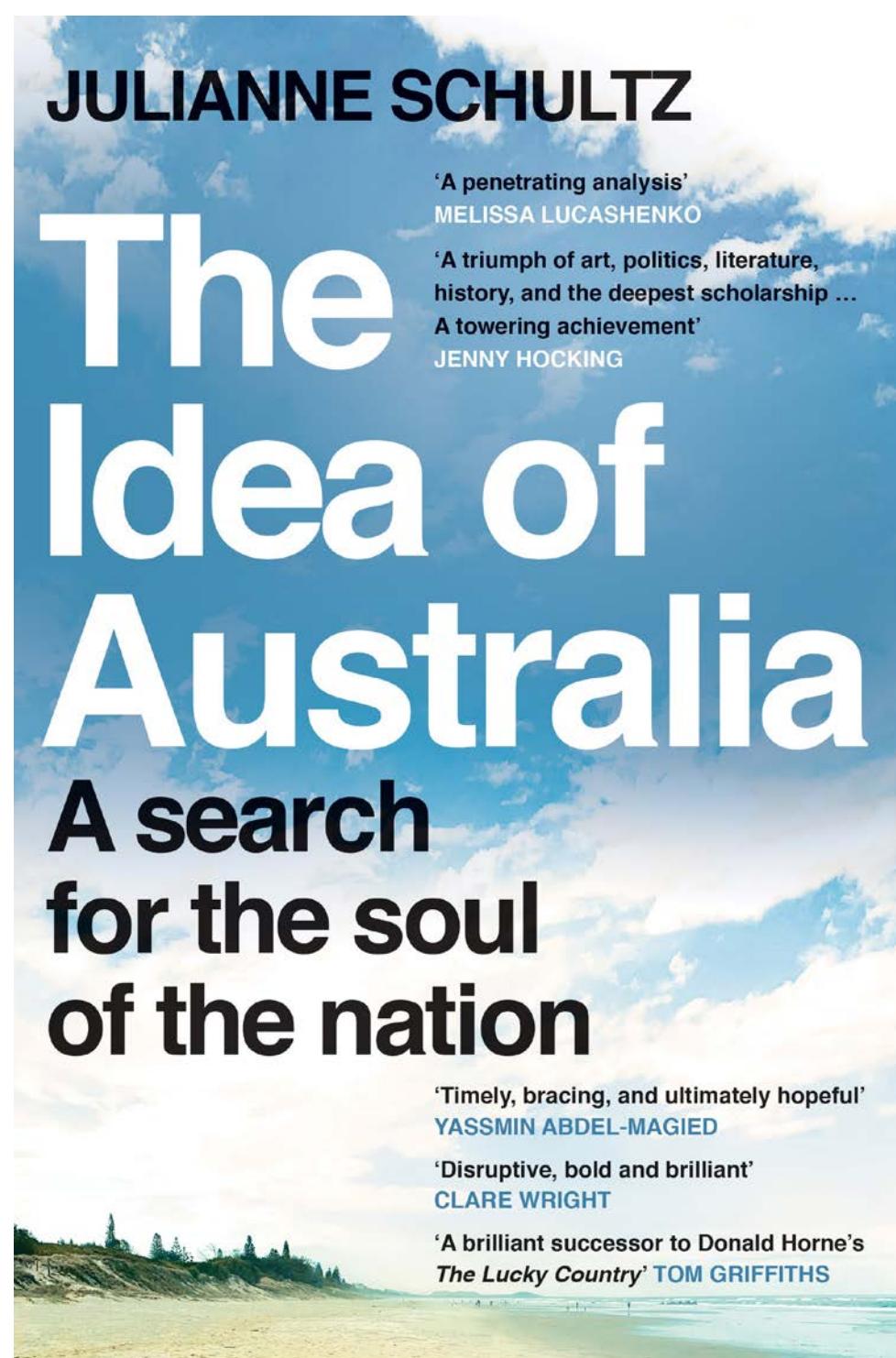
Julianne Schultz

Howard when he talked about "the black armband" view of history. Perhaps a better term would be "the blindfold" view of history. This book, which might cause discomfort to some people, seeks to X-ray the nation's past and look more honestly at our past. Such an approach risks producing an overly negative and pessimistic view of our past, but Schultz avoids this and cleverly balances the negative with the positive.

Very few topics are off-limits as she traverses topics such as: inequality, entrenched racism, unbridled free-market capitalism, misogyny, the shameful treatment of our first nations peoples, misuse of media power (Murdoch in particular), anti-intellectualism, sexual violence, the nature of our federal constitution and an unwillingness to accept and face up to the truth of our history.

As mentioned, the book contains optimism and hope for the future. Near the end Schultz contrasts Rupert Murdoch with his sour backward-looking view of the world with four impressive women who in January 2021 were on stage at the National Arboretum receiving various Australian of the year awards. As Schulz puts it:

There was an Aboriginal elder from the Northern Territory, the Kenyan immigrant from Sydney, the young medical student and social



entrepreneur from Adelaide, and the triumphant sexual abuse survivor from Hobart. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Rosemary Kariuki, Isobel Marshall and Grace Tame were these distinguished Australians, their elevation an unequivocal sign that the nation could both acknowledge its past and embrace the future.

The final chapter ends by suggesting that more change is needed and that the two first steps should be greater action on climate change and a recognition of our First Nations people. Interestingly the book was written before the recent change of government in Canberra, and these are in fact two of the first actions of the new government.

Schultz makes no attempt to hide her political leanings which are strongly progressive and her views on each topic reflect this. In my view this is not a criticism of the book; it

could not really have been written in any other way. Any reader who has strong politically conservative views is likely to disagree with many of her positions on the various issues discussed, but I would urge such readers to give book a go as a catalyst for honest open debate on the many issues facing Australia.

I highly recommend the book.

John Watts is a retired Barrister, Gloucester resident and author of '*Nine Lives for Our Planet: Personal Stories of Nine Inspiring Women who Cherish Earth*' and of '*The Town That Said NO to AGL: How Gloucester was Saved from Coal Seam Gas*'. John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group and a member of the committee of Energise Gloucester.

Sneaky Little Revelations



Selected Essays of Charmian Clift

Edited by Nadia Wheatley

NewSouth Rrp. \$34.95

Charmian Clift is a timeless writer; her words resonate today as much as when they were written for her weekly column in the Sydney Morning Herald back in the 1960s.

Her personal and incomparable style is chatty but not lightweight. No doubt being married to well-known author George Johnston (My Brother Jack etc.) with whom she collaborated, shadowed her own career path. Her biographies "Mermaid Singing" and "Peel Me A Lotus" and novels, Honour's Mimic" and "Walk to the Paradise Gardens" were written during, what seems to have been, a colourful period on Hydra (the international literati of the day, including Leonard Cohen, hung out with them in Greece).

Returning to Sydney when her husband was hospitalised for months with tuberculosis and having to manage a family and a household the Herald columns were possibly all she could manage. But, they illuminate an era with passion, humour and insight – whether you agree with her views on world events, politics, or what colour to paint the kitchen, or not.

Nadia Wheatley has done a skilful job in detailing when each column was written and the times and issues it reflects.

Sadly, Charmian took her life in 1969.

I so wonder what she might have written under other circumstances. (see essay "on painting bricks white p17)

DM



Nadia Wheatley

sneaky little revolutions



edited by Nadia Wheatley

Selected essays of
Charmian Clift

'More lightning and quicksilver, more brilliance and more skill of execution, than any Australian writing other than the great novels of Patrick White and Christina Stead'
PETER CRAVEN, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

DI'S DIARY – THE BOOK TOUR AND TALKS

It's that time again. Book number 29 has been published – "The Night Tide".

It still feels as thrilling as when my first book was published. Some things have changed though. Like the Book Tour.

Since Covid I'm very over Zoom chats. Or phone interviews when you can't see the journalist's face. It's rare now to do appearances at major bookstores, big Literary Luncheons, or Special Events.

All media is managed by one of the publisher's publicists. I'm lucky to have Clare looking after me. Smart as a whip, strong as an ox, her delicate and gentle appearance hides a will of iron, and ignorance of the word "no". She smiles and persists until we get a "well alright then..."

The Publisher is keen that the Book and I get media exposure apart from all those live phone chats. And social media is not my forte. That means popping into radio stations, chat-

ting to journalists in hotel coffee shops, and if we're lucky we score some tele.

Having worked years in television interviewing people on camera, this is familiar territory. However this new book, while a novel, does touch on some sensitive issues for me. Each of my novels comes out of a place ... which chooses me and I go there for a month or so and hang around talking to locals soaking up history and the atmosphere and landscape.

But without going anywhere during lockdown I had to travel in my mind...so I reflected on Pittwater where I grew up as a kid. Which was a difficult sentimental journey.

The TV station decides to take me back there to the places that meant so much to me.

The Church Point ferry service kindly drag the ole ferry "Elvina" out of mothballs for us

and the film crew to chug around the bays. I went to school on this ferry every morning.

They want to take me back to a pivotal place ... the home of Dorothea Mackellar who first suggested to a 7 year old girl who "made up stories in her head" that she should "put them in a book so other people can enjoy them."

I ask the blokey ferry driver if he knows the people living in my family home... a couple of houses up the bush track from Dorothea Mackellar's house.

'Nah,' he shrugs. 'Why doncha just call Dorothea whatshername and ask her if she knows em.'

Sigh. Time marches on.

Di

On painting bricks white

This is one of Charmian Clift's essayswhile she supported the rights of women and migrants (this is back in the 1960s remember), called for social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, opposed conscription and the war in Vietnam, acknowledged Australia's role in the Asia-Pacific, fought censorship, called for a local film industry and much much more, she set a new benchmark for the form of the essay in Australian Literature.

I chose this essay from the new edition of "Sneaky Little Revolutions" as before this I was never brave enough to admit how much I loathe brick houses!!

(From "Sneaky Little Revolutions" Selected Essays by Charmian Clift. Edited by Nadia Wheatley. Published by NewSouth.)

Idling around the neighbourhood blocks just a little time ago we noticed a piece of construction – or alteration, rather – in progress on a private garage that fronts one of the avenues. A couple of men were busily bricking in the entire opening. This in itself was not very interesting and I don't know why we even remarked on it, except that it is a little curious these days to see someone sealing off car space rather than building extra, and one wondered (vaguely) why. Had the owners come to what is called The End of the Tether with all automobiles? Or were they nobly sacrificing car space to a growing family's need for living space? Making a rumpus room? An extra bedroom? A garden shed? Another few square feet of brick doesn't matter much one way or another around these parts.

Only, the next time we passed that way we really did stop and stare. Because the couple of men had a brush apiece, and a big pail, and they were sloshing whitewash all over the completed area of raw brick. Real whitewash. We both stifled a mad impulse to cheer. Instead we walked around the corner to look at the house (which the garage obscured) for the first time. An ordinary house, brick, of course, of the post-World War I 'bungalow' period, uninteresting architecturally, but soundly built, probably very comfortable inside (one imagined plaster ceilings with mouldings, and vaguely William Morris fanlights), and transformed from ordinariness into grace by the fact of being painted white.

This was like being given a bonus, or an unexpected Christmas present, and led us to some further explorations, and some further thoughts on the pleasingness of painting bricks white.

Australian suburban architecture is without doubt or question the ugliest in the world. There is nothing to come near it on the civilised

globe – or uncivilised either, for that matter: grass huts are beautifully cohesive and harmonious.

Approach any capital city from the air and just look at the rectilinear grids of terracotta ruled out in a stupendous monotony of elementary geometry, a statistical nightmare of raw repetition. Actually, if one makes the urban approach by road instead of air, it is all too horribly apparent that the sameness is deceptive. How in all the world do Australian brick manufacturers manage so many variations on such a painful chromatic theme?

Over and above the dominant Humours – Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Melancholic – there are Splenetic bricks, Liverish bricks, Apoplectic bricks, Bibulous bricks (those purplish ones like old drunks' noses), and bricks which appear to have been steeped before baking in the Pancreatic Juices for a special variegated effect.

This is all the more fascinating since bricks aren't (or shouldn't be) in themselves hideous. Bricks are a good honest form of building material and have a long and distinguished history.

Men have been building with bricks for at least five thousand years and probably a good deal longer. Bricks were the very first prefabricated building material. The Egyptians used them, and the Mesopotamians, the Assyrians and the Persians. The Etruscans brought their ancient craft knowledge to Italy, the Romans passed it on to the Byzantines, who, in turn, influenced the Seljuk and Ottoman Turk. Byzantine brick buildings furnished prototypes for the great Lombard development of brick buildings in the eleventh century, and bricks came to dominate the architecture of northern Germany, Denmark, the Low Countries, and England.

Bricks were good enough for Ur of the Chaldees, the Tower of Babel, the Pyramids of Dashur, the Palace of Sargon, the Sassanian dynasty palace near Baghdad, the Colosseum, the Church of Agia Sophia in Constantinople, Brunelleschi's dome in the Duomo in Florence,

Michelangelo's in St Peter's, Wren's in St Paul's, the palace of Hampton Court (as well as a thousand other brick castles, manor houses and chateaux all over Europe), whole cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen, and the supreme grace and elegance of the Georgian period of architecture in England.

It can't be just age (and soot?) alone that produces that effect of quiet, mellow vibrancy. Perhaps it is a peculiar quality of light? For, certainly, whether one approaches an Australian city by land, sea, or air, all that brick gives a sort of *inflamed* effect.

Very distinguished architects and authorities have talked a lot and written a lot about the Great Australian Ugliness, and fulminated (with justice, I think) against the architectural errors of the past, and the architectural delinquencies of the present. I have just been reading Robin Boyd (whom I would recommend as required reading to anyone really interested in what makes us tick as a people and as a country) and agree with him absolutely that it is the uses to which perfectly honest bricks have been put that is the core of the ugliness.

But – alas – what's done is done, and we can hardly, even in the cause of aesthetics, bulldoze down whole square miles of errors and delinquencies and start again. No, the double-fronts and the bow-fronts and the feature windows and the sun decks will have to stand now, and the 'contemporaries' and the 'semi-contemporaries' and all those 'home units' that look like tall, ransacked chests of drawers. Perhaps, one golden day soon, people will begin planting trees to replace those that have been hacked down by the subdividers – those great Australian axemen – to make way for the bare building plots, and then branches and leaves will mercifully soften and disguise the nude brick boxes.

In the meantime, what we *could* do – and I know this is a revolutionary thought – is to get out the whitewash brushes.

In the course of our explorations

(begun on the fact and the hope of one whitewashed garage) we happened upon some lovely individual discoveries of white houses – old, new, beautiful, ugly-made-beautiful – and finally a whole street of white houses. I would think they were built in the 1920s, not one of them pretentious, not one of them beautiful, with the usual old half-verandah and projecting gabled front room, all standing back at a decent number of feet from their front gates and lawns.

But because they were all white the whole street was cohesive. It had a harmony and unity and dignity far beyond the architectural worth of any of its individual components. No house was competing with its neighbours for attention, and all that clean white under the blue sky made a tranquil background for pretty gardens and green grass and a few spectacular blood-red bracts of bougainvillea.

I was reminded, naturally enough, I expect, of Mediterranean towns, towns of Calabria, towns of any Aegean island, towns that are really only huts made of mud and daub riveted to bare treeless hillsides and breathtakingly beautiful because they are painted white. Property owners (and tenants too) are compelled by law to whitewash their houses once a year. On Mykonos, an island bursting out at every cobbled seam with civic pride and tourist-awareness, it is *twice* a year.

The point is that the tourists – Australian tourists, many of them, straight from the inflamed brick areas – make the proper gasping responses and start in frenetically with their cameras.

Perhaps it is all a question of the peculiarities of light. Naked brick becomes mellow and vibrant under soft European light, but just wouldn't do in the Mediterranean, where whitewash works better, for harmony and beauty (and camouflage too).

I know it's a daring suggestion, but I'll make it anyway. Might not a poultice of whitewash reduce the inflammation of our brick areas also?



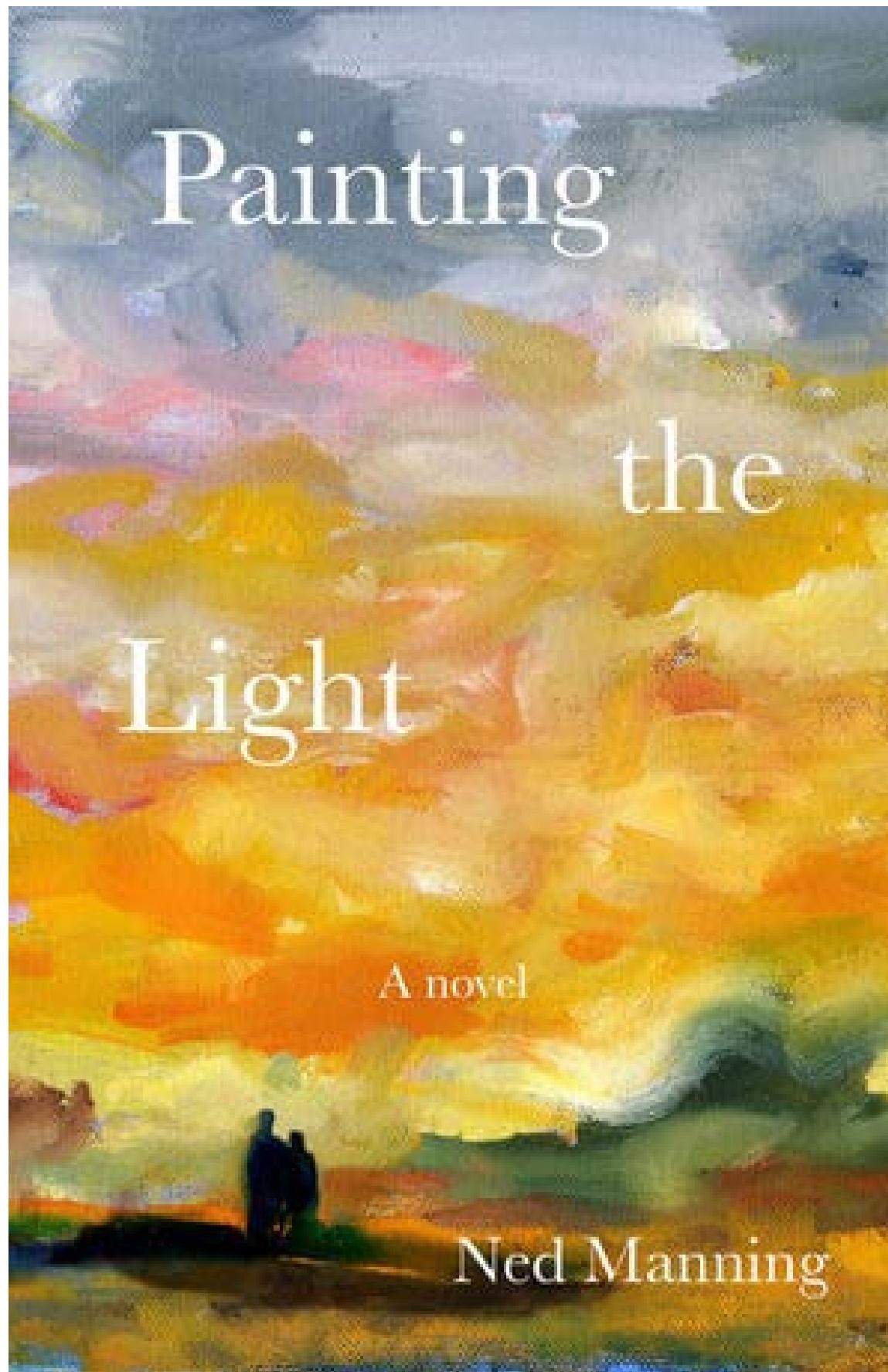
Painting the Light: A novel

Ned Manning
Broadcast Books
RRP \$29.99

Ned Manning's novel *Painting the Light* invokes an Australian past that starts on the eve of World War II and moves through the twentieth century's greatest turbulence, into the early post war years. The broad sweep of this setting is honed between the intimacy of two lives; his protagonists, Nell Hope and Alec Murray are, like the Australia they live in, struggling to attain a stronger sense of self and independence.

The novel's beautiful cover encapsulates the overarching trajectory of Manning's story; two young people, infused with the optimism and energy of youth, inhabit an expansive land filled with possibility. On the cover they are small silhouettes facing a sky that is vividly lit with sunrise or sunset. The image is ambivalent because the expansive possibilities they yearn for are in conflict with the constraints of tradition and the strength of those who hold onto power. This ambivalence between hope and constraint generates the novel's tension and draws the reader into the momentum of Nell's and Alec's lives.

In the early chapters, Manning paints an earlier, considerably more elegant version of the contemporary gap year, as eighteen-year-old Nell moves to Paris – a bohemian world of berets, wine and romance. She is there to pursue her emerging talent for painting, until the looming war and a telegram from her father sends



her back to the vast dry paddocks where her family's wealth rides upon the sheep's back. Alec Murray pursues independence in Australia, attempting to farm in Coonabarabran, free from his father's conservatism. The war, however, will transport him into the danger that Nell has been forced to leave. While the early chapters move

between the two, the reader anticipates that Nell and Alec will meet. On the precipice of war, the farewelling of young men brings them together and they fall in love.

Manning takes the reader into Alec's war experiences and their transformational power. Confronted with war's horror, Alec seeks redemption in political ideas that he

believes endorse humanity. When he returns to Australia, he strengthens his belief in egalitarian notions and pursues their political expression in Ben Chifley's Labor Party. Manning explores the heated conflict between conservative and progressive forces in post-war Australia and for Alec, the division this creates with his staunchly conservative father. Alec also returns to marriage with Nell, a young family and a farm that offers all the beauty and recalcitrance of the Australian landscape.

While Nell supports her husband's political aspirations, her love for Alec and her three sons is passionate and strong, but her own life is shrinking. The reader is reminded that post-war Australia was not generous in its offerings to women. Alec's mother, Daphne, is a background character, but the reader sees enough to understand how her strength must give way to the traditional power of her less competent husband.

As the writer acknowledges, *Painting the Light* is based on the lives of his parents. Manning recreates their world with a realism that many will recognise as a not too distant past, even if we did not inhabit it. We can recognise it in the lived experiences of our parents and grandparents. And perhaps most interestingly, we recognise it in the tensions that continue to shape Australia. Manning grapples with the elusive past and captures the world of his parents and their quest for transformation. In the heart of this novel, there is also an understanding that their story remains connected to contemporary Australia. The past is less elusive when we acknowledge its intimacy with who we are now. *Painting the Light* does this with clarity and conviction.

Debra Barford

Sneaky Snapper Sought In Our Seas

For many reasons snapper are the most sought after fish in our local waters. Apart from being an excellent table fish, snapper are great battlers and to catch one requires a real effort. Traditionally, snapper have been chased over the extensive reef system that stretches from Birubi in the south to Seal Rocks up north.

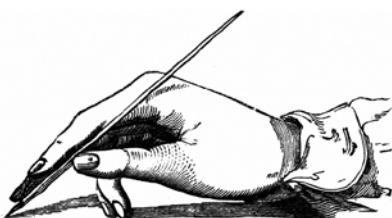
Bait fishing had been the preferred fishing method using fresh squid, bonito, slimy mackerel, pilchards or big prawns. In recent years there has been a move away from the old method preferring 'plastics', eliminating the use of berley and a bait freezer.

The use of plastics has revolutionised the art of snapper fishing and it is becoming increasingly apparent that the method is proving to be far more effective. The method used is simple, firstly discover suitable reef habitat using a sounder and fish finder then cut the motor and cast in the direction that your boat is drifting, allowing the lure to sink naturally into the strike zone. Lock the reef into a GPS system for future trips.

It all seems very uncomplicated however there is one variable that remains. I've always maintained that catching fish is simple – finding them is the hard part!

Fishing writer, author and radio presenter John "Stinker" Clarke can be heard weekly, throughout NSW, on popular ABC Regional Radio fishing program "The Big Fish". Check him out on www.stinker.com.au or send an email to editor@manningcommunitynews.com with your information and questions.





Your Say...

Letters may be edited for space, offensive language or defamatory reasons.

Dear Editor,

Recently I was unexpectedly admitted to the Manning Base Hospital. Having never been in hospital before, I write to support the hardworking nurses.

During my week in hospital I have nothing but praise for their efforts. Their working conditions are trying at best and near impossible at worst. Each nurse has at least

8 patients to attend to, most in need of serious care, assistance and regular medication. With some patients not quite as coherent as others and all tired, grumpy, and sick. Often the nurses are required to do double shifts, miss work breaks and overlap each other in order to keep up with the workload.

The amount of paperwork and computer checking on individual patients is extremely labour and time intensive, leaving limited time to cover all aspects of the job. As such, I note, and was told they are overworked, underpaid, underappreciated, and literally worked into the ground.

How they do it I do not know. Despite all this pressure they have an unwaveringly happy disposition, are cheerful, helpful and try their best to keep their patients informed, comfortable and healing.

My personal experience was with Jess, Belinda, and Mary. I marvelled at their tenacity, patience, skill and unwavering effort to provide care and support to patients on all levels whilst negotiating the minefield that is their workplace and its massive responsibilities. Remember, these people are changing patient's lives. It shouldn't be at the detriment to their own lifestyle and health.

Surely more can be done to

increase the staffing levels and pay and ease the tremendous pressure they work under. With all the talk about looking after frontline workers in the current pandemic, someone has forgotten our everyday hospital nurses. THESE PEOPLE ARE AMAZING. We should be looking after them, not taking them for granted.

I will be following up with correspondence to our local MP and the Press and hope others will also take an opportunity to speak up for our nurses, after all, where would we be without them?

Jan Hodge
Wingham

Speaking of the Manning Base Hospital...

Yes indeed, the staff are under the pump for sure as so many have left due to many reasons.

We know beds and staff from all services and medical specialities are short and a lot of elective surgery is being delayed.

The hospital is aiming to gear up and get the hospital back up to speed to be the key hospital in the electorate. They are pitching to double the funding to over \$200 million and get it done properly once and for all.

Then with additional facilities, we can attract more specialists to move here.

While there won't be a new Forster Public Hospital, the existing Forster Hospital, hopefully along with the Mayo Hospital, will combine to give us the service and care we need in an area with an increasing ageing population.

Editor.

WE HAVE A NEW POSTAL ADDRESS . . .

Thanks to the erratic service at the Tinonee sub Post Office who gave us 4 days notice that they are closing down.
The postal address for The Manning Community News is now PO BOX 7, WINGHAM NSW 2429

IT'S TIME for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.

UluruStatement.org

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