

# The Manning Community News

MAR / APRIL 2021

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 62, Tinonee, 2430 editor@manningcommunitynews.com

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**IT'S A DOGS LIFE IN WINGHAM!**

**BOOK REVIEWS**

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*Plus* **GROWING BLUEBERRIES**

ON THE MID NORTH COAST



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We are a genuinely independent newspaper. We are not affiliated with any government body/Council nor any political party or religious organisation. We are self funded and supported by occasional personal community donations for which we are very grateful.

## WATER WATER EVERYWHERE... BUT SOON NOT A DROP TO DRINK??

Do we need to hit the pause button to rethink where our local future is headed?

**S**ometimes we see splashy local newspaper articles about new developments to “enhance our area, attract new families” to move here.

And if you look more carefully you may find in the classified section or back pages, or buried on the council website, announcements of planned new developments.

At various stages comments and submissions are asked for from the public. If you know about it.

Some developments are eventually granted approval by council under “delegated authority” which means certain staff or the General Manager can approve a development.

Of course there is a massive amount of development applications going to council. We don't expect councillors to debate about a fence, a shed or a driveway on a property. But vigilance and caution should be exercised when DA's for developments are pushed through or

go through under delegated authority which allegedly could have a conflict of interest which is not declared.

A friend noted a DA published in December giving two weeks for the public to make submissions or comments on a proposed developed of 133 rural residential blocks in Tinonee. By the time many others became aware of it, the two week window to make a submission had closed.

Never mind the pros and cons of such a development being suitable, needed, or appropriate in the Tinonee village area, the bigger question for the Mid North Coast area has to be . . . where is the water going to come from???

Recent rain might have erased last years fears over lack of water, the fiasco of the desalination plant and council's wet dreams over water

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## ARE OUR COUNCIL RATES GOING UP... AGAIN?

It seems ratepayers will receive a double whammy in the next financial year when rates go up. Again.

**A**nd not only by that 5% Special Rate Variation (SRV) which was introduced to pay the interest on loans which Council was supposed to be taking out as part of its 50% contribution to the stalling \$100 million Roads Program. But it

seems as a consequence of (yet another) legacy issue from the amalgamation which is described very inventively, as “Rate Harmonisation”.

This unpleasant news may not come as a surprise to some people who weathered the distance to near

the end of the marathon meeting of MidCoast Council on 16 December last year. Conveniently placed at Agenda Item number “33” and with the rather obscure and confusing title of “Rates Harmonisation Project – Draft Rates Structure for 2021-22” was a Council Report

recommending the equalisation and consolidation of the three former Councils' rate structures into one single structure.

**WINNERS AND LOSERS?**

This means in effect that in

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# GET OFF THE COUCH GRAMPS

In 1900, human life expectancy in Australia was 38 years. Now, a mere hundred and twenty years later, our expected lifespan has more than doubled. It's "one giant leap for mankind".

**M**en can now expect 80.5 years. Women do better and can anticipate 84.6 years on earth. Mind you, life expectancy for indigenous Australians is trailing at eight years behind the general population.

Standing in the supermarket queue recently, I overheard an elderly customer at the checkout ahead, telling the young cashier, that 'old age is an opportunity'. Not everyone has such a positive outlook. Some folk find this time of life to be more of a prison sentence. Many inhabit their elderly bodies in pain and unhappiness. Does it have to be like this?

## WHEN DOES OLD AGE BEGIN?

Becoming older is something shared by everybody, one birthday after another. In my young living memory, old age was clearly defined by job retirement. 'Over the hill' men stepped into a time of no purpose. No longer functional on the treadmill, rapid senescence on the rubbish heap was the expected outcome.

Chronological age (birthdays added up) and biological age (state of health in body and mind) is an observable divide. It's less about the illusion of anti-ageing than seeing that some people in their 80's and even 90's are energetic in mind and body. When I see these people, it gives me hope. And there seem to be plenty of them.

## "OVER THE HILL?" NOT MOI!

'Over the hill' does not have to be the

beginning of the end. We have to expect watershed events with getting older and learn to deal with them in constructive ways. Here is my own story of a confronting shock.

It was a beautiful crisp day, me in my mid-60's (about ten years ago) walking on the beach. Feeling so good I broke into an unaccustomed sprint. My joyful run was brought to a sudden halt when I felt a whack in the calf of one leg. I turned to face my assailant, but I was the only one there. The next few steps left me in little doubt that I had a torn Achilles tendon. My body refused the brain's order to lift my heel from the sand.

The next six weeks in a moon-

boot gave me pause for review. My body had been faithfully looking after my whims all my years. I realised that it was time to nurture, rather than use and abuse the body. I had to recognise running was no longer safe. My ageing process needed a new skillset.

## FINDING A BALANCE

So what to do? The answer is also in what not to do. The safety of the couch is not the full answer because something obvious is emerging from research. To sustain good health, older people need to find a balance between activity and rest.

## ACTIVITY AND MOVEMENT

'Try feeling depressed when you're waving your arms about over your head' a Qi-Gong master named Rod demonstrated to his class. Try it. This small demonstration affirms current research, that body movement sends signals to the brain, vital for producing healthy neural cells.

Walking is a natural human activity, learned in childhood and so ingrained by now that we take this unique gift for granted. Master Rod remarked, 'We die from the feet up. The slower the walk, the closer to death'. Mindful legwork may benefit brain health more than a crossword.

That's hardly a discovery. 'Solvitur Ambulando' is an ancient saying that translates, 'It is solved by walking'. If there's a choice, a walk is healthier than sitting in the car, climbing steps more useful than the lift.

One-third of Aussie adults are inactive. A very elderly patient told me, 'If I had known I would get this old, I would have taken better care of myself.'

The arthritis association recommends Tai-Chi, a tradition related to Qi-gong, which I find comes more easily. A Master said, 'there is no good practice or bad practice. There is just practice- or no practice.'

How do we keep up an interest? A paediatrician said, 'Watch children at play. They are always doing something different. Adults choose repetitive exercise, which can be very boring.'

## LETTING GO

Why do we spend our lives building up a bank of skills, just to

BRUNSWICK PICTURE HOUSE

ASK US ABOUT PRIVATE EVENTS!

**GET OFF THE COUCH!**

← GRAB OUR PROGRAM NOW

let them go? A friend passionate about SCUBA diving told me she had given it up because all the equipment became burdensome and climbing back into the boat too exhausting. Her 60-year-old body was telling her something. Due to her ability to review and let this part of her life go, she might have avoided the perils that come with ignoring the inner voice. Swimming and snorkelling were much more manageable, and she was able to modify her lifestyle enjoyably.

Everybody has different needs and abilities. If an 80-year old is used to running, sailing, skiing or riding a horse, why stop? That time might come with the likelihood of falling off whatever it happens to be. There may be no second chance. How can you dance between safety and independence?

### FALLING OVER

I can speak with some feeling about this. As a young doctor working in the hospital emergency, I recall the steady stream of older people turning up at the casualty due to falling accidents, many of them at home. A frequent presentation, 'a fall onto the outstretched hand' was commonly the defining event, resulting in injuries ranging from a lacerated palm, frequently a fractured wrist, elbow, even shoulder or hip injuries. I learned how fragile bones (osteoporosis) could make a trivial incident into significant damage. In an instant, that person's life may be changed or shortened into a painful demise.

Forty years later, I can face up to my professional detachment as a junior doctor as heartless. We had a collective description of weak elderly patients- 'crumble'. It was a pejorative term, but embedding a reality, that these people were inevitably falling apart with no way back. Young doctors felt above the calamity that can accompany old age. Now I have more skin in the game and know that positive change may be within reach.

### OLD HABITS DIE HARD

A surprising number of Boomers drink alcohol every day, just like in the old days, that daily relaxer after work. Many don't consider it a problem because the bottles pop only after sundown and better drink is more affordable. When the liver descends into rack and ruin and a problem has to be acknowledged, comes a moment of great opportunity to gently break the habit, like making one alcohol-free day every week. For

instance, if Tuesday is a training or sports day, make it a healthy day, maybe substitute beer with a healthy Kombucha. A cold glass in the hand that looks and feels like a drink can fill the emptiness of habit, and the over-worked liver will appreciate the opportunity for a breather. This sort of direction can produce encouraging results in feeling better.

### NUTRITION

Concerning food, a new concept, introduced by Dr Michael Mosley, is called intermittent fasting - 2 days a week of hardly eating. In essence, this makes good metabolic sense. But the recommendations are unsustainable for most older people. They do though present a different way to consider hunger - as a normal sensation. We fear what resides in our genetic memory. Some of our ancestors came here as refugees from the Great Hunger, the potato blight in Ireland circa 1850. The world wars and the great depression of the 20th century made starving times for our recent ancestors. In today's world, taking on hunger is novel and voluntary.

An adaptation of intermittent fasting, deliberately not eating between meals, highlights snacking as an unconscious habit. I have to work on my pattern of chocolate biscuits after dinner. Learning to curb an impulse is hard, but a craving resisted soon passes. The health dividends are huge because not-eating makes the time between dinner and breakfast a meaningful twelve hours. An extra benefit derived from not eating and drinking late in the evening is improved sleep. Restful sleep is vital.

### CONCLUSION

Health in later years is a big topic. For sure, illness and injury get in the way. Some of these things are bad luck, but preventative medicine can nip things early. Tune in with your doctor. By the way, Dr Atul Gawande, in his excellent book 'Being Mortal', praises podiatry as a most valuable service for seniors. Healthy feet enable activity for as long as possible.

I don't know yet about extreme old age. The best news I have heard is that it doesn't last very long.

**Dr David Miller**  
(Retired GP)  
Brunswick Heads

Dr David Miller is a retired GP who writes on Health and Travel

# WE GET NO SAY IN WHO'S OUR MAYOR!

The NSW Electoral Commission has recently commenced publishing information regarding the Local Government Elections scheduled for 4 September 2021, and a key feature is that there will be no popularly elected Mayor at MidCoast Council.

**The proclamation which created the amalgamated Mid-Coast Council stipulated that for the "first election" the Mayor would be elected by the Councillors.**

So now to change this, and to have a popularly elected Mayor voted in by the community, a 'constitutional' referendum of voters in the Council area must first be held to determine whether the community wants the right to elect the Mayor directly or if they are happy to allow (or abrogate that to) the elected councillors to make that choice.

In 2017, we had the ludicrous situation that the election of the Mid-Coast Council Mayor was determined by drawing candidates' names out of a hat and progressively eliminating them one by one until only one name was left in the hat.

Following this, readers may recall there were several attempts at getting Council to agree to a 'constitutional' referendum on the issue, which in order to save costs, could simply be held in conjunction with the next Council elections.

At the 14 August 2019 Council Meeting, a motion moved by Cr Kathryn Bell and seconded by Cr Peter Epov was defeated by 7 votes to 3. Councillors voting against having a "constitutional" referendum were Cr D West, Cr K Smith, Cr L Roberts, Cr D Keegan, Cr C Pontin, Cr T Fowler, Cr K Hutchinson.

Cr Bell tried again, a year later (on 9 September 2020) with a similar Notice of Motion calling for Council to support a 'constitutional' referendum so the community can determine how the Mayor should be elected.

We understand that Cr Troy Fowler (Liberal) who had previously voted against the popular election of the Mayor, contacted Cr Bell and urged her to put up the motion. At the Council meeting Cr Fowler seconded her motion, but then when it came down to the business end, he voted against the motion, which he had only minutes earlier seconded.

The Vote was again 7 to 3 against, with the same Councillors: Cr D West, Cr K Smith, Cr L Roberts, Cr D Keegan, Cr C Pontin, Cr T Fowler, Cr K Hutchinson voting against having a 'constitutional' referendum.

So it seems very clear a majority of our MidCoast Councillors don't want to give the voters that right or perhaps they don't trust the voters to determine whether the Mayor should be elected by a popular vote.

What makes it more intriguing is that MidCoast Council is a member of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils which includes eight other neighbouring councils, six of which all have popularly elected Mayors: Cessnock City Council, Dungog Shire Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, Maitland City Council, Newcastle City Council, Port Stephens Council, Singleton Council.

Other Mid North Coast Councils that also have direct Mayoral elections include: Bellingen Shire Council, Coffs Harbour City Council, Kempsey Shire Council, Lismore City Council, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council.

So why are we so different here in MidCoast? Why can't the public be allowed, or trusted to determine, the method of electing the Mayor?

Also, why have the two Labor Party Councillors voted on both occasions against giving the public the right through a 'constitution' referendum to determine whether they want a popularly elected mayor, particularly as it is the official NSW Labor Party Policy to have popularly elected mayors.

It's all very incongruous and makes you seriously question the value in voting for candidates that stand for political parties at council elections. Do they actually understand and will they honour their party's published principles and policies or are they using that brand name to be elected?

So in September, when you go to vote and you are wondering why you don't get to vote for the Mayor, think carefully about whom you should vote for, and Choose Wisely!

# UKULELES, BUDDHISM AND MORE WITH U3A

After running a limited program in Term 4 2020, the Manning Valley U3A is back in full swing in 2021. Classes in a range of subjects are underway, at low cost, mainly at the Manning Uniting Church, for people over 50.

**W**e are happy to be able to offer 23 courses this term, with some returning after a hiatus in 2020, and some newer offerings which have been taken up with enthusiasm by our members.

We have a range of classes, from Philosophy and Cryptic Crosswords, to Social Craft and Tai Chi.

New courses for our organisation in 2021 are: Introduction to Buddhism, Activism in Older Age, French, and Quantum Physics (The eight Theories of Reality).

Ukulele groups and our Silver-Tones Choir are always popular, and we are pleased to be able to offer these once again – albeit with various restrictions in place which require some creative adaptation on the part of our class leaders.

The implementation of a new database, which allows personal online



Seven of our members receiving their o.b.e certificates

registration for membership and course enrolment from home computers and other devices, has been a big change. In spite of a various hiccups this will be a great benefit for many members and the Management Committee, and we have in place assistance for those who are not able to use it themselves.

Term 2 classes will start on April 26<sup>th</sup>, and enrolment in these will be possible from mid-April, both online and at an Enrolment Assistance day.

This term we have had eight classes reach capacity, and the French course has required a waiting list – clearly there is interest in languages, with several participants re-visiting school French from 60 years ago! Around 50 new members have joined us and we welcome them to our organisation.

A tradition of the MV U3A is to give members turning 80 a certificate to celebrate this birthday: their personal OBE award (standing

for ‘Over B.... Eighty’!). The OBEs from 2020 needed to wait till now to receive their awards, as the relevant luncheon was not feasible due to Covid restrictions; in the meantime 7 of them were given a private concert in their homes in late 2020.

Most courses are held at the Manning Uniting Church. Have a look at our website Manning Valley U3A, where next term’s

courses will be listed in April in advance of enrolment.

“Learning for Life!” is our motto. The rewards for joining our University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age are mental stimulation, physical activities, social interaction, learning new skills and enjoyment.

**Have a look at our website, [www.manningvalley.u3anet.org.au](http://www.manningvalley.u3anet.org.au) or contact the Secretary on 0425 757 641.**

## REAL KULTCHA

Well sports fans, how’s your year going so far? Has this virus mess caused you any great hassles? I have to say *The Child Bride* and I seem to have managed quite well and save for some age related problems like, “Where are my glasses?” and “Can you be a little more specific, what month is it?”

**W**e have no complaints. We’re still working on the Travel Cards the Federal Government gave us for petrol and that obviously means we haven’t been doing much

travelling! We’ve just received our NSW (petrol) card so at this rate, that should see us up to Christmas! The joke about the garbage bin going out more often than us really isn’t a joke

around here!

I’ll say it now and then I won’t have to say it again. I think our politicians have handled the crisis quite well. By that I mean they’ve listened to the medical experts and with the arrival of the vaccine, it seems we’re climbing out of the crisis at long last. Our medical people have done us proud and it’ll be quite some way down the track before we can say we’ve thanked them enough.

The big sporting event that occurred is the Oz Tennis Open in Melbourne. Not many folk thought they could pull it off but they did. There are always going to be some dingbats involved of course, and for mine it was Bernard Tomic’s girl friend Vanessa Sierra. I have no idea who she is or where she comes from but it seems they were all told that if they went straight into Melbourne,

they’d have to go into quarantine. I think she thought that was some kind of pizza! Her life was turned up side down and I can understand that, having to spend 2 weeks in a room with Bernie! But she had other major problems and she aired then on National TV: “Why can’t I go to a salon? I never wash my own hair. Do you mean I have to do it myself?” Sweetheart, which part of the word quarantine are you having trouble with?

Bernie made it into the second round but then played like a spoilt child and with some luck neither of them will ever be heard of again.

There was a changing of the guard in the Lady’s comp with Naomi Osaka sweeping all before her and if I were a betting man I’d lay a dollar she’s going to be around for quite a number of

# PM MAKES A MOCKERY OF “DUE PROCESS.”

The cant from our “can do” Prime Minister concerning the necessity for “due process” in considering serious allegations affecting our Attorney-General is breathtaking in its hypocrisy.

**T**he principal premise on which he relies is our much vaunted common-law system – which for hundreds of years did absolutely nothing to protect the most fundamental rights of the homeless, the mentally ill, indigenous peoples and millions of others.

Three decades ago I had the privilege, as Australia’s first Human Rights Commissioner, of conducting extra-judicial national inquiries to address and redress grievous and systemic violations of human rights. The evidence available to me was not available to our courts – for many reasons – including 700 years of rules relating to evidence and procedure. The fact that I was not bound by anything except the rules relating to “natural justice” did not preclude me from reaching conclusions and making recommendations – findings which the Australian Parliament accepted as compelling – and which led to many essential reforms. The principles on which I proceeded had been well-established (and have since been followed) by many different types of inquiries – including numerous Royal Commissions which have found it essential to go beyond what our criminal courts, still bound by very restrictive rules of evidence and procedure,

could achieve.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

It is fundamental to democracy that power must be accompanied by accountability. The Prime Minister’s claim that the Attorney-General’s accountability rests only with our criminal courts is unsustainable – and dangerous. It is also completely inconsistent with past practice. (In Australia and virtually every other Westminster style democracy it has been common practice to stand a minister down pending the outcome of an appropriate inquiry.)

The position of the Attorney-General in our democracy is unique. He is the minister responsible for the administration of justice (not only in our courts but in our tribunals, commissions, and other agencies with quasi-judicial powers). The political and moral implications of his actions have serious consequences for public confidence in the integrity of our most senior political leaders. Because of his position – as the minister responsible for the entire administration of justice (requiring him, if necessary, to put this responsibility above those related to cabinet solidarity) – public confidence in his role is critical.

The Prime Minister has, wilfully or in ignorance, attempted to define

“the rule of law” as being confined to the presumption of innocence. **That is completely wrong.** The rule of law embraces our entire legal system (with various standards applicable in judicial, quasi-judicial and other bodies). It has evolved and is specifically intended to place limits on the power of those we elect. And the claim by Mr. Porter that if he stepped down there would be “no rule of law left in this country” is simply disingenuous nonsense.

There is, clearly, an existing body of evidence that could be relevant to determining whether the AG’s behaviour met the high standards required (including an extensive statement the deceased herself had prepared). Messrs Morrison and Porter have both declined to read that statement – which is now circulating. So, in the absence of an appropriate inquiry, this corrosive controversy will continue – in the public arena.

## INQUIRY NEEDED

A properly constituted inquiry by an eminent judicial figure would be entirely appropriate to ensure that fairness to the AG and the rule of law are duly observed. The former Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and the former President of the Law Council of Australia, along with oth-

er eminent lawyers, have all supported an independent investigation.

In his emotional press conference Mr. Porter expressed his concern for the family of the deceased; they also believe an inquiry is necessary.

In this government, one minister after another has been accused of serious malfeasance – accusations always initially met by the Prime Minister with obfuscation or denial. He has been fond of referring to the necessity for “due process”. A fundamental requirement of due process is equal protection of the law. But our Prime Minister presides over a government which routinely denies these rights to hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers, including small children, some of whom have been in detention for years – in circumstances so inhumane several have died.

The Prime Minister’s hypocrisy in relying on “due process” is graphically compounded, when juxtaposed with the current case being pursued by his government – with the active intervention of this Attorney-General – against Bernard Collaery and Witness K.

“Due process”? To our shame, this government makes a mockery of it!

**Prof. Brian Burdekin AO  
Hallidays Point**

years. Meanwhile, Serena Williams has felt the cold breath of Old Father Time on the back of her neck and has some serious thinking to do. Does she retire now and effectively go out at the top of her fame or does she play on? I’d think she’d probably still be able to make it through three or maybe even four rounds of any championship she entered for several years yet, but then she’ll come up against one of those highly trained, super fit, hard charging and much younger players and probably get blown off the court. If I were Serena I’d bow out gracefully now, have another child and then set up a tennis clinic and pass on the enormous talent she has to the next couple of generations.

On the other hand, Old Father Time hasn’t been able to get within a bull’s roar of Novak Djokovic and he

made short work of the Russian Daniil Medvedev in the men’s final. I’d put a dollar on Novak also being around and competitive, for several more years as well.

*The Galahs* are over in New Zealand at the moment because nobody wanted to go to South Africa where there’s a very virulent strain of COVID running about. Having been beaten by the Indian Second XI here, it seems now this team has finally found their level of competence in the game because *The Black Caps* have belted them from pillar to post! In short, *The Galahs* have played pathetically and there is now a very real chance I may get the long awaited call-up. Stay tuned, I’ll let you know.

From Left Field. The name Russia, their flag and national anthem have all been banned from the next two

Olympics because the IOC and the World Anti-Doping Agency have convicted them of tampering with a test database in a lab controlled by Russia. Fair enough but what then follows I don’t understand. Russian athletes will still be allowed to take part in the Olympics and they’ll compete under a version of the Olympic flag. I don’t understand that.

Somebody (I don’t know who and I really must be more careful with whom I associate) whispered in my ear a few days ago that the cross-country wrestlers have started up again. That came as a complete surprise to me as I was under the impression, because the game was in such a sick state at the end of last season, that COVID had wiped it out! But No! Like Lazarus they’ve risen again. Mind you, *The Waratahs* (that’s the

NSW side) currently look as if their end of year trip should be to the knackery! To date they’ve played and lost two games (to *The Reds* [41-7] and *The Brumbies* [61-10]) and by the time you read this, they’ll have played *The Western Force* and I doubt they’re capable of winning that one either. They could even be rejected by the knackery at the end of the season! One assumes even the knackery has standards.

The round ball enthusiasts (G’day Max) have started up again or maybe they never even stopped! I don’t know but like basketball and rugby, I don’t really care. Be Happy and March to the Drumbeat you Hear in Your own Head. That’s my philosophy.

Talk at you next month,  
*The Hillside Critic.*

Continued from page 1

## ARE OUR COUNCIL RATES GOING UP... AGAIN?

some areas Council rates will now be going up as a result of this "Harmonisation" and in some places they may be going down. But we don't really know as Council hasn't bothered to tell us yet!

MidCoast Councillors passed the Resolution 413/20 by 7 votes to 3:

*That Council:*

1. Adopt the categories and sub-categories outlined in the Table 'Proposed Categories & Sub-Categories' contained within the report.

2. Adopt the draft rate structure contained within Annexure A as the basis for a community information program to be undertaken in early 2021.

Working through the smoke-screen of official waffle aimed at playing down the consequences, it appears some Councillors have pre-determined what the new rates structure will be, without any reference to, nor public exhibition of, those rates, with no community input, nor prior public consultation.

Councillors who voted for this Resolution were:

Cr David West, Cr Len Roberts, Cr Claire Pontin, Cr Troy Fowler, Cr Brad Christensen, Cr Jan McWilliams Cr Karen Hutchinson.

Those against were Cr Peter Epov, Cr Kathryn Bell and Kathryn Smith.

Cr Peter Epov did move an amendment, appealing for the new rates structure to be placed on public exhibition (for public consultation) before a final determination was made by Council, but this was defeated by the same group.

(Cr David Keegan was not at that Council Meeting, making it the 9<sup>th</sup>

meeting that he missed, out of the 18 held in 2020.)

Since that Resolution was adopted very little has been published by Council on the subject.

The second part of the Resolution indicated that "a community information program to be undertaken in early 2021". Since that December meeting nothing of any substance has been revealed by Council to the broader community.

### COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

For those keen enough, or able, to check Council's home page there are links and references to fifteen subjects ranging from Bushfire Recovery and Covid 19 Information to Pets and Animals all boldly displayed but there is no reference pointing to this significant issue of "Rate Harmonisation" nor to the new rate structure, something that will affect every single ratepayer in the Council Area.

At that December meeting Council also promised that a "Rates Calculator" would be placed on Council's website, but at the time of going to publication there has been no sign of this tool.

### RATES SHOCK

To many this "Rate Harmonisation" will come as a significant surprise or shock, and a further financial burden, particularly when not only the primary rate goes up but also when that 5% Special Rate Variation kicks in and is applied **on top** of our rates.

To be fair, the subject of "Rate Harmonisation" (rate equalisation) has been mandated by the NSW Government since the Proclamation

which created the new amalgamated Council. The original requirement by the NSW Government was that all newly merged councils were required to establish a new, equitable rating structure, and transition to it from 1 July 2020.

This challenging and problematic issue has been known by MidCoast Council since the first day of merger, but unlike other councils very little has been done to prepare the Mid-Coast community.

### EXTENDED DEADLINE

The deadline for "Rate Harmonisation" was subsequently extended by the NSW Government to 1 July 2021, but our Council has not commenced a conversation with the Community and appears determined to just steam roll through and impose the new rate structure at the 11th hour, without formal public exhibition and consultation.

### OTHER AMALGAMATED COUNCILS

The majority of other newly created Councils dealt with the issue last year, and have thoroughly and comprehensively engaged with their communities, placing the proposed rates structures on public exhibition for comment, before a final determination.

Yet again, the management of the issue by MidCoast Council shows an arrogance that will leave many ratepayers angry and concerned. It's bad enough to have to pay more, but for what?

Most of the other 16 newly amalgamated Councils approached the challenge of "Rate Harmonisation" by informing their communities of the issue well in advance, explaining

how they were proposing to treat the issue and how they arrived at the proposed rate structures, which were then placed on public exhibition for community consultation and public input.

### RATES HARMONISATION REFERENCE PANELS.

A number of Councils actually advertised for expressions of interest from members of their communities to participate in "Rates Harmonisation Reference Panels" to help determine draft rates for public consideration.

Clearly the overwhelming majority

of the other 16 Councils saw this as an opportunity, as it affected all rate-payers, to be proactive, giving people early notice of the requirement and to be inclusive and transparent. The methodology was structured around being inclusive and focused on delivering services to their community along with a lot of other important issues and subjects by openly engaging with their communities. There were no attempts at covering up information or reducing disclosure to the barest minimum.

If you search hard enough you'll find a comprehensive 30 page briefing paper produced for Council dating back to May 2019, by one of MidCoast Council's favoured Consultants, Morrison Low.

This details in Table 4 (page 21) an itemised schedule of suggested actions which include:

Council Workshop - Rates Structure Scenarios - June 2019

Prepare Community Engagement Strategy - August 2019

Commence Community Engagement Activities - Rates Harmonisation - September 2019

Rates Modelling - New land valuations - re-model rate structure and prepare ratepayer impact analysis - November 2019

Rates and Revenue Policy decision - December 2019

Written notice of rates categories / subcategories to ratepayers - February 2020

Council Workshop - Harmonised Revenue Policy - March 2020

Council Workshop - Long Term Financial Plan - March 2020

**Harmonised Revenue Policy endorsed for public exhibition - March 2020**

**Adopt Harmonised Revenue Policy and Rates Structure - June 2020**

Post rates notices July 2020.

Regrettably Council did not follow the Consultants' advice on engagement and consultation.

The Briefing Note was presented to Council back in May 2019 for implementation before 1 July 2020, so the same schedule could have been easily adopted when the deadline was extended by the NSW Government by an additional year.

It is also very concerning that after commissioning that Consultant's Briefing Note, at some cost, very little if any, of the recommended actions, particularly in relation to public engagement as itemised in that schedule of timetabled actions, have been undertaken.

No doubt Council will be using Covid 19 as their excuse, or telling us that the rates will be confirmed in June this year along with the next Budget so people can still have some



**Dis 'n' Dat**

**2BOB Radio's Disability Advocacy and Inclusion program**

**Goes to air on FM 104.7 each Monday from 12.00-2.00pm.**

**Produced and directed by Matt Early.**

**2BOB Radio your community station**

input.

Surely the community's best opportunity to have their say on the new proposed rate structure is before Council has adopted that rate structure, and not when it has been interlaced with a Budget a Delivery and Operational plan and a whole bunch of other considerations six months later.

#### LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Consultant's Briefing Note also makes significant references to Financial Sustainability and the need for an accurate and up-to-date Long Term Financial Plan, a subject Councillor Peter Epov has been advocating for several years.

The May 2019 Briefing Note stated:

*"Council is currently refining its consolidated long term financial planning and asset management planning."*

So here we are in March 2021, nearly two years after that Briefing Note, and after a number of promises from Council to produce a Long Term Financial Plan and yet that plan is still not in place, but they have determined what our rates will be.

Why is it so difficult for our Council with its \$280 Million Budget to produce a Long Term Financial Plan? After all, it is only and essentially a cash flow projection extended over 10 years, So what would it expose?

#### MORE CONSULTANTS

Apparently Council is working on a Long Term Financial Plan and has again engaged some 'consultants' to help them.

So will the plan commence from the 2017/18 Year when the new Council was elected or the 2018/19 when Council published its first Budget (including a Long term Financial Plan). Or will it commence from the 2021/22 Year when possibly all manner of prior sins can be omitted and erased?

Other questions include the growing shadow over the much lauded \$100 Million Roads Program, where Council received a NSW Government Grant of \$50 Million Dollars over four years to be matched by Council through a \$50 million loan, to be borrowed over that same four year period for a list of specified roadworks.

From Council records it is clear that they have not been borrowing the required amounts for that Roads Program and given the number of projects that have not been completed and the constant "re-voting" of projects (*council speak for failing to complete projects in the specified financial year and transferring them into the next year*) over the past two years it seems unlikely that all the proposed roadworks within that four year \$100 Million Program will be completed on time.

Perhaps there have been too many distractions for the Administration, like the Office Centralisation - a very expensive computer system that apparently still doesn't work effectively, the Executive Restructure by our rookie GM where five divisions were shrunk into three, or the inconceivable turnover in Council Staff.

Bring on the Local Government Election on 4 September! We can do better!



## Manning-Great Lakes Greens

Social Equity & Economic Justice | Ecological Sustainability | Grassroots Democracy | Peace, Nonviolence & Disarmament

### Environmental activists agree: The future is now!

MidCoast Council residents and ratepayers cannot wait for another consultation or survey when it comes to the environment, sustainable practices and social justice.

Longtime activists and concerned citizens gathered at the Manning Valley Uniting Church on Saturday, March 13 to participate in a grassroots process to determine the most urgent regional issues facing our local townships, rural districts and iconic bush and coastal landmarks.

More than 30 people came from the far reaches of the amalgamated council area to share their ideas and enjoy an indoor picnic at the church hall. Hosted by the Manning-Great Lakes Greens, the Environmental Revival Picnic was a chance to hear from speakers, connect with others and determine the top campaign issues they would like to see addressed by local council candidates ahead of the September 4 election.

Aunty Pam Saunders of the Biripi people welcomed those gathered to her grandmother's country. She congratulated them for looking after the environment. Aunty Pam shared her memories of the annual, six-week camps at Saltwater National Park, where as a child she and others were given a small, baby possum to take care of during their stay. "They hung off our fingers by their little tails and they were beautiful," she remembered.

Other speakers on the day were Susie Russell from the North East Forest Alliance, Jessica Leck from MidCoast and Tops Landcare, Katrina Paterson, independent council candidate and MidCoast Community Matters social

media administrator and Leonie McGuire, past manager of the now defunct Taree Women's Refuge. Former Taree City Councillor Helen Hannah and former Gloucester mayor and councillor Julie Lyford also attended the picnic, adding relevant comments and questions throughout the day.

Compere Dheera Smith divided the attendees into picnic table buzz groups to discuss and report back on focus questions. As participants strove to identify their top priorities, cups of tea and supplies from their covid-safe, BYO picnic baskets kept them going.

"The people who took the time to attend were the stars of the day," Smith said. "When they got up and reported the results of their discussions, it was really gratifying to see so much agreement about what matters around the region."

While a full list of the top issues will be posted on the Manning Great Lakes Greens FB page and Greens for Local Council 2021, FB page, the overriding feeling on the day was one of urgency.

Steve Ballantine of Greenpoint, summed this up in his group's summary report. "No matter which issue we talked about today--It was clear the future is now," Ballantine said.

Manning-Great Lakes Greens hope to facilitate further discussions for the community before the September elections.

**The group is actively seeking Greens candidates for the MidCoast council elections. For more information contact the Convenor on [greensmgl@gmail.com](mailto:greensmgl@gmail.com).**

Continued from page 1

# WATER WATER EVERYWHERE... BUT SOON NOT A DROP TO DRINK??

supply and “she’ll be right” assurances the dam is adequate. But water security here, and indeed within all Australia, is a major concern.

## A NEW DAM?

MidCoast Water used to have a comprehensive program aimed at providing reticulated water and sewer for small communities and plans to grow and expand water supply : a second dam; expanding the supply from the Nabiac aquifer, so we can only hope this will be adequate for the long term.

Many see construction, building, development as a means of keeping the area alive.

But there are instances of land being developed in areas well known for flooding where the shovelling in of tons of fill is starting to affect the natural drainage and the flow of stormwater into our rivers.

One example from a local is that since the “Bullocks Run” estate went in, Bungwahl Creek now backs up much more with rain than it ever used to. And with housing estates multiplying like fleas throughout our region someone needs to look at the big picture.

What are the arrangements for water and sewer for all these developments? Some areas are very low lying so sewers could be a real issue. It doesn’t appear that infrastructure is keeping pace.

Twenty five years ago MidCoast Water (then MidCoast County Council) was formed because the general purpose councils were using water and sewer as a cash cow ... taking the rates but not maintaining the infrastructure. Now that we’re amalgamated and responsibility for water and sewer has been handed back to the general purpose Council we see history repeating itself.

We have a cash-strapped council desperate for money and we have a bucket of money in the form of water and sewer rates. Guess who pays! All the infrastructure built up by MidCoast Water over a quarter of a

century will fall into decay because the rates will be diverted to other things ... and twenty years from now the state government will be forced to strip responsibility from the council and form a separate water authority. And what have we lost or gained in interim?

We are all acutely aware of what happened in the drought. The supply could not meet demand. Then it rained and any measures toward future supply security seemed to be forgotten. Desalination was a part of the strategy during the drought. Apparently some of the infrastructure was left in place for possible future use but will it be left to decay now it’s no longer a priority?

Meanwhile the billing model falls on ratepayers’ shoulders. It was originally supposed to be a “user pays” system but the charges for actual usage have been overwhelmed by the charges for “access”. Of course, such a model is very attractive to councils ... they get a substantial and consistent income which is largely independent of having to supply the product.

Electricity supply has gone the same way.

## CHARGE FOR USAGE

The bulk of our bills are the

access charge and only a tiny proportion is our actual usage. This charging model makes a mockery of trying to encourage water conservation. It doesn’t really matter how frugal consumers are with their water ... any change in our bills will be imperceptible. Some people have noticed that if they go away and turn off the water at the meter while away, their bill for the period is almost exactly the same as usual.

The argument for the access charge is that it goes toward paying for the provision of infrastructure; new pipes, reservoirs, and all these new developments. However, developers already pay a “headworks levy” to cover any needed additional infrastructure.

Council are no doubt loathe to turn off the tap of such a revenue stream.

As one resident commented, “To be honest I find the whole thing depressing. The quiet coastal town we moved to years ago is now choked with traffic. High rise everywhere. Rates are through the roof but services are declining and we have an intransigent council who believe their role is to rule rather than to serve. It’s all about more, more, more! The concept of “enough” doesn’t exist. Sustainability isn’t part of the equation.”

But should development, especially of crammed small metre blocks, be the major priority? Surely the focus should be on ‘sustainable development’. The other problem that we have is our LEP and what is actually permitted to change within the LEP.

Councillor Peter Epov has been advocating subdivision to smaller acreage lots of 1, 5, 10, 25 acre lots, but apparently the NSW planning department is opposed to this in principle.

Council is finalising its Rural Strategy which will be included into a new draft LEP, but possibly they will not be proposing any change to small acreage lots.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

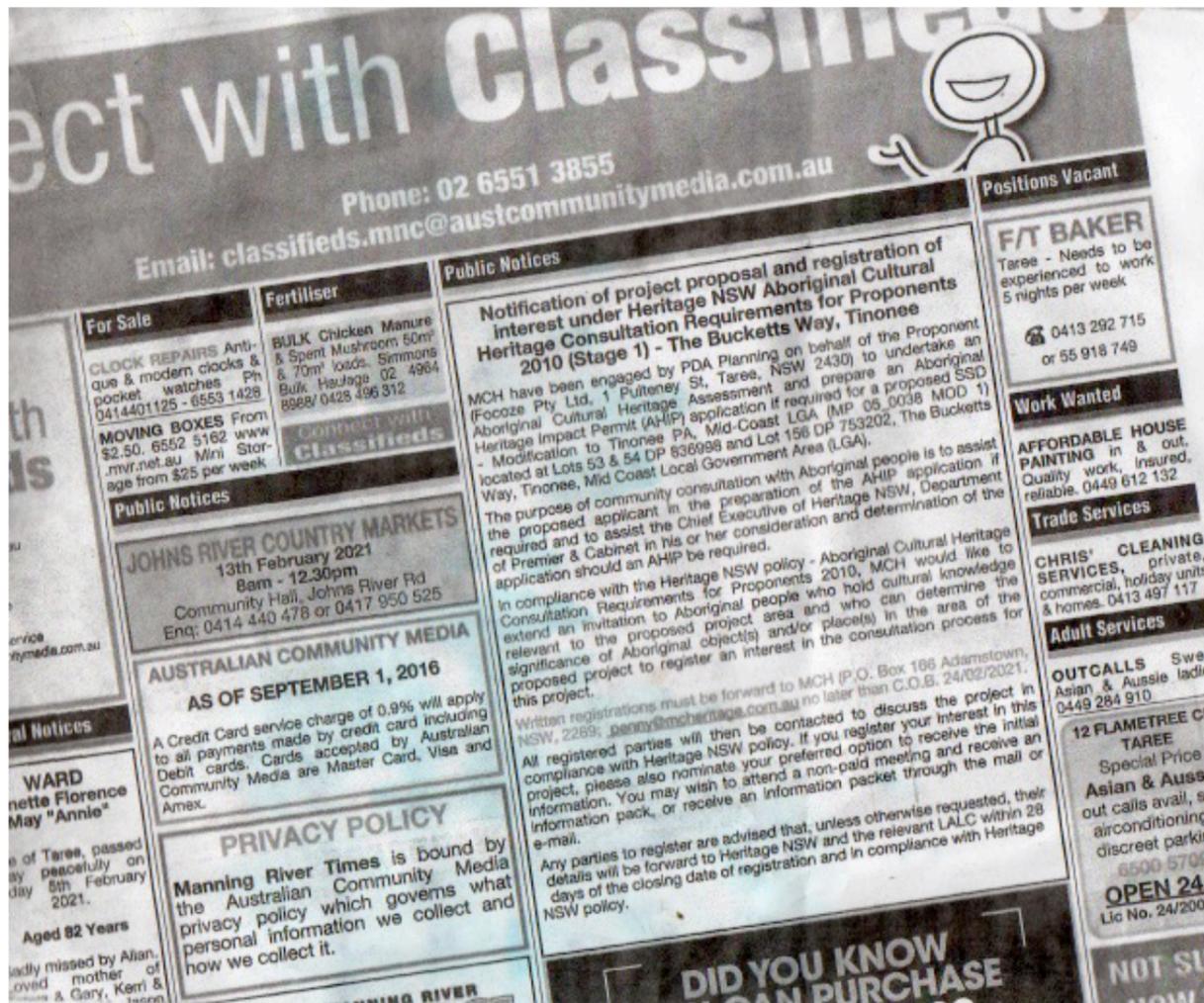
Surely it’s quality of life, preservation of nature, strategic planning of green tourism, homes in peaceful spaces, smart business plans for renewables and resources yet retaining what drew us here in the first place. Progress and innovation must come but not impose, nor dominate and remove the visual history of what made this place so appealing.

We should tread lightly, unobtrusively, on the landscape of the coast and sea, the forests, the river flats, the mountains, the lushness of old dairy farms, the peace of the mountains. A place that looks forward but treasures its past, where nature and old trees thrive, where one can sit quietly, pleased at the future we’re building for our kids, and reflect how lucky to be where we are.

But our future is not in our hands alone. It takes wise heads and good and honest people to protect and move us safely forward. We need such people standing for Council.

Vote wisely September 4.

(As this paper went to print Council announced it intended to upgrade Gloucester’s water infrastructure by establishing two new reservoirs. Ed.)





## Important Public Announcement

# EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

**MidCoast Councillor, Peter Epov, is currently conducting preliminary investigations into running as a Candidate at the 2021 MidCoast Council Elections on 4 September.**

**Peter is inviting expressions of interest and or support (and comments), from persons who would like to either participate and / or assist a potential Group which Peter may form for the 2021 Election.**

### Peter Epov:

*"MidCoast Council is now a major Regional Council which will have spent over a total of \$1 Billion dollars, in the four budgets ending at June 2021. This makes our Council a significant trading enterprise which requires the highest levels of corporate governance, as well as a core focus on rebuilding public trust through genuine transparency and accountability. It is critically important to engage and have the community actively contribute to the future of our region.*

*Many people have rightly questioned the performance of this Council since amalgamation, and what has really been achieved.*

*It is clear that our community now needs to elect representatives onto Council who are sufficiently proficient to the level required to control Council's finances and to effectively oversee the work of senior executives who manage a staff of over 800 employees, whilst simultaneously representing our diverse communities' interests in a fair, effective and*

*equitable manner. Representatives who are not afraid to listen to the community, who will speak and engage with the public and are not afraid to justify their decisions, coherently.*

*Our Council needs significant reform in order to operate as an efficient business, with the understanding that Council's core business is in the delivery of vitally important services which can contribute meaningfully to the quality of the lives of our residents and to the prosperity of our communities. Thus your future elected representatives will need to enact policies and implement strategies to ensure that Council can effectively deliver those vital key services and important infrastructure projects such as road works which are enduring, timely and to budget."*

**So if we want real change and reform that will actually make our Council markedly more effective, we all need to play a greater role in this democratic process.**

If you would like to contribute please register your interest or support by mail to: **PO Box 431 Wingham 2429**, OR by Email to: **PEpovMCC21@gmail.com**

**OR** you can call on **0477 521931**. All expressions of interest will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Paid advertisement

## Remembering Manning Village Teams Cricket Grand Final

**The completion of the 2020-21 Manning Cricket season marked the 75th Anniversary of the 1945-46 Grand Final.**

**That season was the resumption of the sport in the Manning following World War II.**

The Village Green (Central Park), Wingham was the venue for the decider between neighbouring villages Burrell Creek and Tinonee. Neither club had ever won an A Grade title since the Manning Association was formed in 1893. Thus, the stakes were high for Tinonee, an original government town and nearby Burrell Creek, a close knit rural community.

Burrell Creek batted first and tallied a worthy team total of 268 runs. Vince Martin at just nineteen and a half years of age dominated the Tinonee bowling with a majestic 137. George Titcume (24) and Bob Cox (22) were the next best while four other batsmen reached double figures. The Tinonee side was

best served by Weller Maiden with 5-95.

In reply Tinonee was dismissed for a meagre 70 runs, to all but hand the title to the Creek boys. Jack Abbott took the bowling honours with four wickets.

In the second innings Tinonee showed some resolve to compile 166, Fred George (42), Dudley Johnston (31) and J Gollan 25 not out, the principal run-getters.

The spin bowling of Ron Martin with four wickets for 61 dashed any hopes of a Tinonee comeback.

Fred Lambert captained Tinonee while Jack Abbott was the skipper of the victorious Burrell Creek side.

Numerous players from both sides continued playing well beyond this game and also served as officials of the MRD Cricket Association.

Among spectators at the game were cousins Johnny and Alan Martin cheering their home team, Burrell Creek.

Incidentally, this was the sole A

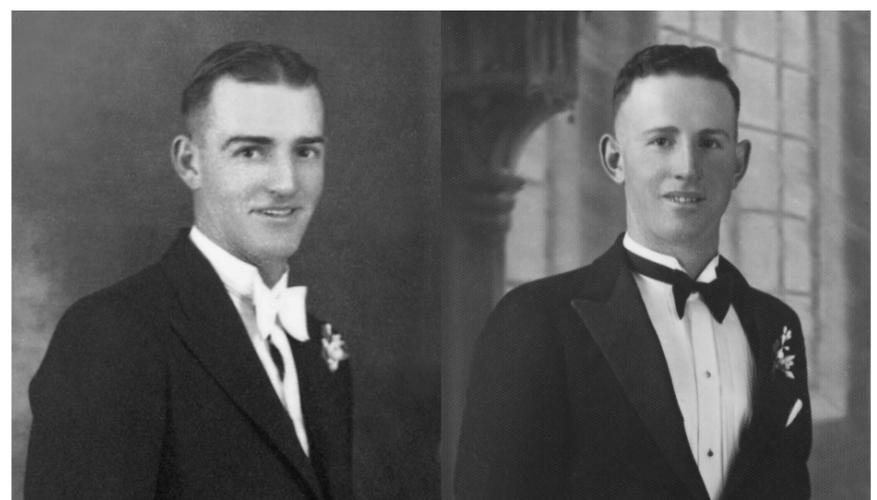
Grade premiership win by Burrell Creek while Tinonee never registered a top grade title.

**Burrell Creek:** Eric Easton Ron Martin Vince Martin Jack Abbott Stan Wells Jack Keppie George Titcume Bob Cox Tom Cox Warwick Martin Neville Andrews

**Tinonee:** R Smith Weller Maiden

Will Muldoon Bill Lambert Arch Murray Fred Lambert Dudley Johnston Fred George Royce Johnston Charlie Edwards J Gollan

Les Eastaway  
Taree



Tom Cox and brother Bob Cox from the Burrell Creek team

# WINGHAM PET MOTEL GETS A BIG BARK OF APPROVAL

One of the traumas of travelling is leaving beloved pets behind. But Wingham Canine Lodge and Pet Motel gets a five paw rating.

## BOARDING

Cats have the choice of an apartment in the cattery overlooking the 100 acres, or a bedroom with air con in the granny flat.

Selected dogs can stay in Ros and Mike Walker's home, sleeping on or beside their bed and jumping off the jetty into the lake by day.

A heated dog hydro therapy pool will be completed in June - with an infinity edge to maximise the Pet Motel's ridgetop view west across to the mountains.

A certified puppy trainer, Ros offers boarding and training weeks for puppies aged 11 to 14 weeks. The pups stay in her home where they learn foundation skills such as toilet

training, loose leash walking, and come when called as well as being socialised to other dogs, people and things in a fun and positive way.

## PUPPY SCHOOL

Dogs and their owners will soon be able to attend a new vet clinic-based Puppy Play-school free for pups is under 12 weeks of age who have had their first vaccination.

This will help create friendlier, safer and less fearful dogs in the community says Dr Elena Dreyer who, with husband Dr Geert Lampen own Manning Veterinary Hospital, where the Playschool will be held.

"We are offering two weeks free to encourage dog owners



to bring their dogs before their vital puppy socialisation period ends at about 12 weeks of age," Dr Elena says.

She often sees fearful dogs attending the hospital. "Pups who come to Playschool will get to know our clinics as places of fun and be much more comfortable coming in for future vaccinations and medical appointments."

The classes will be run by Wingham Pet Motel's Ros Walker and partner Mike, who have been successfully operating Puppy

Playdays at the boarding facility for 6 years. They also train dogs for television and offer board and training weeks for puppies.

"There'll be a big focus on puppy play and handling as well as foundation training to teach appropriate behaviours such as bite inhibition, four feet on the floor and loose leash walking, which are so much easier to teach early, before inappropriate habits have formed," Ros says.

After the two free weeks, owners

have the option to pay for another four classes.

"Puppies that are correctly socialised between 7 and 12 weeks have a far greater chance of being friendly, able to play with other dogs and will better cope with 'scary' things throughout their life. They'll also be less likely to end up in a shelter because of behavioural problems."

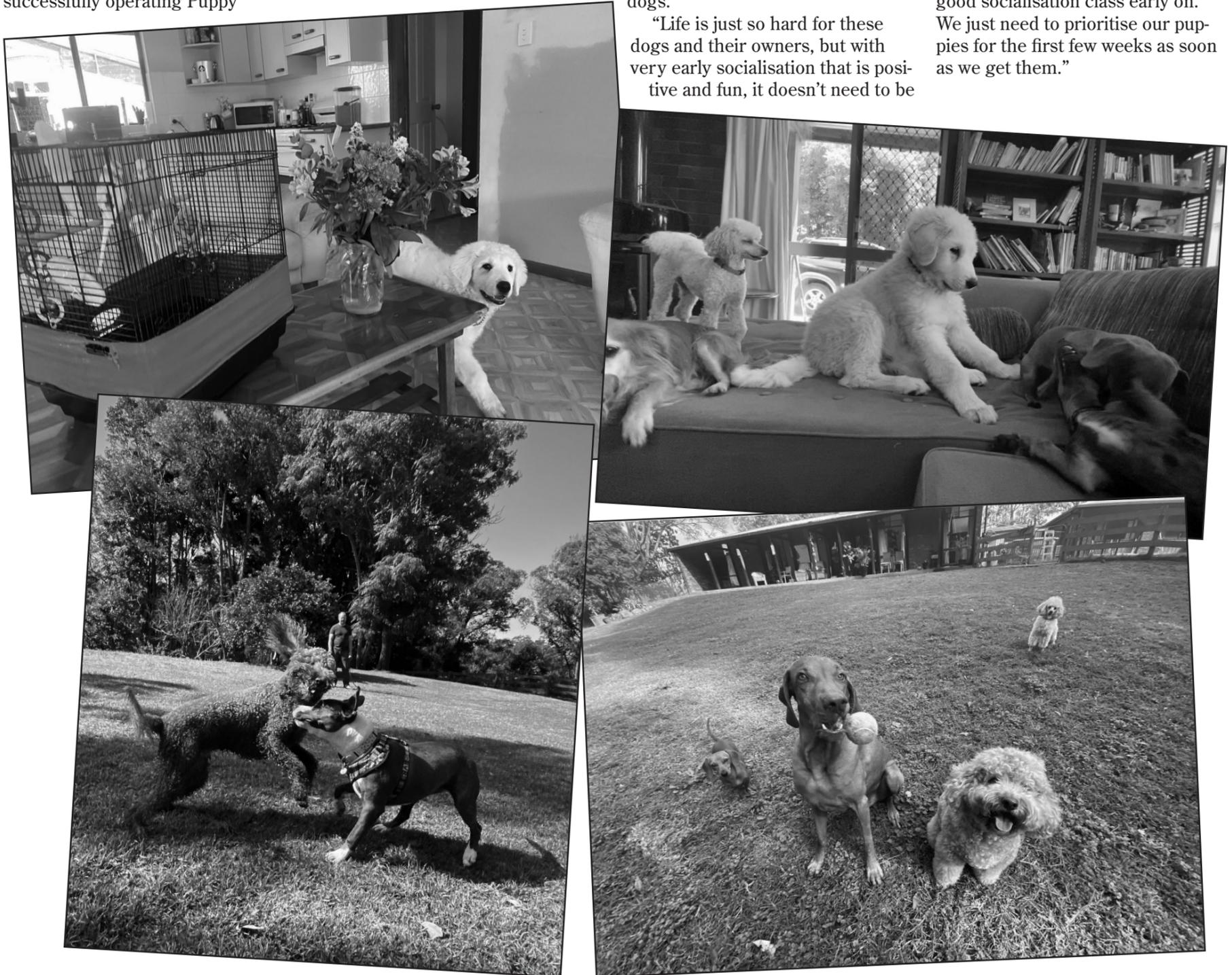
Ros and Mike see adult dogs coming to the Pet Motel every day who are fearful of people and other dogs.

"Life is just so hard for these dogs and their owners, but with very early socialisation that is positive and fun, it doesn't need to be

like that.

"Because the first 12 weeks are when dog's when sociability outweighs fear, this is a window of opportunity for puppies to adapt to new people, animals, and experiences. After that, it is much more difficult."

For many years Ros volunteered in dog shelters, helping to modify the behaviour of under socialised rescue dogs. "It was a very difficult task and made me realise that it's far easier to get your pup into a good socialisation class early on. We just need to prioritise our puppies for the first few weeks as soon as we get them."



**To enrol in Puppy Playschool at Manning Veterinary Hospital in Taree go to [www.winghampetmotel.com.au/puppy-playschool](http://www.winghampetmotel.com.au/puppy-playschool) or phone Ros and Mike on 6557 0055.**

**WHAT: Puppy Playschool**

**WHEN: 11am Sundays**

**FOR WHO: Pups one week after first vaccination**

**HOW MUCH: 2 weeks FREE for pups aged 8-12 weeks then \$150 for 4 more classes**

**WHERE: Manning Veterinary Hospital, Taree**

**BOOK: <https://winghampetmotel.com.au/puppies>**

# GROWING BLUEBERRIES ON THE MID NORTH COAST



Delicious and versatile - they're just two of the reasons why blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum* and Hybrids) are among the most popular fruits to grow in home gardens.

**Y**ou can grow them in an orchard, veggie bed or garden bed - dwarf varieties will even grow happily in a large container. Blueberries grow across many climates, which means there's a variety suitable for most.

### GROWING NEEDS

When it comes to soil, blueberries prefer acidic conditions. In alkaline soils, grow blueberries in containers filled with a potting mix formulated for acid-loving plants (Searles Gardenia, Camellia and Azalea Potting & Planting Mix is ideal). If you'd rather plant in a garden bed, soil pH can also be lowered with the addition of acidifying products such as sulphur. However, if you're unsure of your soil pH drop into the nursery and we can test this for you.

Blueberries also need very well-drained soil. In heavy, clay-based soils, grow blueberries in raised beds or containers. While these plants tolerate partial shade, full sun produces the best crops. Keep plants sheltered from cold winds and well-watered, especially during hot, dry or windy conditions and when fruit is forming.

Blueberries don't need lots of fertiliser. Fertilise in spring using an azalea and camellia plant food and keep the area around each plant well mulched with organic mulch. This will help to keep the soil moist and cool.

Pruning isn't a big issue for these plants either. Young blueberries are pruned to shape bushes, while older plants are pruned in winter to encourage new growth by removing any old, dead or spindly growth.



### FLOWERS AND FRUIT

Depending on the variety and climate, blueberries can flower and fruit from late winter through to early summer, so grow several varieties to enjoy a long harvest.

Most varieties are self-fertile, but will produce better with other blueberries growing nearby. They do, however, need protection against birds which might steal fruit before you get a chance to harvest it. Use bird-safe netting stretched tautly to avoid ensnaring birds or reptiles in the covering.

Blueberries have few other problems, although they can be attacked by fruit fly in fruit fly-prone areas.

Protect crops using organic fruit fly baits. Blueberry rust, a disease recently introduced into Australia, can also pose a problem. Treat with a fungicide and avoid overhead watering.

While some blueberries ripen all at once, most home garden varieties crop over many months. Pick berries when they are fully-coloured and sweet. Leave berries that are tart, poorly coloured (still green or pink tinged) or firm on the bush to fully ripen.

Blueberries can be eaten fresh, added to cooking, or frozen to use later (that is if they last that long!).

### VARIETY GUIDE

There are many varieties of blueberries on the market, and they vary in a number of ways. Fruiting time, necessity for winter chilling (low winter temperatures) and the size and colour of fruit can differ wildly from variety to variety. While some blueberries tend to grow quite large, there are also several naturally-dwarf varieties available which are ideal for home gardens - especially in small spaces, containers, raised garden beds or to grow as a low hedge around a vegetable garden.

### VARIETIES SUITABLE FOR THE LOCAL AREA INCLUDE:

Variety	Dimensions	Fruiting period	Comments
Brightwell	2 x 2m	Dec-Feb	Suited to hotter areas. Vigorous grower and heavy yielder.
Sunshine Blue	1 x 1m	Oct-Dec	More tolerant than other blueberries of alkaline conditions and needs little pruning. Suited to small spaces or pots.
Tiff Blue	1.2 x 1.2m	Nov-Jan	Often described as one of the better flavoured varieties. Bushy upright growth. Higher water demand.

The nursery stocks all of these varieties for \$12.95. All are grown on site so are acclimatised and ready to grow!

Caitlin

**Wingham Nursery & Florist**  
02 65534570



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**

# FLATHEAD HAVEN!

A warm welcome to our many visitors who have chosen to spend their holiday time with us. To those of you who have an ambition to catch a fish you are in for treat as you have entered the “Land of the Giants”.

**I** am forever astounded, not only at the availability of numerous species of fish, but of their quality. Monster, broad shouldered dusky flathead snooze in the warm shallows from Shoal Bay right throughout the system, up into the far reaches of Tilligerry Creek and the Karuah River. Indeed in many areas along our mid north coast.

Thumping big, bright eyed whiting are nosing along the beaches and cruising up into the Port. Bumper bream are everywhere. Wherever you find an oyster you will find a bream.

Outside the heads snapper over the magical 10kg mark are swimming in real close particularly as the sea rises retreating to the outer reefs when the sea settles.

Cracker mulloway over 20kg have regularly been reported along all the beaches and in the deep water inside the Port around Middle Island off Soldiers Point. Let's not forget the monster mud crabs, so big, they think they are turtles.

Remember you are in a Marine Park and rules apply.

Also a quick pic before releasing can be just as satisfying as ending the old fellas's days!



Paul Lennon with his grandpa Flathead

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](http://www.stinker.com.au) or send an email to [editor@manningcommunitynews.com](mailto:editor@manningcommunitynews.com) with your information and questions.

# A CRY FROM MYANMAR THAT TOUCHES US ALL...

Our people are being arrested, tortured and slaughtered by a Military dictator and his followers who are police and soldiers. We have many proof that soldiers change their uniforms to avoid international attention.



DI Morrissey and Ven Wiza at the school she established outside Mandalay in 2011

**I** am 40 years old and have lived with fear and hatred since I was 8 years old. I still remember that day in August 1988, when soldiers came to search our house with guns. I did not know what they were searching for, but my grandmother said the police and soldiers were not trust-worthy persons. They can create drop something illegal out of their pockets accusing you that you had stolen and you must be arrested.

From the 1st of February 2021 I feel that fear and hatred again as the wonderful feeling of freedom and security from 2015-2020 when our national leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party governed our country with respect and care has now gone.

Daw Suu, our president and Union ministers were detained and the military robbed them of the power to rule the country. We feel hopeless and helpless despair as we have no one to lead us.. Internet is cut off every night so

that we cannot let the world know what's happening. So we go out on the streets to protest peacefully shouting slogans such as *We need Justice, We do not accept military coup, Free Our Leaders and Respect our votes.*

Our votes are crucially important as the coup leader insists the result of our recent election is a fraud. The people won by a Landslide (82%) and there is no proof that it was fraud.

We protest everyday on the streets and in front of UN offices and embassies. The people of Myanmar are so united that one can be tearful with respect. Thousands of protesters are on the streets and hundreds of people prepare food and water, offer snacks and soft drinks which we all share. At the end of the day, we go home leaving clean and empty roads /streets. Myanmar people

people for no reason. At night the Military Coup followers shoot into houses so we guard in the streets holding metal pots and rods. When they come in, we beat the pot to let everybody know that they are coming but we must hide or be shot in the head. We are exhausted by protesting in the day and guarding the house at night. But we will fight till the end to breathe without fear and for my younger generation to grow up with freedom from fear and security.

We have to uproot this Military Coup system. We need justice. Our trusted group CRPH meaning Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is organised by our elected Union Ministers who we trust. With their tireless working, we can let the UN know what's happening in Myanmar and at the same time make the terrorist group or Military Group

illegitimate in south east Asian countries and the world.

We are risking our lives to get back what we has been stolen from us. I know that my life is not safe anymore but I don't want to live under Military boots with fear and bullies. I would rather die fighting our freedom and security.

When I see this Gen-Z is losing their lives, fighting and running away from armed terrorist groups,

my heart is broken and full of tears as they are 14,16 to 25 years old and few over 30. They should be in the classroom or online class studying for their future.

I have never been upset and depressed helplessly and hopelessly like this time before. Our lady, the lady of the whole nation is detained. Our future is in her hands once more. Every night I



Students at the Golden End Education Centre

used to throw litter everywhere before 2015. But during these 5 years when the people's elected government was ruling the country with respect, love, compassion, and wisdom, we learned and studied how to be a good and respectful citizen as we experienced security and the freedom from fear.

But now I am scared as the soldiers come in our houses and shoot with no reason and in the streets kidnap and beat the

Continued on page 15



This elegant dish ticks all the boxes when it comes to flavour, texture and presentation. The combination of blushing pink prawns and vibrant green asparagus offers a pretty palette, with a subtle sweetness and earthy aromas. You will notice there is no parmigiano added to the mantecatura; this is because, with a few notable exceptions, Italians prefer to let the delicate flavour of seafood shine through.

Rrp \$39.99 and Published by PLUM

Photography by Rob Palmer

## RISOTTO with asparagus and prawns

1 bunch of asparagus  
12 raw prawns  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin  
olive oil  
40 g butter  
350 g carnaroli or arborio rice  
200 ml dry white wine  
2 litres good-quality vegetable  
stock, brought to a gentle  
simmer  
salt flakes and freshly ground  
black pepper  
finely grated lemon zest,  
to serve

SERVES 4



Trim the woody ends off the asparagus and peel the spears if they are thick. Cut the stems into 2 cm pieces, keeping the tips intact. Set aside.

Peel and devein the prawns. You can add the prawn shells and heads to your stock for extra flavour if you like.

Heat the olive oil and half the butter in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add the rice and stir until well coated in the oil and butter.

Add the wine and allow the alcohol to evaporate, stirring occasionally (this will take 1–2 minutes). Reduce the heat to medium–low and start adding the stock, a couple of ladlefuls at a time, giving it the occasional gentle stir. Keep adding the stock until the rice is almost al dente, about 15–16 minutes.

Add the asparagus and toss through, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Remove the pan from the heat and add the remaining butter and another ladleful of stock. Stir vigorously to release the starch and create an all'onda texture. Add the prawns, then cover with a lid and let it rest for a few minutes to create the perfect mantecatura (creaminess). The residual heat will cook the prawns. Ladle into shallow bowls, sprinkle with lemon zest and black pepper and serve.

Continued from page 14

am scared when it gets darker in the evening as terrorist come into our houses armed and angry.

Dr.Sasa, the special envoy to the UN appointed by our CRPH called for R2P (Responsibility to Protect) and the military families who live in Yangon to move to the capital. They are worried for their lives.

In 2011, after our Lady was free from long-term house arrest, I learnt about freedom from fear and justice and the rule of law. Daw Suu could talk in public and travel inside the country and abroad and accept her Nobel Prize for Peace..

In this 2021 Spring Revolution, to uproot 60 year old Military dic-

tatorship we Myanmar people are united and unified. Now we have known true freedom we must not be silenced and tortured. We have to teach our younger generation that corruption is shameful and rule of law must be equal.

The police and soldiers are brain washed and the more you are cruel and brutal, you will be promoted as higher officers. The higher your rank the better your chance to corrupt and to bully or kill. This is the system of Military dictatorship we had for 60 years old so it takes time to uproot and change.

Myanmar people across the world and inside Myanmar search for the military generals related family members to isolate alone

cutting all their supplies. We have also started the boycott to their products. And the most important of all, civil servants are on CDM, civil disobedience movement to stop the whole system of military Junta's administration. It is working so well. We know that the social punishment is not practiced in Democratic system but if you see your innocent and unarmed people are slaughtered or beaten to death before your sight, if you want justice for them, if you want to demolish this bullied and brutal society, you have to change .

All of us who want justice are doing our best to restore freedom and security. Many Myanmar people call our leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, 'Mother'. Our moth-

er Suu loves flowers on her hair as everyone knows.

I tell myself 'Mother, we miss you so much and we are plucking beautiful flowers for you to wear in you hair when you come back'.

**(I have withheld my Myanmar friend's name for his own safety. I first travelled to Myanmar after Daw Suu was released from house arrest in 2011. She believed that education for her people was the way forward. So I established a school in a village outside Mandalay with the help of a Monk, who has sadly died. However the school we built and which I still support, flourishes. . . for the moment. DM. Editor)**

# WHAT A GREAT VIEW!

Brushy Cutting, the lookout at The Bight is a popular scenic spot for visitors to the Manning.

**D**espite calls to the Police and Council, an abandoned (stolen?) car at the lookout has seen out its days in full view over many weeks.

We are told that the car was apparently registered and had third party insurance. However local residents' calls to have it removed were ignored for weeks.

"Undesirables" were spotted at the vehicle on several occasions to the concern of nearby residents.

The broken railings at the lookout still only has a temporary fence in place.

A sign states the area is under surveillance.

Someone is asleep at the wheel in council.

What's it take for our Council to care? And let's not get started on the Bight Cemetery continuing sadness.

Make a note to vote. September 4.



## WINGHAM BEAUTIFICATION FEEDBACK

**Not everyone seems too thrilled with the plans to "beautify" Wingham!**

Most concern is for the heart of the town – the Village Green, to use it's formal original name rather than the common Central Park.

Locals don't want the green screen around the park wall ripped out and replaced with a brick wall with a level as seating.

Parking is a worry if shopkeepers still use the main street which will have 40 less places due to the ( welcome) arrival of trees down its length.

The state of the roads in town and around is an ongoing issue of money wasted, work half done and the sense Council road workers don't know what they're doing and so it's endless patching up and we keep footing the bill.

Maintenance of verges and public areas is considered slow and slack.

The biggest issue and concern is to keep and enhance Wingham's heritage look, feel and atmosphere. Have your say!

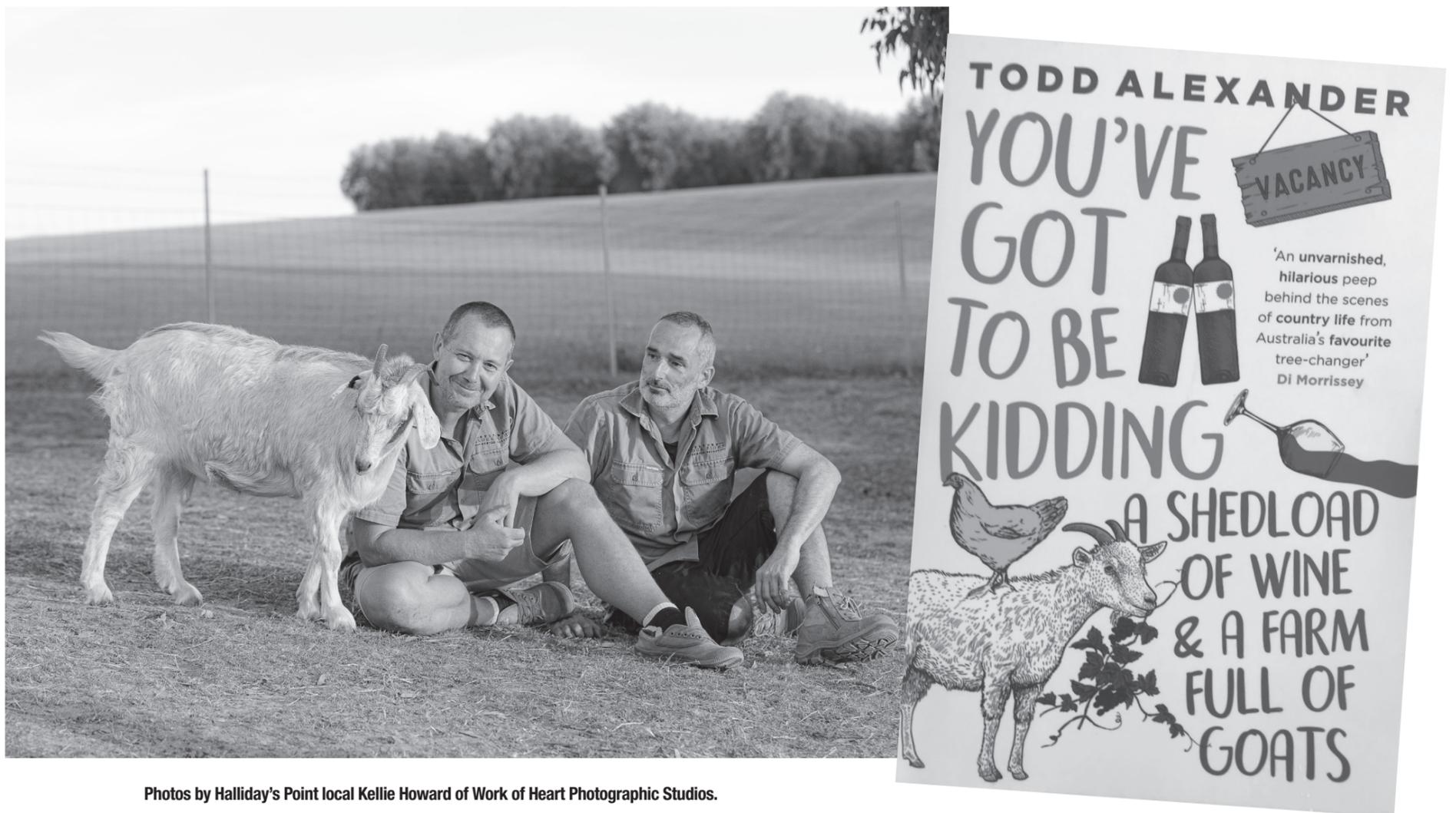


## BOOK REVIEW

# YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING... A SHEDLOAD OF WINE AND A FARM FULL OF GOATS

"You've Got To Be Kidding... A Shedload of Wine and a Farm Full of Goats" is published by Harper Collins.

Rrp. \$34.99



Photos by Halliday's Point local Kellie Howard of Work of Heart Photographic Studios.

**A**uthor Todd Alexander wrote his hilarious memoir "Thirty thousand bottles of Wine And A Pig Named Helga" about he and his partner Jeff moving to the country. Now comes the sequel, with some advice from Todd . . . . .

How To Succeed In The Country (Without Nearly Dying)

### HAVE A FALL GUY

For me, that's encouraging my poor long-suffering partner Jeff to do most of the dangerous work. He's the one who handles all the

lethal chemicals, defends helpless animals against marauding goannas and savage wild dogs, crouches behind kicking goats to trim their nails and removes most of the native corpses. After all, someone needs to stick around to tell the stories if something goes wrong – that may as well be me.

### BEFRIEND THE LOCALS

If you go to Paris and don't try to speak French you'll be instantly dismissed as another annoying "English" tourist. The same goes for the country. If you don't show

the locals you're prepared to break a sweat, your back and a nail or too – you won't be taken seriously. And you won't survive without help and knowledge from locals who have country life in their blood and no amount of convincing your city mates that you're a tree-changer can make up for assisting the locals who come to your rescue time and time again.

### BECOME A HURDLER

Mother Nature has a bitter and twisted sense of humour. You'll face one of her little challenges and sur-

vive by the skin of your teeth, only to have her throw you another... the very next day. From drought to overnight flood, a visit from the world's longest brown snake (or so it seems), deadly algae in your animal's drinking water, oh and a little thing called Covid-19. Practice running and jumping, both will come in very handy.

But most of all, bring a smile to everything you do. If you can't laugh at life on the land, you'll end up crying – a lot.

# SLOW MUSHROOMING

Alison Pouliot

Fungi are old. Very old. They've inhabited the planet for millennia, colonising new environments, diversifying, enabling life on land. Across continents and cultures *Homo sapiens* have tapped into their quirks and qualities for thousands of years. They feature in our fairy tales and fables, legends and lore. In recent years, increasing awareness of fungi as food and medicine has seen foraging grow in popularity.



fungi can be a tricky business. Online reports about the edibility of fungi are often inconsistent and conflicting. These differences can reflect cultural preferences and biases but are also due to varying conceptions of risk and different levels of taxonomic skill and knowledge. A swathe of unsubstantiated opinions can complicate things further. Finding consensus about the edibility of a species among the profusion of websites, blogs and other online platforms means being able to recognise evidence-based data from reliable sources. The most reliable are those that provide first-hand information, evidence of consumption, and have been scientific-

cally reviewed.

Once you've found yourself a reliable field guide, expert or other source of information, it's time to head to the field!

## NOTICE YOUR SURROUNDS

Slow mushrooming begins with understanding the ecological significance of fungi in the context of their environments. Fungi are not isolated entities. All live in close association with other organisms and their habitats. Accurately identifying a mushroom means being able to recognise, for example, the habitat types or plants with which a particular fungus associates.

Many fungi form symbioses (alliances) with other organisms. Those that form between fungi and plants are known as mycorrhizal symbioses. Recognising these relationships has obvious benefits for the forager. Being able to identify the tree genera with which a particular fungus is associated saves the forager from

through slow mushrooming reduces the risk of harming yourself or the environment.

## DESIRABLE OR DEADLY?

What is an edible mushroom? Edibility can be a little ambiguous encompassing everything from 'not poisonous' to 'delicious'. Most species are not likely to be poisonous, but few are appetising. Fungi can be categorised as palatable; edible; edible with caveats; of unconfirmed edibility; suspect; poisonous; or deadly poisonous. These are useful but are sometimes imprecise and confusing. For example, palatability (taste, smell and texture) is subjective. Some poisonous species can be rendered edible through treatment. Others can be deadly when even the tiniest quantity is consumed. Most importantly, every forager seeking edible fungi should learn the major toxic lookalike species. After all, it's always better to leave an edible mushroom uneaten, than consume a toxic one.

Finding reliable information about

**T**oday we live in a fast forward world. Meeting deadlines, improving productivity, increasing efficiency. Life has accelerated to such a speed that we abbreviate intimacy and communicate with emojis. In our rush to meet the next demand or deadline, we trade knowledge for googling. We've lost the touch from keeping in touch. But there are those who are pausing for just moment, to remind themselves, there's another way.

## SLOWLY SLOWLY ...

Finding fungi requires slowness, not speed. It's about careful observa-

tion, noticing subtle differences. Finding fungi as food is about learning a few species thoroughly, rather than many superficially. This is the notion of slow mushrooming. Like slow food or slow art, it's about care, attention to detail and developing deep knowledge. It's about revisiting traditions and gleaning the latest research. It's about being aware of how our choices and actions affect the world around us.

Fungi are diverse and ubiquitous. There are few places that you won't find them. Some are delicious and others are deadly. With interest in foraging for wild food on the rise, learning to accurately identify fungi

aimless wandering around in the 'wrong' habitat.

Finding fungi also means being able to anticipate the type of substrate (growing medium) in which a particular species grows. Some fungi live in soil, others in leaf litter, some in herbivore scats, and many species grow in wood. Some grow in living trees, others in fallen wood and some on a particular type of wood or at a particular age. There are those fungi that are only found in undisturbed habitats while others favour ruderal (disturbed) environments. Knowing the substrate type where your sought after species grows helps you identify a fungus by eliminating all those substrate types where it doesn't grow.

Keep in mind that seeing a particular mushroom species once doesn't mean you'll be able to recognise it next time you encounter it. Identification skills develop from direct experience in the field and observing a species in different places and conditions over time and learning to recognise the important diagnostic features. Observing the same species in different habitats and situations allows you to become familiar with the extent of variation that can occur within that species. As a mushroom develops, it can change in shape, form and colour. This is further influenced by where and in what it is growing, as well exposure to different weather conditions.

### COLOUR AND FORM

*Homo sapiens* have evolved to notice colour. It's usually the first



thing we notice and comment on when we spot a mushroom. Colour is important for identifying fungi, but it can also be an unreliable feature because it can vary greatly within a species. Colour can change as a natural part of the developmental process or with exposure to wind, sun or rain. Many fungi share similar colours but flipping through a field guide looking for a mushroom of a similar colour will only

get you so far. Hence it is important to consider colour and morphology (shape, texture and general appearance) in tandem.

Becoming familiar with the different parts of a mushroom (e.g. pileus, lamellae, stipe) and the



variations both within and between species, is the starting point to finding your way around a mushroom. A hand lens (x 10 magnification) will help you observe finer features. Don't forget to also use your sense of touch. Mushrooms vary enormously in texture and touch reveals details that are always apparent to the naked eye. Allow your fingers to discover whether, for example, a specimen is smooth, velvety, rubbery or buttery.

These are just a few hints to get you started. You could spend a whole day, week or month wandering around simply feeling mushrooms to become familiar with their different textures. Or you could smell them all to familiarise your nose with the great array of fungus scents and odours. Or you might simply begin by getting to know your local plant species and the fungi that associate with them. All these things take time and gradually your accumulated observation develops into knowledge. The good news, it seems, is that slow mushrooming is growing fast.

Dr Alison Pouliot is an ecologist, author and environmental photographer with a focus on fungi. As an ecologist, Alison researches fungi with the objective and analytical tools of science. As someone who daily wanders in the bush, she relates to fungi with an aesthetic and sensory appreciation; a natural history of experience. Alison draws on both worldviews in her efforts to stir a broader public consciousness in the way we understand and relate to the fungi, the forest and all life.

Alison is the author of *The Allure of Fungi* and co-author of *Wild Mushrooming: A Guide for Foragers*. Published by the CSIRO.

# COUNCILLOR JAN MCWILLIAMS BOWS OUT

Former Great Lakes Mayor, MidCoast Councillor and Tuncurry resident Jan McWilliams has announced she is retiring from MidCoast Council after 26 years of public service.



Councillor Jan McWilliams has retired from MidCoast Council

**'It's time,' she says. 'I'd like to thank my General Managers over the years -Gerry McDonagh, Keith O'Leary and Glenn Handford, along with former Great Lakes Mayor John Chadban for their great and appreciated help during my term as both Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The team efforts helped maintain positive control of ratepayers finances. I'd also like to thank all the staff who were so supportive.'**

Jan says she thoroughly enjoyed her time as Great Lakes Mayor and always maintained an open door policy to all. She was (and still is) Patron of many local groups.

The naturalisation ceremony on Australia day was Jan's favourite part of the job. She lists her proudest achievements as; the Tuncurry skate park development, the Tuncurry

Hawks football ground grandstand and lighting, the Oyster Festival, the 2000 Olympic relay, her work on police and crime prevention committee, and the planning for future improvements at Main Beach and Memorial Drive boardwalk along Wallis Lake.

During her service, Councillor McWilliams has been honoured three times: she received the Women in Local Government award and the Emeritus Mayor award and was recognised by the New South Wales Premier and the local government association for 25 years service. She has been ably supported by Dennis, her husband, throughout her political career.

The local community wishes her well as she looks to enjoying a well earned retirement.



## BOOK REVIEW

# KILLING SYDNEY... THE FIGHT FOR A CITY'S SOUL

Elizabeth Farrelly

Pan Macmillan. Rrp. \$34.99

**For some of us who know Sydney...or knew it ... each visit now brings a stab of nostalgia and sadness at what has gone. Killed off in a perceived frenzy of greed, corruption, over-development.**

**T**here is no disputing the traffic jams, the freeways spewing over landscape, the loss of nature and habitat from backyards to parks and bushland,

beaches eroding, views shredded by monstrous glass towers of greed, and ugly apartment blocks of dubious construction reducing sunlight on neighbours.

Though what may look tacky, tasteless and ostentatious to some, may appear bright, modern progressive to others.

cial, public and heritage buildings against a stunning natural backdrop. The past was present and appreciated from the old terrace houses to the likes of the Treasury Building.

Elizabeth Farrelly shows her skills and knowledge as an architect/writer/worrier/former city councillor with articulate and evocative prose and it's clear where she stands in the debate about Sydney's past and future .

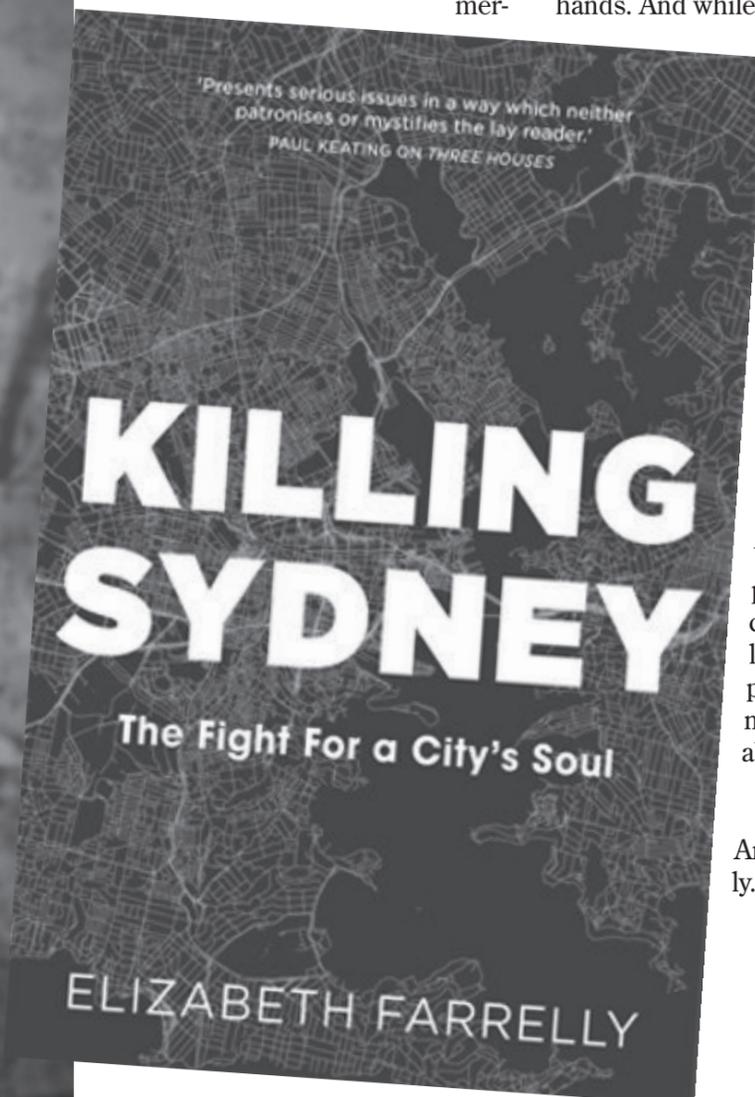
Once the city spaces accommodated a blending of residential, commercial,

In Killing Sydney Elizabeth passionately discusses sustainability, affordability, beauty, as well as requisites that embrace basics such as the right to light, fresh air, green spaces, ease of living and travel, raising flags and alarms. It brings nostalgia and a sorry sense of what might have been in better political hands. And while I ache as I read, she ignites in the reader a small fierce fire to hit the pause button.

Politicians, developers and assorted contractors et al, have not served Sydney well. Saviours, solutions, and suggestions are thin on the ground but her beautifully written paean to a loved city before it's swallowed by so called progress, is stunning, knowledgeable and heartfelt.

Read it and weep. And vote accordingly.

DM



# THE GREAT FACEBOOK SHOOT-OUT.

The great Facebook shoot-out is not over. The six-guns may be back in the holsters, but Facebook has made it clear it is not shucking its shell on the ground. News pages may have been restored, but Facebook reserves the right again to shut down news feeds.

**T**he government made some concessions and, finally Facebook accepted the inevitable. The concessions concern the process of the negotiation of fees and of alternate ways in which Facebook may support public interest journalism. And discretion is vested in the Treasurer, not the Minister for Communications, seemingly without much legislative guidance, to approve that support.

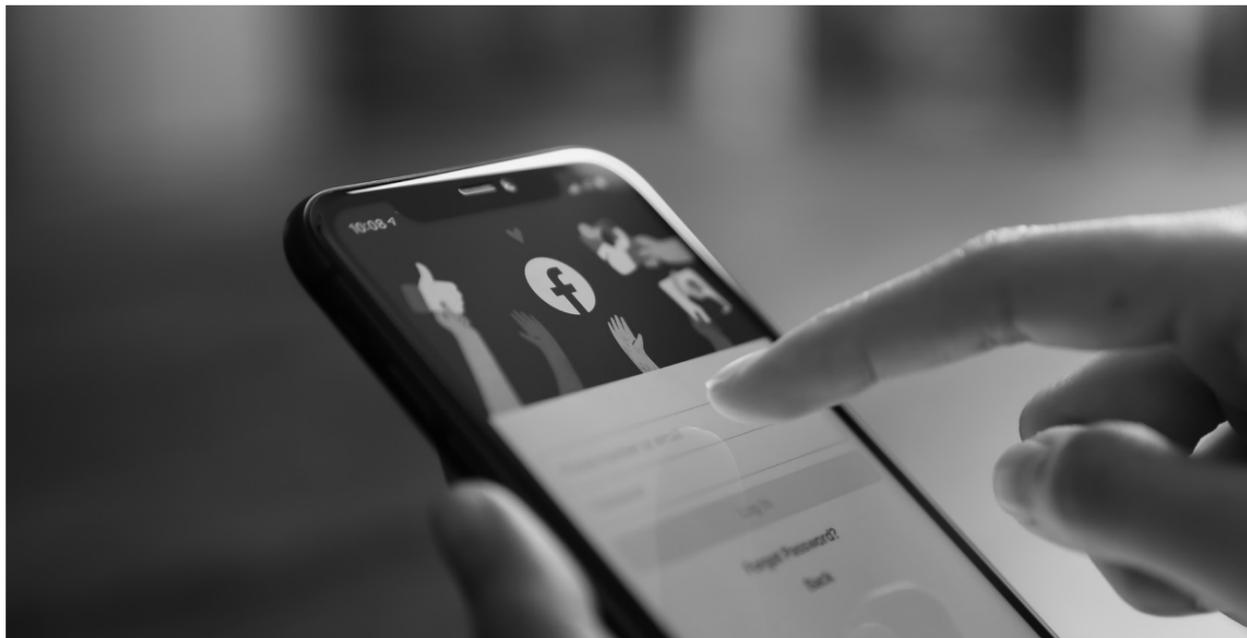
It was a remarkable sight. The government of a sovereign nation in a stand-off with a transnational corporation about the government's right to pass legislation. And on display was the hubris of a corporation, whose annual turn-over for the year 2020, at US\$86 billion, exceeds the GDP of many countries.

But the government was always going to win. While the news content of Facebook is small, as the company insists, the documentation of news choice by clients is an important part of the Facebook rivers of gold. Facebook probably knows more about you than does your family, and its key business is monetising that knowledge.

## TO KNOW YOU IS TO LOVE YOU

The social media platforms all do it. Tik Tok is particularly good at it, but Google and Facebook are the big players, financially speaking. That knowledge of each user is what guides the algorithm's choice of topics for you to read or view and also guides placement of advertising.

News choice is crucial as is a litmus test of political inclination. That's the knowledge that allowed Cambridge Analytica in 2016, using Facebook data illicitly obtained, to support the Trump election campaign. News choice easily identified the Trump voter but, more important, it identified the undecided voter whose opinion could be swayed in Trump's favour.



That voter is the key to winning secret ballots, anywhere, so preserving access to news choice is vital to Facebook's file on you.

But these contretemps also shone further light on other aspects of Facebook's operation. The shut-down of news feeds had an unexpected outcome: hundreds of other sites, many not-for-profit charities and arts organisation were also shut out.

This collateral damage was distinctly bad publicity for Facebook and, doubtless, a spur to some reconciliation with government.

## AI ON THE LOOSE

The collateral damage adds weight to an argument that I have advanced since Mark Zuckerberg's appearance before the US Senate in November 2017. Not surprising, the transcript revealed that the Senators knew little about how Facebook functions. But it seemed to confirm that Zucker's own knowledge of the subtleties of Facebook, if he was speaking truthfully to the US Senate, was limited.

That should be unsurprising. Facebook is run by an aggregation of algorithms, interacting in complex ways with little human intervention. Without doubt, individual parts are understood by its programmers but not how the whole functions as an organism. It is a massive piece of artificial intelligence capable of acting outside human command, at least in the short term.

Because of this lack of knowledge

of overall function, the programmers who designed the exclusion of Australian news sites were not able to anticipate the collateral damage to arts, health and civic sites, because the differences were too subtle for the present algorithms to discern. But, endowed with artificial intelligence, they will learn. That is the nature of AI.

It should be of concern that a huge and distributed electronic organism, with intimate knowledge of its users, over two billion daily users and more, is capable of acting semi autonomously. And its human supervisors can only manage it reactively, that is correcting its mistakes after the mistake become apparent.

And there is the question of access to knowledge. Should a semi-autonomous aggregation of algorithms be trusted to be a gatekeeper of news? Western democracies have many flaws, but when private enterprises, whose first lawful commitment is to maximise shareholder value, have near monopoly control over the editorial selection and dissemination of news, and serve only profit, then sovereignty is under siege, and democracy impossible to maintain.

## THE BATTLE OF THE 'BERGS

Another big issue that arose from this battle of the 'bergs, Mark Zuckerberg verse Josh Frydenberg, was that the whole world was watching. If anything this probably strengthened Frydenberg's resolve. The social media platforms saw the Australian

legislation as the thin edge of the tax wedge.

The EU moved to introduce this kind of legislation in 2017, but stalled. France was tentatively moving this way in frustration with the EU, but the Trump administration threatened tariffs on wine and luxury goods from France which stalled the progress. Spain has also dallied with the idea, but has hastened slowly. Last year, the Trump administration told the Australian government the measures breached

the US-Aust. FTA, and hence, were illegal. The Biden administration has remained silent.

This is the first government initiative that US interests haven't managed to crush or slow to a crawl. If the Australian government were to win, governments all around the world will want a share of revenue, and that means goodbye for Facebook to a share price above US\$270, the digital rivers of gold, and lucrative dividends.

As a result of the Australian government taking on the social media giants, other governments are introducing similar measures. With Facebook's capitulation, others will follow. Google has been a bit smarter than Facebook. It has been doing deals that will pass as acceptable under the regulations.

The stated aim of the government was to support public interest journalism. At the end of round one, with the legislation through parliament, whether that goal can be achieved is unclear. The big players, News Ltd, Nine Entertainment Ltd and Australia Community Media, Seven and Ten, will certainly benefit in varying degrees. But, whether the dozens of independent community papers, papers of and for the people, like the Manning Community News, will see a cent, is completely opaque.

**Vincent O'Donnell**  
Media specialist and researcher



# BOOK REVIEW

## THE SECRET OF HALF-ARSED PARENTING: RAISING KIDS WITH HALF THE GUILT AND TWICE THE JOY

Dr Susie O'Brien

Murdoch Books RRP \$32.99

*The Secret of Half-Arsed Parenting* is a readable 'how-to' guide to raising kids to live, survive and thrive as grown-ups – without crumbling at the first whiff of adult responsibility, resorting to therapy or packing themselves chock-full of anti-depressants.

A book such as this has been a long time coming. After all, it's about time modern parenting received a metaphorical slap to remind those enslaved by their entitled and over-indulged offspring that the whole point of parenthood is to bring up adults, not children.

On the surface, Dr Susie O'Brien's first book is a hilarious takedown of the sometimes idiotic, irrational and indulgent ideology that has pervaded the modern parenting zeitgeist, and the so-called 'experts' and narcissistic social media goddesses who inflame it. Delve a little deeper, however, and *The Secret of half-arsed Parenting* is a credentialled, well-researched and sober assessment of a generation of obsessive and infatuated parents who, in viewing their cookie-cutter child as extraordinary, are potentially sabotaging that child's future happiness not to mention society's well-being.

'We are pushover parents raising a generation of pampered, privileged children,' O'Brien warns.

With a PhD in Education, *Herald Sun* journalist and columnist and – most significantly – solo, full-time working mum of three, O'Brien interweaves personal anecdotes with national and internationally published, peer-reviewed research to question the current epidemic of poor parenting choices.

From the reality of early motherhood, monster toddlers and pampered brats; to the puerile and pointless mummy wars; to



not saying 'no'; to detached dads; anxious and scheduled children; to avoiding failure; to being too scared to stand up to your own 11-year-old, O'Brien uses humour to unleash on the very things that are undermining the ability of our next generation to be functioning, contributing members of society. She nails the parental pariahs who think their children are always right, regardless of the facts, and who spend their time orchestrating their child's friendships and lives.

How does that help later, when said child is 24 years old, can't take instructions in a workplace and hasn't the first clue about how to get along with colleagues?

Or those of the gifted child who believe their precious offspring is way too smart to be bound by the normal conventions of behaviour, schoolwork or friendships. Yep, good luck kid, when you get sacked from your future job for trying to make your boss understand that your particular genius means

that a 9am start just doesn't work for you.

O'Brien argues that it is the half-arsed parents who are the ones doing right by their kids' and our community. That, by letting kids fail, and hurt and be scared and bored, by not handing opportunities over on a solid-silver-platter-being-flown-by-miniature-rainbowed-unicorns or by not making the child the centre of their universe, the half-arsed parents are establishing individuals who are more likely to have successful, contented lives.

Whether a hyper or half-arsed parent, this book is a light and soul-cleansing read that will help strip off years of pent-up guilt and chip away at those embedded feelings of inadequacy.

For us on the 'half-arsed' end of the spectrum, who collapse into bed every night grateful the children are not only asleep but still alive, it is cathartic and reaffirming.

For those on the hyper end who need help to let it go, O'Brien will take your hand and show you how it's done. In a nutshell: 'Cut corners, diminish expectations and underwhelm your loved ones at every opportunity.'

O'Brien comprehensively sets it all out.

In doing half as much for your kids, introducing a bit of benign neglect and dropping ludicrous standards, parents can more easily succeed in one of their primary functions, which is to deliver well-rounded, self-aware, resilient, empathetic, and hopefully humorous adults to the world.

**Katherine Towers is a freelance journalist, speech writer and communications specialist.**



# ANTIQUES AND OLD WARES

Collect items from the past that bring you happy memories for the present and for the future. Invest now & see if your selections accumulate in value through the coming years.

**W**ow! What a year we have had! Drought, bushfires, political turmoils at home and abroad and of course COVID. Humans are amazing. Through all these trials we have had kindness, compassion, giving, empathy and a willingness to pull through. The human spirit is a wonder. Let's all keep that spirit burning with a smile and a kind word. My dear old Mum used to say, "Treat people the way you want to be treated yourself." A pretty good philosophy to follow.

I've heard lots of stories lately of people finding interesting "treasures" at the local bulk waste clean-up piles beside the roadside. One enterprising young fellow spent two days in the Old Bar locale and was rewarded with many interesting finds.

Still no organisation of Antique Fairs or auctions, that I have heard of. The Hub Market at Taree Showground is again underway (third Saturday of the month) and Blackhead markets have three months to run until their winter recess (first Sunday of the month).

A very collectable and much sought after type of pottery was made by members of the Moorcroft family, in England. William Moorcroft was employed by Staffordshire pottery manufacturers, James Macintyre & Co., Ltd. as a designer in 1897 and after a year he was made responsible for their art pottery studio.

William Moorcroft created designs for the Macintyre's Aurelian Ware range of high-Victorian pottery, which had transfer-printed and enamelled decoration in bold red, blue and gold colours. He also developed the art nouveau-influenced Florian Ware which was decorated entirely by hand, with the design outlined in trailed slip using a technique known as tubelining. William Moorcroft's designs won him a gold medal at the St. Louis International Exhibition in 1904.

## A selection of Moorcroft pottery



Each piece of pottery produced was personalised with Moorcroft's own signature or initials.

William Moorcroft and James Macintyre & Co. Ltd. split up in 1913 and Moorcroft founded his own factory nearby. Some finance came from the famous London store Liberty, and Liberty continued to exercise control over Moorcroft until 1962.

Moorcroft's reputation was further enhanced with the appointment of the Moorcroft company as Potter to HM The Queen in 1928. On the death of William Moorcroft in 1945, his elder son, Walter, took over management and design and he continued in this position until his retirement in 1987, after which he continued contributing to Moorcroft designs.

During the tenure of Walter Moorcroft, the Liberty store's inter-

est in Moorcroft was purchased by the Moorcroft Co. in 1962.

In the 1980s Moorcroft got into financial difficulties as a result of rising wages and fuel, which were exacerbated by the labour intensive techniques employed by Moorcroft and the company went through several changes in ownership with the result that from 1993 the company was controlled by the Edwards family, which is still the case.

The young 24 year old designer Rachel Bishop joined Moorcroft in 1993, as only its fourth designer in almost a hundred years and her designs become immediately popular. In 1997 the Moorcroft Design Studio was formed with eight designers, and with Rachel Bishop as head designer.

Moorcroft celebrated its centenary in 1997, marking the year that

William Moorcroft joined MacIntyre as its founding date, rather than the year the company was founded.

Moorcroft is still producing art pottery in its own distinctive design style, and with astute promotion and limited edition designs, is selling more than it did in the mid-1920's, its previous heyday.

Our new shop, Antiques and Old Wares - 12 Isabella Street in Wingham, is keeping Dave and I both busy and entertained. Our hobby has continued into our retirement. If you get a chance, call in and say hello.

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

Phone Rex - 0427 880 546.

## SORRY MITCH!

Last month I wrote about the need for tourist attractions in Tinonee, lamenting the loss of places like Memories Café and the Terrace Cinema. I note the former Mondrook Café has now been sold, but I forgot to mention that Mitch Spiteri who runs the café at Wallabi Point and also the café in the new Council premises, has opened a Sit and Eat or Take Away, yummy meals from his new venture -The Tinonee Takeaway! It's worth a stop!

DM



## AUSTRALIA'S COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAM IS UNDERWAY.

COVID-19 vaccines will keep Australia safe and protect our way of life. The people most at risk of serious illness and those most likely to be exposed to the virus in our communities will be vaccinated first, including:

- Quarantine and border workers
- Frontline health care, disability and aged care workers
- People living in aged and disability care accommodation

Vaccination offers the best protection from COVID-19, but it's also important we all continue to remain COVIDSafe.

To find out when it's your turn, visit [australia.gov.au](http://australia.gov.au) or call the National coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccine helpline **1800 020 080**.

**BE COVIDSAFE**

**COVID-19 VACCINATION**  
Safe. Effective. Free.

Authorised by the Australian Government, Canberra.

To keep this paper running, make a donation : BSB 032102 ACCT: 007242 – Thank you!

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