

The Manning Community News

JANUARY 2023

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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

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LAST CHANCE FOR THE MANNING BASE HOSPITAL IF CANDIDATES UNITE

The Manning Base Hospital in Taree is continuing to struggle to provide adequate services to the Forster-Tuncurry, Taree Manning Valley and Gloucester areas.

With a resident population of 100,000 which can double in holiday periods, the underfunded hospital hasn't been able to cope for years. Problems have been highlighted during times of bushfires and floods as well as covid lockdowns. And it's occurring right now due to the holiday population explosion.

The MBH with support from Mayo and Forster hospitals are simply not coping. Staff morale is low and vacancies are not being filled. There is too much reliance on locum doctors, short term staff contracts and excessive overtime particularly by frontline staff.

Dr Murray Hyde Page, Chairman of the Medical Staff of MBH, revealed he recently received yet another text message from the hospital, "Good morning doctors, beds are at critical levels and causing a backlog in ED. Please review all possible discharges and transfers urgently. One bed available at Forster and no beds available at Mayo."

We are now at a tipping point.

SO WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Dr Murray Hyde Page has now agreed he is in a position to make a public statement about the state of the hospital and its future needs.

"In the short term we need to adequately resource nursing and allied health staff as well as junior and senior doctors. There is also a need for administrative and support staff. These staff want secure long-term employment.

MBH is clearly short of beds. An immediate and temporary solution is to use vacant space next to the Emergency Ward as an Emergency Short Stay Unit. HNEH (Hunter New England Health) is looking at doing this right now and bringing this online before next winter when bed shortages will occur. However time is of the essence.

In the last few years MBH has been able to work collaboratively with the Mayo and Forster Private Hospital where public beds are now available. These hospitals are also helping to reduce Public Hospital surgical waiting lists which have

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WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO MY COUNTRY?



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

blown out greatly.

But these and other measures however are only short-term options. Until a **complete upgrade** of the MBH is undertaken there will be no long-term solution.

“MBH has presently secured \$100M to undertake stage 2 redevelopment. However this is behind schedule and the starting date has already been put back.

It is also apparent that stage 2 construction cannot be undertaken independently of stage 3. The internal refurbishment of the present MBH can only be done at the same time and it will be impossible to come back at a later stage to do the further refurbishment of stage 3. This does not pass the common sense test and the cost blow out would be enormous. You cannot come back and put the 4th floor on the In-patient Unit at a later date. This has to be a part of stage 2!! As it is, stage 2 will take at least 3 years with disruption of hospital services.

“HNEH understands this and have already done the preliminary planning of stage 3 at a further cost of \$115M. this could be undertaken at the same time of stage 2 in the same time period. These costs for stage 3 have been provided to the NSW government -

Funds needed to complete MBH development (stage 3)

1. \$22M additional 4th floor Inpatient Unit
2. \$7.5M Connection Spine

3. \$9M Non Cancer Infusion Service
- Expansion Out Patient Clinic
4. Enhance ED for increased presentations, including Medical Acute Care Unit
5. \$12M level 2 Paediatric Maternity and Special Care Unit
6. \$38M increase surgical capacity and expand post operative lounge
7. \$10M Intensive Care Unit expansion

The NSW government through the Rural and Regional Health Department have been asked to commit to the immediate funding of stage 2 and 3 together but we are still waiting for an answer. Instead they appear to be distracted by whether or not the area needs a Forster Public Hospital. Outside the government there is no support for this project other than an Urgent Care Centre that would be supported by the Emergency Department of MBH. The Clinical Services Plan of HNEH supports this development of the Forster Hospital which already has public hospital facilities and would support an Urgent Care Centre being built.

Any development in Forster should *complement* rather than just duplicate services provided at the MBH,” says Dr Hyde Page.

The need for a full upgrade of MBH is indeed urgent. Candidates for the upcoming election include a male and a female nurse, (Labor and Greens) and all candidates must surely see the upgrade of the hospital as a major election platform.

Perhaps as we all agree that the hospital is a priority and the full plans and costings are ready, and all that’s needed is money and the go ahead, then why don’t all candidates agree this is a no brainer and advocate together. The re-do of Manning Base Hospital is a priority issue for everyone and so each candidate can detail their other platforms, promises and issues?

Representatives from the Manning Base Hospital as well as candidates are hoping to meet soon with the current Minister for Regional Health, Bronnie Taylor.

Mr Eddie Wood, President of the Manning Great Lakes Combined Health Action Group agrees.

“Manning Great Lakes Community Health Action Group fully supports Murray Hyde-Page (Chairman of the Medical Staff Council of Manning Base Hospital), Doctors, Allied Health personnel and all other categories of staff in their endeavours to obtain more funding to complete Stage 2 and 3 of the proposed re-development at the same time, and in its entirety. There are major issues that require immediate action, and substantially more funding, not the slow drip feed that we have seen in the last 4 years.

Manning Base Hospital remains in a crisis situation as was highlighted in the 2021 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into health in rural, regional and remote NSW.

Lack of clinical staff ... doctors, nurses and allied health personnel who do not stay in the area due to

poor infrastructure and support.

The \$100 million for Stage 2 is old money promised 4 years ago by The Nationals and still nothing has been done.

It is imperative that Stage 2 & 3 are completed simultaneously and in their entirety ... not just Stage 2 on its own. This will require considerably more funding on top of the \$100 million.

Completion of an Urgent Care Centre at Forster as supported by the HNEH Clinical Services Plan, complementing services that are provided at Manning Base Hospital.

It is also of the utmost importance that Manning Base Hospital be brought up to the standard of an acute care hospital with adequate and appropriate funding, staffing and education programs in place as recommended by Professor Balogh in his review and report of our hospital in 2017.

There is, and has been, talk of a hospital in Forster, but no details have been forth coming for the community and according to Dr Hyde Page it is not feasible and is not in any plan.

The number one priority for the Manning Great Lakes Area is that the full Stage 2 and 3 of the Manning Base Hospital is completed in its entirety so that it can service and meet the health needs of the community.

The community needs to engage with ALL political parties to implore them to set aside party politics and to work together to make the completion of Manning Base Hospital Redevelopment a reality and not a pipe dream.”



IT'S A SURE BET – POKIES ARE ODDS ON TO DISRUP THE STATE ELECTION!

Tim Costello

So how on earth did Pokies surface as a key issue in NSW for the March State Election?

Well it started last year when former Gaming Minister Victor Dominello recommended that there be a universal cashless card to play NSW Pokies. Just as he had put NSW drivers licences on line he saw an opportunity to remove criminal money being laundered at pokies by a card which could offer protections where gamblers could set a limit and a time line by locking them in with a pre commitment before play.

The NSW Pokies industry with a turnover of \$95 billion a year was so outraged they demanded his scalp and he was duly removed from the Gaming portfolio.

The cashless card was dead. Killed by the secret shadow Cabinet (NSW Clubs) that has funded political donations and demanded MOU's (Memo of Understanding) before any election where both major Parties promise they will never put up taxes nor change regulations. What vested interest in Australia gets that protection?

When the Industry roars it always wins and with Dominello it had certainly roared. And it has always been thus, as in truth it runs NSW politics and always has since 1955 when the only places in the world with legal pokies were Las Vegas and Sydney.

NSW has 35% of the world's pokies in Clubs and pubs. Most pokies elsewhere are in Casinos and destination gambling but not open in a shopping strip when you were not planning to gamble but to shop! Such ubiquitous accessibility explains why Australia has the greatest gambling losses per capita in the world and those losses are 40% higher than the nation that comes second - Singapore.

Pokies are the crack/cocaine of gambling. If the USA's blind spot is guns, ours is poker machines. Americans love their guns defeating



any gun reform. Ostensibly we love our pokies entrenching the power of NSW Clubs and the AHA. (Australian Hotels Association.)

SECRET INVESTIGATION

But that all changed in October 2022 when the NSW Crime Commission released its year long secret investigative report into money laundering, citing billions of dollars of dirty money washing through the pokies. No longer was it just the punter hurt- and remember it is less than 20% of the NSW adult population who ever play the pokies. It was potentially any of us who has been burgled or had drugs sold to our kids.

Proceeds of crime laundered at the pokies means criminals can walk away clean by receiving a cheque demonstrating they were just playing the machines.

Premier Perrotet announced he was going to introduce a cashless card and the secret Cabinet roared. If you have wondered how Opposition Leader Chris Minns could resist any bipartisan offer to clean this up it is because Labor is both terrified of the muscle of this secret Cabinet and has much self interest. The Randwick Labor Club in Sydney is a 3 site pokies operation owned by the Labor Party with millions in profit. Equally, National Party members have been both terrified to speak up as they are duchessed by donations

and support from the Clubs.

But a crack had appeared in the secret Cabinet. How could they oppose the Crime Commission and the NSW Police Commissioner calling for a universal cashless card? And the heat was so great for Chris Minns that he had to look like he was doing something. His policy announced on 16 January at least banned future political donations from Clubs and some signage but on the real reform issue he totally buckled. He should have declared that by the end of his first term punters would need a cashless card to play any pokies in NSW. That is what the Crime Commission recommended to the NSW Unions, countless health practitioners and civic leaders. Instead Minns tried smokes and mirrors trick namely calling for a trial of a cashless card on 500 pokies over twelve months. We have had four voluntary trials already and all the criminals do is go to the 90,000 pokies not in the trial to launder their money.

That is why universal means universal. And when 62% of all revenue going through pokies comes from problem gamblers (Productivity Commission) the shame means no problem gambler will get a card to play at one of those 500 machines in the trial. Make it universal and there is no shame as it applies to all.

But yet another trial is exactly what Clubs NSW wanted in order to

kill a card and Chris Minns delivered for the secret cabinet again.

ALL CLUBS DIFFERENT

But it is an interesting and varied story. Not all Clubs are like those big Club Directors on the Board of Clubs NSW who are all from mini casinos with over 600 Poker machines and paying their CEO's salaries of more than \$1 million per year. Some 20% of Clubs have no pokies at all and still serve the community brilliantly. The smaller to medium clubs in regional areas with pokies are largely trying to reduce

their dependence on pokies, unlike the mini Casinos (represented on the Clubs NSW Board) who get over 80% of their revenue from machines. Neither of these two types clubs - no pokies or small number of pokies - ever get to serve on the Board of NSW Clubs. These smaller Clubs with a bar and a bowling green and a few poker machines are serving the community for those who are so inclined. Yet these local clubs are squashed and dictated to by they heavyweight Clubs NSW which should be renamed Mini Casinos NSW.

These smaller community Clubs often see the pokies addiction, the crime and damage as a result, and want to limit it in their community.

After a number of Royal Commissions into Australian Casinos now all pokies in Casinos must move to a cashless card. And the same is now happening to all pokies in Tasmania with bipartisan support. If Tasmania can do it why not NSW?

I think we know the answer Mr Minns. No man can serve two masters and your choice seems to serve NSW Clubs not the Crime Commission or the people of NSW.

Tim Costello is chief advocate for the Alliance for Gambling Reform and the former CEO of World Vision Australia.

ALEXANDER GEOFFREY FLOYD OAM

1 April 1926 – 12 December 2022

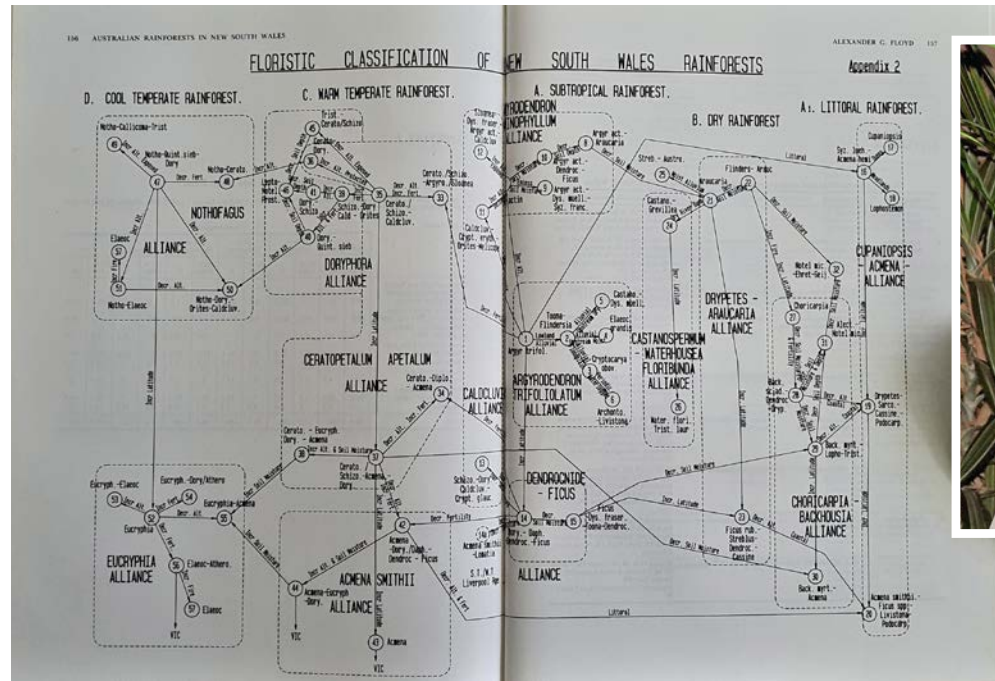
Born in Hampton, Victoria, Alex completed his Diploma of Forestry and Bachelor of Science in 1951. He worked for the Department of Forestry in Papua New Guinea, “running the Botanic Garden in Lae” and returned to Australia in 1956, where he was employed by the NSW Forestry Commission as a Silvicultural Research Officer at Coffs Harbour. Alex’s forestry career spanned 30 years. His research focus gradually shifted from Eucalypts to rainforest trees, with Alex preparing field identification keys for them.

The Forestry Commission of NSW published his comprehensive *NSW Rainforest Trees* serially in 12 “Research Notes”, from 1960-1983. These Research Notes were later consolidated and published as a single volume, *Rainforest Trees of mainland south-eastern Australia* in 1989, with a revised edition in 2008 (Terania Rainforest Publishing).

1976-1980, Alex was seconded from Forestry to NPWS, to compile a complete inventory of NSW rainforests, much of it in remote areas. Floyd’s exhaustive two-volume *Australian Rainforests in New South Wales* (1990), with detailed appendices and a microfiche of “species lists for representative locations” from his field surveys, was published in 1990.

In 1978, Floyd reported on the parlous state of our Wingham Brush, forecasting its likely extinction within 50 years. Although Taree’s Coocumbac Island was gazetted as a Nature Reserve, in 1981, Wingham’s Brush was too far gone for inclusion in the NPWS estate. Floyd’s dire review created discussions as to whether, and how, the Brush could be saved, ultimately resulting in the Wingham Brush Regeneration Team. Alex advocated the liberation of the canopy from exotic vines as the first priority as opposed to a ground-based block by block removal of all exotic vegetation. He also championed the retention of Wild Tobacco. However, in 2021 Wild Tobacco was listed as a weed slated for removal at Wingham Brush, despite 15 years of scientific assessment and monitoring by the National Herbarium, having verified Wild Tobacco’s critical importance. After over 40 years, the Wild Tobacco controversy was finally addressed and officially codified.

Floyd was the foundational, and seminal, scientific mentor of the Wingham Brush Regeneration Team (1980-1996) and the ensuing development of *The Wingham Brush Method of Rainforest Regeneration*. His advice was critical during the entirety, and aftermath, of the dispute between our local team and the National Trust



NSW, concerning the dogmatic and inflexibly procrustean application of The Bradley Method (*The Battle of the Brush*). Alex was always approachable and generous with his advice, despite the many times I pestered him, from tactics (*Keep your powder dry, don't use all your ammunition at once!*) to advice on successional stages and how they vary from site to site (*Remember these plants haven't read our lists!*). His vast knowledge was respected with awe by regenerators and conservationists, and professional botanists, alike. Floyd assigned Wingham Brush to his Suballiance No. 3; “the major suballiance on the well-drained, fertile, basaltically-enriched alluvial lowland flood plains north of the Manning River... These were truly magnificent forests... Today’s remnants... are pitiful oases in an agricultural desert.” Little did we realise how rare these rainforests were until Floyd told us: *less than 100 hectares of this suballiance remained in NSW*, with the Wingham Brush representing nearly a tenth of it. Wingham Brush was eventually gazetted as a NPWS Nature Reserve in 2000, with Floyd warning “continued vigilance” and effort will always be required if it is to survive, due to our catchment being infested with aggressive exotic weeds.

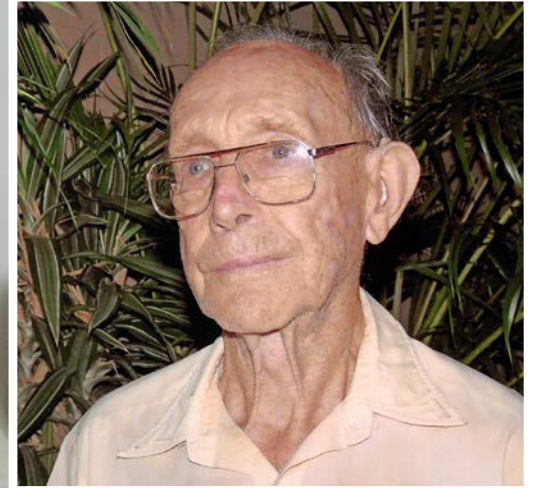
In 1973, Floyd initiated a submission to the Coffs Harbour council, for the establishment of a Botanic Garden on the 20 hectare site surrounding the Coffs Harbour Cemetery. Floyd reflected in an interview 2010, “It used to be the town’s sanitary night soil dump and at the time other people were pushing for it to become a sports club, and even a lion park, so it took a lot of work to convince the council about the merits of a botanic garden. Luckily we had the support of the then Shire Clerk, Rod Firman, because one councillor who favoured the area as a sports ground had gone on the record to say that gardens were only good for growing flowers for bulls to sniff.”

A bicentennial project, Coffs Botanic Gardens has grown to be an “outstanding Regional Botanic Garden and tourist attraction, offering visitors a unique blend of flora, recreation, education and relaxation.” The Coffs Harbour Forestry Department Herbarium, dating back to 1940, which Alex built upon over the years, was transferred to the Gardens after his retirement from the public service in 1988, after which he continued to passionately promote the Gardens.

The North Coast Regional Herbarium now has a collection of over 28,000 specimens, primarily from the NSW North Coast and Tablelands. A seedbank was established at the garden in the 1980s, initially for growing its own plants.

Over the years the seedbank has expanded, supplying native seed from the north coast region to other botanic gardens, research and conservation organisations in Australia, and around the world. While the primary function remains collecting wild-sourced seed from the NSW North Coast, many of the first plantings of rainforest and rare and endangered trees in the garden are now mature and produce additional seed for distribution. Over a hundred and fifty endangered plants are cultivated, providing an invaluable resource.

Two plant genera are named in Floyd’s honour, the rainforest tree *Floydia Floydia praelta*, “Ball Nut” and, ironically, for a rainforest specialist, a grass, *Alexfloydia repens*, described in 1992, restricted to Boambee and Bonville, a mere 10-15 kms. south of Coffs Harbour. This endangered, stoloniferous, spreading grass grows only in Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, itself an endangered ecological community (EEC), in areas inundated by king tides. Remarkably, Floyd’s grass is the sole foodplant of the endangered “Black grass-dart butterfly”, *Ocybadistes knightorum*, first described in 1994. Other plant species bearing his



name are *Acacia floydii*, *Bosistoa floydii*, *Cryptocarya floydii*, *Endiandra floydii*, *Homoranthus floydii* and *Zieria floydia*.

Floyd also collected over 3,200 specimens for the Australian National Herbarium, Canberra (which contains 1.25 million specimens dating back to Joseph Banks 1770), from Papua New Guinea down the Australian east coast to Tasmania.

Many private landowners consulted Floyd for guidance in conserving and expanding their rainforests. FAWNA’s Meredith Ryan recalls Floyd’s research notes were cherished and assiduously annotated by her mother, the late Margaret McGlynn, while identifying rainforest tree species on their 860-acre family property, Benwerrin, straddling both sides of the Pappinbarra River, west of Beechwood. Floyd’s work inspired and has left the McGlynn family the wonderful legacy of identified rainforest species on Benwerrin.

In 2008, Floyd was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia “for service to botany, particularly through research and identification of sub-tropical rainforest plants, and through support for the North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens, and to conservation and environmental education.”

As Dr Robert Kooyman warmly remembers, Alex “was both humble and generous in sharing all he knew, and tireless in pursuit of understanding ever more. Anyone alive today with an interest in Australia’s rainforests knows his name, and likely has referenced his work. His passing gives us pause to reflect on an incredible contribution. All of us, whose lives were touched and informed by him, are richer for the time spent.”

Alex was predeceased by his wonderful wife, Cynthia (20 April, 2015) and survived by their four children, Peter, Robert, Malalia, Donald, and their families.

Dr John Stockard, DDS OAM
Team Leader
Wingham Brush Regeneration
Team (1980-1996)

FACING A MOUNTAIN THAT'S NEVER BEEN CLIMBED

Elizabeth Farrelly on why she's running Elizabeth Farrelly Independents in the NSW state election.

For years, as a weekly truth-to-power columnist, I'd be routinely asked "How do you get away with it?" My answer, equally routine, was, "No idea. Figure I'll just keep doing it until they stop me." When eventually the forces of darkness did contrive to stop me, after a column calling out dodgy behaviours in council politics, I had a choice: retire hurt, or lean in, getting more involved in trying to rectify the system that enables the sleaze and trashes our habitat along the way.

In many ways I'm the last person to be involved in politics. I have no interest in the glad-handing, game-playing, horse-trading, favour-exchange that is NSW politics. But perhaps this is a strength. Perhaps my very unsuitability to the job is why you should vote for us.

We desperately need *real* people in politics. Not career politicians or political staffers groomed through the party ranks. We need people who are connected to their communities and care about their futures. People who have some of the wisdoms of life experience and the altruism to vote and act according to the longer-term bigger picture. This is no longer a choice. It is bleeping red.

Yet, even so, there are mornings when I wake up thinking I must be mad. I could have a life. Travel, write books, have fun. Then I have to remind myself of the reasons why, scrawled on hasty yellow post-it notes and stuck randomly to my soul.

I'm doing it because it is necessary, it's doable and it's appropriate. Appropriate because I've spent my life as a writer, designer, councillor and academic working through these issues and here is a chance to put what I've learned into practice. Doable because, if we can replicate the ten percent of the vote I achieved as an Independent in the 2022 Strathfield by-election, we'd get not just one but two people into parliament. And necessary because, well, someone has to.

Someone has to:

Stop the indiscriminate industrial-scale logging of old-growth native forests such as the Bulga
end the greenfield sprawl that



Elizabeth Farrelly and her grandson Lachlan

devours fertile farmland, spreads the urban heat-island, builds on floodplains and will decimate precious habitat

join the dots between the fact that "one-in-a-hundred-year floods" now happen two or three times a year, and the relentless push to mine coal and destroy the Pilliga for coal seam gas;

transition immediately to renewables;

reduce the land clearing, especially of old growth forest, preserving soil, enhancing carbon sequestration, improving water retention and protecting biodiversity – most obviously koalas;

introduce serious rent controls, so that people can rent with dignity and certainty throughout their lives;

build public housing and encourage affordable housing in our cities and towns without yielding to devel-

opers' demands for forests of ugly, cookie-cutter towers and crammed treeless housing estates;

properly fund public education; create walkable, liveable, loveable medium-density neighbourhoods for people to live and work.

This is not just about doing the right thing by the environment. Nor is it just about being decent to those less fortunate, though both of those things are important. It's about inter-generational justice. We must do everything possible to leave our children and grandchildren with a planet that is as habitable and beautiful as that into which we were born. And neither party has the backbone to take us there.

Community independents are critical to a healthy, functioning democracy. Why? Because, unlike party members, they are not beholden to party bosses, factional demands,

and big donors before listening to their constituents. For an independent every vote is a conscience vote. Yet everything is stacked against them.

To run an election campaign without the money and muscle of a party machine is difficult, to say the least, and made more so by the fact that, for individuals, donations are capped at half of the limit that applies to parties. To stand in the upper house, as I will, is more difficult still, since the electorate is the whole state. You can't doorknock, or even letterbox, six million people. And as an Independent or even a group you don't get your name above the line on the ballot paper. This makes the degree of difficulty overwhelming – which is why no Independent has ever been elected to the NSW upper house.

It's also why, contradictory as it may sound, we've formed an independent party. Even there, it was touch and go. A party must be registered for a full year before the election and, to be named above the line, must field a full ticket of 15 candidates. It was a matter of serendipity that we found a party whose values (openness, integrity and cultural vibrance) meshed with ours and which had outlived its initial purpose. Thus, the Open Party became Elizabeth Farrelly Independents. And here we are, with crampons and ropes, preparing an assault on a mountain that has never been climbed.

We have a vision of a NSW that is lovely and purposeful, where people expect decency from their governments and interest from their neighbourhoods. Where governments and communities work together to clean the air, nurture the seas and forests, create vibrant, walkable, medium-density cities and villages and create a fair and excellent system of education. Where we all feel included in a culture and common purpose that is, in essence, this: civilised survival.

So please, join us. Donate, volunteer, help us end the cronyism and achieve the impossible. Change. Politics!

Elizabeth Farrelly

<https://www.elizabethfarrelly.com.au/hello@elizabethfarrelly.com.au>

WHO'S TO BLAME?

NIMBYISM, DEVELOPERS, PROTESTERS, COUNCIL OR THE LAW... WHO DECIDES IF CONCERNS ARE LEGIT?

If you have a gripe where do you turn?

Letters to the Editor, ranting on radio, bending a friend's ear, getting the run-around at Council, calling a lawyer or the law . . . where do you go with a local issue or concern?

The New Year has seen a myriad of issues come to the fore. Some the result of weather/climate change, crooked roads, rising prices, troublesome neighbours, shortages or yet another edict from Council. Some are legit whinges, some deadly serious, and others fall in the middle where either side has a case.

On bigger issues frustration grows when there's no perceived action or solution from Council, the Ombudsman, the Office of Local Government, ICAC, the Police or your local solicitor or lawyer.

The last resort seems to be The Press. Get your complaint out there and get on the telly news, the front page or the local radio bulletin. Whingeing on social media might make you feel better when friends commiserate, but actually it achieves little.

I do feel frustrated, helpless, angry and sad at many issues raised with me. Sure, there are some nutters out there, or totally unreasonable people, but most people who complain feel they have legitimate cause. But it's frequently hard to know where and to whom to go to and also afford in order to complain or seek a solution.

Understanding both sides can be tricky or else you realise both have a cause to complain. And sometimes, we each may align our sympathy for one side or t'other.

For example. Some residents at Harrington are livid that Council has sent machinery and men to cut ("prune") down to eye level the mangroves along the river in front of Harrington Waters Estate. Not all of the mangroves, it seems only those blocking the view to the water in front of certain luxury homes.

Council's Director of Livable Communities (who created these titles??) Paul de Szell responded to our query that...

"MidCoast Council is undertaking pruning of mangroves along a

strip of the foreshore at Harrington Waters, as outlined in an adopted plan of management for the area. The plan allows for the pruning of the mangroves every two to three years along a section of the constructed foreshore next to the Manning River.

It has been four years since we have undertaken this pruning (last pruning - October 2018). The current pruning is being undertaken by contractors employed by Council and is expected to take approximately three days.

The plan of management has been in place since 2004 and was initiated to stabilise the bank and to maintain views of the river and, by doing so, eliminate unauthorised damage or removal of the mangroves.

The pruning is also being undertaken in accordance with a permit issued by NSW DPI- Fisheries. . ."

It was this last comment that had some locals cranky.

One wrote to me. . . . Mid-Coast Council have allocated the funding to pay for these few rich people including a wealthy retired politician to have all of the highly protected mangroves cut down so that they can have their views. For the rest of us it's a \$220,000 or \$110,000 individual fine.

This approved work is paid for by @midcoastcouncil and is agreed to by the Department of Primary Industries. After a phone call to council this morning we are told that it's an agreement between the developer of the Harrington Waters Estate and the Council.

With all of the terrible roads and broken infrastructure in this area surely these funds could be better spent on helping the community instead of a few rich people who want to maintain their view. Not to even mention all the environmental impacts this has on the fish and wildlife nurseries that rely on these protected trees to breed and maintain our fish stocks for the thousands of fishers who live in and visit this area."

Well, I have to agree about the importance of the mangroves... they are vital.

I asked some locals and received mixed responses.

'Well if I could afford a mansion

on the river I'd probably be cranky if my view was obliterated."

'The development should never have been approved in the first place. Developers with money inevitably get their way."

And this pragmatic one *"The mangroves are important. So it's better that they get pruned and continue to function otherwise they would all be mysteriously poisoned and gone forever."*

A lot of problems arise from lack of information, communication and sheer transparency.

There's a quiet treelined street in Taree of older style homes, some locals believe are heritage listed with old fashioned gardens which might not be everyone's cup of tea. But into this serene and friendly street a house has suddenly been sold in the middle to become a private medical radiation treatment facility. This is needed no doubt. But in the middle of a suburban street where the locals don't want a business building and the nightmare of parking? It is in the hospital vicinity but surely. . . and why weren't we told, they cry.

The deliberate smothering of plans might be a business ploy but it's uphill to object when the place has been sold before anyone knew of the plans.

Some people have found that a rubbish dump, a view, a quarry, or a sudden development obliterates their neighbouring trees and land without any awareness of these events.

It's all very murky and it's rare the locals win against the bigger companies and those with fistfuls of dollars.

Meanwhile in Gloucester's backyard **John Watts** reports . . .

Most complaints about roads received by MidCoast Council relate to the failure of the Council to undertake roadwork, but controversy is brewing about a plan by MidCoast Council to actually carry out roadwork in a usually sleepy farmland area adjacent to a horseshoe bend of the Manning River at Bootawa.

Moore's Road runs from Bootawa Road all the way down to a quiet reach of the Manning River. How-

ever, as is the case in many areas of NSW, for part of its length the road is simply a mark on the map, or what is usually referred to as a 'paper road'.

What has upset a number of the Moore's Road residents is that the Council has received \$522,000 in government funding to turn this paper road into a properly formed road to allow better public access to the river.

On 2 December 2022 the owners of four properties on Moore's Road wrote a detailed letter of complaint to the Council giving many reasons why they objected to the Council proposal. On 16 December the Council wrote a letter in response.

On 3 January Council provided me with further detailed comment in response to a number of specific questions.

One issue raised by the residents was whether the unformed (paper) part of the road is actually a public road under Council management and suggested that many of them were unaware that it was a public road.

Whether it is a public road is simply a legal issue and Council has engaged a surveyor to undertake a full and detailed survey to prepare a plan of the road alignment which will be provided to all residents before any work is carried out.

Robert Scott on behalf of the Council commented:

'It is important to note that we are not creating anything new by doing the proposed work. The existing road reserve permits public access to the river. Any of the property owners would have been clearly able to see that there was a public road reserve through their property when they initially purchased it.'

Perhaps any resident who was unaware of the existence of the road should have a chat to their solicitor or conveyancer who acted on the purchase of their property.

Whilst it is true that no new road reserve is going to be created, to suggest that the Council is not creating something new when a completely new formed road is going to



A view from where the mangroves have been "pruned" to allow some residents a better water view. Original mangroves to the left.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

be constructed is a statement that could well be open to some debate.

It appears that at least one of the local residents has on occasions improperly attempted to prevent members of the public accessing the river via the road reserve, which is obviously a recipe for conflict, a conflict which might be avoided if the road was properly formed.

Other issues raised by the Moores Road residents relate to such things as toilet facilities, garbage disposal, campfires, water safety and disabled access. In response the Council has advised that there is no proposal to permit camping near the river and that no further amenities or facilities are going to be provided.

It does seem that these issues are no different in kind to any area where the public might have access, but the work will almost certainly result in a greater chance of poor behaviour with increased visitation.

It is clear that these are genuine issues and that their impact should be properly considered before the proposal is allowed to proceed.

The residents have also suggested that there will be adverse environmental impacts on wildlife and in particular on the Manning River Helmeted Turtle, Platypus, Fish, Water Birds and Koalas, although they have not at this stage provided any expert evidence about such impacts. Whilst the nature of such impacts might not be different than at present, an increase in the numbers

of visitors may increase the environmental risks.

The Council has indicated that it will be looking at the actual issues associated with the road's construction and that no clearing is required. Mr Scott commented:

'By and large the majority of users (of public areas) do not generate these issues...'

And:

'The main issue for (the Council) is the public access that is presently being restricted both deliberately and inadvertently...'

And:

'We have over 190km of coastline and considerably greater length of rivers and creeks and our programs encourage sensitive, appropriate and considerate use of them rather than exclusion and restriction.'

At the suggestion of one of the residents objecting to this proposal I contacted Jennifer Grainger from the Manning River Turtle Group for her take on the proposal, and she commented that there will be issues relating to garbage disposal, toilet facilities, wildlife protection, methods of fishing and safety for those accessing the river and that these all need to be considered, but added:

'On a positive, 'if' the area is safe



pruning in front of homes

then personally I like to see people getting out on our rivers and appreciating or learning to appreciate nature and how to protect aquatic habitat.'

It is unclear at the present exactly what environmental studies will be carried out by the Council before the work is allowed to proceed. The area is within an area of high koala population and greater road use will obviously increase the risk of koala road strikes and stress on the local koala population. Three koala deaths are known to have occurred on gravel roads in the Bootawa area in the last few months.

There are other issues involved with the road work including the fact that some residents have built structures such as fences on the road reserve and that the existing formed roadway does not follow the road reserve in some places. These obviously need to be resolved. The road reserve is likely to need some realignment, although some residents of Moores Road seem staunchly opposed to any such realignment.

It seems that the main community mover behind the proposal to

construct the road is a group calling itself the Bootawa Community Action Group. Their spokesperson is Dr John Harris whom I contacted for comment. Dr Harris has lived in Bootawa for 22 years and he is a former Principal Research Scientist who led NSW Fisheries' freshwater research group. He is now an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Centre for Ecosystem Science at the University of NSW.

Dr Harris indicated that for some time he has been keen to see better public access to the Manning River, and particular river access from Moores Rd. He pointed out that there is only really one public access point between Gloucester and Wingham. He said that over the years many access points had been sold to adjacent owners by the government but welcomed the fact that in recent times government policy had changed in favour of not permitting such sales.

He and his group obtained over 300 signatures on a petition supporting this proposal.

I asked him about the suggestions that building a road would cause the risk of some anti-social behaviour and he agreed that there was some risk, but that it was not a sufficient one to prevent public access, however

any such issues would need to be properly managed by Council.

I asked him whether he agreed that there might be some risks in relation to wildlife such as koalas, turtles and platypus. He responded that as a scientist with some expertise in the area he was confident that any environmental study would find the risks to be minimal.

Whilst public access to the Manning River is obviously very important, it is not the only issue, and environmental and social impacts are also important. It seems clear that at the present time the environmental impacts of the roadway construction are largely unknown and a full assessment looking in detail at all impacts, particularly on koalas, turtles and platypus, should be undertaken before any decision is made to proceed.

JDWatts

Meanwhile the forest protesters against logging in the Bulga Forest hang in there. (See story by MP Sue Higginson on P8)

DM

OUR FORESTS ARE WORTH MORE STANDING

The end of native forest logging in NSW is on the horizon – but it can't come fast enough for the climate and the environment.



MP Sue Higginson at the Bulga Forest protest.

No matter what the Government says in public, in private they know that the native hardwood industry has already reached the cliff edge and is an embarrassing reminder of the forestry wars between the Liberals and Nationals that have been played out on the public stage for years.

Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia have all demonstrated the benefit that can flow from a planned end to native forest logging.

Whereas here in NSW we are seeing communities having to stop their daily affairs and stand up for forests to try to build the political momentum to put an end to our costly, unprofitable and destructive native forestry industry that will ultimately abandon workers and communities.

There is a populist and incorrect idea that logging native forests is an essential industry that is vital for

important needs, including the construction of housing. This is an easy mistruth that has propagated from those vested in the continuation of the industry. The reality is that the trees that are felled in NSW native forests mostly get converted to wood chips that are then burnt in overseas power plants or used for paper, or are used for other low value products, for which there are alternatives, such as pallets, fence posts and telegraph poles.

Laminated softwood pulp is a much more sustainable, cost effective and durable product for the construction of buildings so that is, unsurprisingly, what the industry prefers.

This is precisely why the softwood plantation division of NSW Forestry Corporation has earned more than \$90 million over the last two years while the native hardwood industry lost around \$27 million in the same period of time. Sustainable plantation softwoods are relatively low cost and

go towards high value end-product uses. Native forests, by contrast, are being torn down at a huge expense before being burnt in carbon intensive power generation facilities or used for things for which there are alternatives.

Academics, forest scientists and conservationists and industry professionals have known all of this for years. There have been several papers published in recent times on the fiscal and environmental costs of native forest logging and recently we have seen reports prepared by the non-government sector that demonstrate how quickly and cheaply we can transition to a profitable model.

Late last year, Frontier Economics released their report into the kind of transition support that could see an end to native forest logging in NSW. The plan would support workers, the industry and the environment while creating exciting new opportunities for regions that have traditionally been involved in native forest logging. They used Australian Bureau of Statistics data to estimate that there are just over 1,000 jobs involved in hardwood forestry operations in NSW, a number that is declining already with no assistance offered to the affected workers.

To protect these workers in forestry and the wood processing industry, their plan accounts for structural re-adjustment, redundancies, retraining, and buy backs of existing wood supply agreements. This support would happen alongside an expansion of the current dedicated softwood and hardwood plantation estate to ensure that timber needs can be met well into the future *without* destroying native forests.

All of this would take an invest-

ment from the Government but the costs, around \$20.8 million per year until 2053, will likely be outweighed by a range of positive budget impacts including avoided ongoing structural adjustment and bushfire support to the hardwood sector, avoided equity injections to the Forestry Corporation and the likelihood of increased dividends from the Forestry Corporation over time by avoiding the loss making activities of the hardwood division.

WE NEED NATIVE FORESTS

Beyond a simple calculation of the monetary benefits of ending native forest logging, the threat of a changing climate offers a survival imperative to rapidly regenerate native forests. Native forests store huge amounts of carbon dioxide, the older and healthier the forest, the more carbon is captured and stored. The federal government has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% compared to 2005 levels. This commitment, while inadequate, equates to about 15.3 megatonnes of carbon reduction over the next 9 years which is also about the same as the annual net carbon emissions generated by logging our native forests.

To put this another way, Australia could reduce our carbon budget by 43% simply by ending the unprofitable native forest logging industry. With the additional plantation estate and increases in high-value end use products, we could achieve well over a 50% reduction from 2005 carbon emissions. This is an exciting opportunity that we should embrace to make a genuine and immediate contribution to mitigate the worst

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impacts of climate change while benefiting the community.

BUSHFIRES

The warming climate has also led to a significant increase in the duration of the bushfire season as well as the intensity of the fires experienced. The 2019/2020 bushfire season was the longest and worst on records, fires devastated 80% of South Coast forests and 60% of North Coast forests. Although these disasters are inevitable in this age of a warmer planet, native forest logging operations over the last 70 years had a significant impact on the damage that was caused to forest systems, homes and lives.

Native forest logging operations cause a reduction in the stratification, or layering, of trees in forests that can last for up to 70 years. This disruption to the natural forest balance leads to dryer conditions closer to the ground which then causes more damage when fires take hold.

Contrary to the myth of forests in National Parks being most dangerous in bushfires, it is actually the logging of our State Forests that creates the most dangerous conditions for runaway mega fires that has a permanently damaging effect on forests and surrounding areas.

Ending native forest logging NOW will help us arrest the raging loss of biodiversity we are experiencing, referred to as the extinction crisis. So many of our unique forest dependent animals are facing extinction including the greater glider, yellow-bellied glider, spotted-tailed quoll, koala, glossy black cockatoo, powerful owl, masked owl and sooty owl. Many forest dependent species rely on the hollows in older trees to survive, the same trees the logging industry prefers. Some 70 native animals are hollow dependent including some 20 bat species, 12 arboreal mammal species, 26 bird species and 14 reptile species.

We know that the extinction crisis upon us means that species loss will be compounded and it will not be a single species or a few species - we are looking at the extinction of many, many species in a relatively short period of time.

We must not let this happen, we must rise to the challenge and pull out all stops to avoid any extinction. Saving our native forests, saves our lives as well.

The desire and need to end logging of our public native forests is here, but political leadership is not. We can carry on the current trajectory as an unplanned plunge into free fall off the cliff, after wrecking more of the precious forest systems that we all depend on, or we can take control and go forward in a way that offers countless benefits to all. With political willpower, we can regenerate our forest estate to optimal function creating thousands more jobs than are currently employed in its destruction. This is the time for us to take the opportunity to right some of the historical wrongs while also making responsible plans for the future. The only question is - will you join us?

Sue Higginson
Greens NSW MP

LESSONS IN THE LOCK UP – A PRISON TEACHER’S ACCOUNT

Crime has the dual effect of repelling you and drawing you in. Movies, books, television, and the internet are saturated with tales of crime. And true crime outrates fiction. There is something primal in walking up to the edge of the cliff and looking deeply into the darkest parts of the human psyche whilst taking comfort from knowing we can also step back from the precipice.

As an educator employed in the adult criminal justice system for over seven years, I must admit I never really held a political view on the prison system before working in gaols. Of course, I imagined prisons were far from ideal places, but I knew very little of their workings or who occupied the buildings. Was the criminal justice system effective? Do we have the balance right between punishment and rehabilitation? Is incarceration the best use of social and economic resources? Are gaols masking greater problems of society? On the first day of employment as a correctional education officer, those thoughts never even crossed my mind.

Essentially, all those questions can be whittled down to one: What is a prison for? If you were to ask the public, the answer you would mainly get is to take the bad people out of society, to keep the wolves from the door or something along those lines. To make society safer, the courts' role is to balance making a sentence long enough to deter others from committing the same offence but not too long as to make the prisoner an even more dysfunctional person. But once you have removed them from society, what do you do next? And when you put all the bad eggs together in the one basket, what is going to be the end product? How many pro-social role models is a young inmate going to find in the prison yard?

I agree that there are some people you need to take out of society for our safety. There are some truly awful crimes. I also met some very scary indi-

viduals whom I would not like to be locked up in a cell with at night! However, most prisoners I encountered were not innately evil. The majority came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, were poorly educated and were recidivists – they keep coming back. An inadequate education is only one of the 'big eight' criminogenic risk factors that leads to reoffending. There are economic and social factors at play here but, as an educator, the low level of literacy of the incarcerated and how that impacts their lives was especially apparent.

Education is not regarded as the most significant risk factor for reoffending but there is an undeniable correlation between a lack of education and rates of incarceration. In the United States, where there are more than 2.4 million individuals currently incarcerated, 18 percent of the general population do not hold a high school diploma. This climbs to 68 percent for State prison inmates.

Equally, the Australian Institute of Criminology reported on the effectiveness of correctional education in improving post-release outcomes in 2016. It stated that 'the more classes completed by prisoners the lower the rate of re-incarceration and the less likely they are to increase the seriousness of their offending'. In effect, the more classes the inmate successfully completes, the less likely they are to reoffend and to access welfare payments.

Research shows this is the case not only in Australia but right across the world. Studies suggest an improved education can increase patience, risk aversion and future financial earnings, but life on the inside is more nuanced than any study.

Prisons are not educational institutions, and many other factors are at play that may have a greater bearing on successful rehabilitation.

I recall a prisoner in his mid-twenties who had decided he had had enough of a life of crime. He was studying a university course in gaol via distance. One day he did not show up to class. He was being held in segregation for assaulting another prisoner. He later told me that he was challenged in the wing by a newly arrived prisoner who was trying to establish his place in the dog-eat-dog world behind the padlocked gate.

He could not refuse the challenge lest he be targeted. As a punishment his access to education was under review. At the same time, he was being visited by members of his gang who reminded him of his loyalty to them while declaring they would be providing him with a new sports car on his release.

Crime fascinates us and the media glamourises it, but the reality of a life of crime for many is a life of recurring incarceration and wasted human potential. For some it is cool and a rite of passage, but it is also very degrading, perilous, and tedious. There's a reason it's called *doing time*.

Paul A. MacNamara
'THE CRIMINAL CLASS -
Memoir of a Prison Teacher'
(Big Sky Publishing)

Available in paperback in Big W and bookstores. Also as an e-book and an audio book - <https://www.bigsky-publishing.com.au/books/the-criminal-class/>

WHAT'S BETTER THAN BUYING A MANGO? GROWING YOUR OWN!



One of the first fruits which come to mind when we think of summer is the fleshy, juicy mango with its golden sunny flesh tempting us. If you have a little room in your back garden, you won't be disappointed planting one of these divine trees and raiding its offerings.

PLANTING

Plant young mango trees in a sunny position in the garden, where there is enough room to develop to full size. Mango trees are heavy feeders and need full sun to grow their golden fruit. Mix some 5 IN 1 Organic Plant Food into the existing soil before planting. 5 IN 1 is rich in composted manures, organic fertilisers and minerals to meet all their needs. If you have a clay based soil don't forget to introduce some gypsum and place on a mound for drainage too.

FERTILISING

An ideal fertiliser to grow large fruit is one with high potassium. Searles Fruit & Citrus Food is boosted with minerals to encourage large fruit. Feed young trees in mid-spring and mid-summer and bearing trees during early summer, when fruiting, and again in late summer.

WATERING

Established trees don't require watering but young plants will need plenty of water in summer. Water sparingly in late winter and spring, before the onset of flowering.

HARVESTING

Harvest mangoes when the colour of the skin flesh turns from green to yellow, orange or red. Its final ripened colour may vary depending on variety. As the mangoes ripen, watch out for birds and bats.

Paper bag each mango if practical or cover the tree with a bird friendly net. To find out the best time to pick the fruit, pick one first to sample. If the internal flesh is yellow throughout then your mangoes can be picked.

PESTS & DISEASES

Anthraxnose is the major disease problem; its symptoms are flower death, dark markings on leaves and stems, and premature fruit drop or blackening. Anthracnose can come on very quickly during long periods of wet weather. The fungus appears as irregular shaped black spots and can spread very quickly and attack flower panicles,



fruit and young developing leaves, preventing fruit development. Treat disease with alternative sprays of Mancozeb and Copper Oxchloride.

Fruit fly prevention is mandatory; if your tree is too large to spray effectively, use traps, like Searles Fruit Fly Trap. This trap is so easy to use.

PRUNING

The tree will be healthier and look better if once a year after fruiting you remove the dead wood. This is also the time to lightly shape the tree if required. Fruit is easier to pick if the tree doesn't grow too tall. So if you are sufficiently energetic, get up on a step ladder and cut back the top of the tree each year to develop a low, spreading habit which is easier to manage. Do this annually from when the tree is quite young and it will develop to the shape and size you require. Wear gloves and protective clothing when pruning because the mango tree has a very irritating sap which is hard to remove from skin or clothes.

So, if you find yourself wanting to put in a mango tree or are wondering how you can get the best out of your existing one; come and see us at Wingham Nursery where we can get you growing!



Wingham Nursery & Florist
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BOB BROWN REFLECTS ON WHAT'S COMING AND WHY.

China's self-selected life-president Xi says Taiwan will be part of China by 2049, just 27 years from now but, as only 10% of Taiwanese are agreeable, either this goal will fail or he will trigger an invasion upending the world as we know it.

Elon Musk is putting more than 1,000 satellites into our night sky without having asked any of his fellow human beings if the commonly-owned sky was his for the taking. Not a murmur from anyone.

India's Gautam Adani, aided by his coterie of Australian Liberal, Labor and National Party sycophants, has become the third richest person on Earth - Musk and Mr Besos are still ahead of him. Never mind, according to some news reports up to \$3 billion dollars will be going from Adani's Queensland coal mine to his family trust account in the Cayman Islands, tax free.

Money makes money, especially if a glitterati of political leaders service your plans for free. To quote India's National Herald: 'The Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, who led a delegation of 25 mayors and officials to India, confirmed that all the clearances and approvals had come in.'

Labor even gave Adani free water for his massive mine. Which highlights how the world's richest 10% (including most of us reading this) have 50% of the wealth, while the world's poorest 50% (none of whom will get to read this) languishes with just 10%: for each dollar they get, we get \$25. Yet who's content?

As the evil billionaire President Putin shows, greed has no mercy or limit.

But if social inequality besets the world, how about environmental injustice? Especially from the point of view of the non-human world? Homo

sapiens (us) is wrecking Earth's finely-tuned and miraculously-complex biosphere like a rat eating a moth. Life is fast fading away. If you are 3, expect sea levels to rise 3 metres in your lifetime with a billion or so people displaced and moving your way.

One thing I regret about leaving the Senate is that I didn't get in a bill making it unlawful for taxpayers' money to go to future reparations for those building within 10 metres of current sea levels. Compensation demands from this myopia will break the bank. But, if we think a few centuries out and sensibly project the ultimate Antarctic ice melt, make that nearer 80 metres - somewhere out in the Dandenongs, Mt Coot-tha, or the Blue Mountains (Penrith is at 32m) etc.

Australia's Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek, is taking a long time to decide whether to let Xi's state-owned mining giant, MMG, go ahead with its toxic waste dump in Tasmania's takayna/Tarkine rainforest. She answers no campaigners' letters. While MMG has alternatives outside the Tarkine, the threatened Tasmanian masked owls in that rainforest have none. It took a Federal Court appeal to stop MMG from its first invasion of the Masked Owls' forest, but Plibersek can override the court. MMG will be watching for the minister's decision as closely as the 80 good citizens arrested so far for impeding its destruction, though I doubt that MMG, like them, will be excommunicated by Plibersek. What is certain is that

she will inform MMG before the public.

This Albanese Labor government began its environmental career by ticking off on the vast Scarborough gas project in Western Australia and the consequent further destruction of Aboriginal rock carvings on the Burrup Peninsula. Then Plibersek, in her first decision as Minister for the Environment, sent the bulldozers into the rare Gelorup woodland south of Perth to begin a Bunbury bypass. That road could and should have been planned on alternative routes which didn't smash the woodland and its array of threatened wildlife.

After four critically-endangered Western ringtail possums were killed, the works were temporarily stopped. As with the Tarkine, Plibersek completely ignored her constituents at Gelorup. No answers to their polite letters. No acknowledgement of their appeals. Nothing. Can you imagine a Labor, Liberal or Nationals Minister for Resources ignoring their constituency of mining or logging corporate executives?

To be simplistic, there are two urgent challenges facing us eight billion human beings if we are to make it into the future. The first is to give everyone an equal chance at life and that means ending this era of billionaires. It means all of us have to pull in our belts and cease wanting, way beyond our needs, more stuff. Growth economics is killing everyone's future security.

The second is to end the wrecking of the biosphere and that is

closely linked to the first. These challenges overshadow all else in politics.

The Greens were addressing both when, at the last election, they won the biggest vote ever. The parallel advent of the Teals emphasises the electorate's belated but growing fear for the future and eagerness for political saviours.

From now on, each native forest tree that falls, each coal mine that expands or is newly begun, each hole drilled in farmlands for gas, each industrial fish farming invasion of our seas, will see more votes carve off the old parties. That is why they are so desperate to criminalise peaceful defenders of the environment. The Green MPs' job is not to be arrested at the barricades but to be on the parliamentary benches as advocates and supporting those who are at the barricades.

In the duality of political advocacy and civil action for equality and ecology is the winning of the world.

(Bob Brown, a medical practitioner was elected to the Australian Senate for Tasmania in 1996 later elected as the first Federal Parliamentary Leader and instigator of the newly established Greens Party in 2005. After a dedicated career as an environmental leader and pioneer he resigned in 2012. He subsequently established the [Bob Brown Foundation](#) with his longtime partner Paul Thomas to promote environmental awareness.)

Public Health Forum

There will be a Public Health Forum being conducted by Manning Great Lakes Community Health Action Group at Black Head Surf Club on Wednesday February 22nd at 7pm. The forum will be chaired by Mr Eddie Wood, President of MGLCHAG. The two guest speakers will be Dr Murray Hyde-Page (Orthopaedic Surgeon and Chair of the

Medical Staff Council, Manning Base Hospital) and Dr Sesh Narasimhan (Cardiologist). There will be other health professionals also present.

The aim of the meeting is to allow all candidates for the upcoming State Election to explain and expound on their party's policies and visions for Health Service Delivery in the Manning Great

Lakes Gloucester region for the next four plus years. This will provide the community with a good understanding of what to expect as the provision of Health services and related treatments will be a major election issue, not only in this region but all over the state of NSW.

MANNING COMMUNITY NEWS CONTRIBUTOR, VINCENT O'DONNELL REFLECTS ON ISSUES OF THE PAST THAT WILL SHAPE THE YEARS TO COME.

Always Another Dawn.

This is the title of an Australian film released in 1948, from the years when there was not an Australian film industry. Those words could also have been a rallying cry for that very small band of men and women who thought there should be an Australian film industry and campaigned and lobbied fruitlessly to create one.

Always Another Dawn was not well received, despite its patriotic celebration of the Australian Navy at war, but it did one good thing: it gave Charles 'Bud' Tingwell, his first leading screen role of a subsequent six decade long career that made him the best loved and recognised Australian screen actor.

Those few words, 'always another dawn', expresses the optimism we face each new year with our new year resolutions, resolutions we (kind of) know won't be in place by February. But optimism is there and optimism is one of humankind's most animating forces.

It gets you up in the morning, you greet your neighbour with it. It hold families, communities and nations together. Fires, floods and other catastrophes hone its edge into a weapon of survival and recovery. It is essential to life and when it ebbs, disorder, or worse, follows.

In Ukraine, the success of the country's small army against a numerically superior invader is built on optimism, while the disorderly

retreat of Russian forces signals a collapse of optimism that they are serving some noble national purpose as they have been told.

But sometimes it is hard work to seek that new dawn. The last couple of years have been particularly tough for many people: the threat of disability or death from Covid-19, at very least the inconvenience of lock-downs and travel restrictions. And there was the disappointment of seeing some people who were more concerned with their personal convenience rather than the welfare of the community that gave them place and purpose.

And there's the on again-off again political and social concern about climate change. Remember Kevin Rudd's "great moral challenge of our generation". That was fifteen years ago in the Kevin '07 election year. His generation did little, will the next generation do more? The activists' *tactic de jour* of gluing their hands to gallery walls and works of art gets publicity, but the publicity doesn't go past the acts of defiance and so fails to communicate the issues behind the action. It is the issues that matter, not the publicity-seeking defiance.

Of climate change, I cannot judge the science, but I can judge the scientists. I am far more inclined to trust them, rather than dissembling politicians or self-interested business tycoons, when they warn of the danger. And I am

very strong on applying the precautionary principle. After many years in film and television production, I know not to trust those who say 'It'll be right on the night'. So, I think it will be better and cheaper in the long run if we act to head off the possibility of climate change lest it trigger social, agricultural and political events beyond our governments' ability to anticipate or counter.

A key issue in climate change is the consumption of fossil fuels. If you take the long view, then carelessly consuming a limited resource is not a good idea. One day the resource will be exhausted. So as our society has achieved a level of technical proficiency and social stability using fossil fuels, it would seem to be a smart move to develop and implement renewable resources and use fossil fuels for tasks where we can't find renewable substitutes.

Many societies are starting down that road but some countries remain perilously dependent on fossil fuels, so we need an international effort to share renewable technologies.

Sharing is also an act of trust, trust that our generosity will not be abused. But trust is in short supply. Things are not too bad in Australia, but trust in the US, especially in government, is seriously corrupted. Increasingly, US society and politics is governed by mistrust, from a need to be armed lest your home or

person is violated, to their highest governing body, Congress, where even members of the same political party do not trust their own leadership.

In politics, trust is a two way street. It is hard to build, easy to destroy, but essential to efficient social and economic management, the core business of politics. John Howard's core and non-core promises were, at least, a politician acknowledging that politicians cannot be trusted. The last decade of political leadership has done little to change this. Perhaps another dawn is called for.

My New Year's plea to politicians of every stripe, from wanna-be local councillor to prime ministers and presidents, is this: win trust by being open with your motives and honest in your answers. Better governance will follow.

Trust and optimism are brother-sister qualities. If you have one, you have the other.

As we face another year, my New Year resolution is this: be more trusting and trust-worthy. That will fuel my optimism that we can defeat the pandemic, ameliorate climate change and create a society in which we expect the best of family, friends, neighbours and politicians. If so, we will all hopefully enjoy another dawn for a long time to come.

Vincent O'Donnell is a Media Researcher and Analyst

CUTENESS OF THE MONTH.. Baby Porcupine



MASTER CRAFT BIRDS!

Over weeks we watched two Willy Wagtails swish and dart around our pot plants and outside window ledges thinking they were hunting bugs and flies to eat.



However one morning we discovered what they'd done. They had collected masses of fragile cobwebs and glued them into a mud packed nest on a low branch of a Ti-bouchina tree in the front garden where three chubby babies were sitting in or rather on it. As we peeped at them each day the babies were quite nonchalant

though mum and dad shrieked from a nearby branch. One baby let us gently rub his chest, lifting his head and closing his eyes in enjoyment! So quickly though the kids left home off to see the world and left behind a very empty nest!

DM



Photos by Boris Janjic



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WINDING UP TO WIND DOWN — AN ADVENTURER'S GUIDE TO TURNING 70

Kieran Kelly

The wind beat into my jacket, and the first snowflakes fell on the back of my gloves. High on Kings Peak, Utah's tallest mountain, I realised I might be in trouble. It had taken me longer to scale the steep, rock-strewn slope from the valley below, and the weather had caught me. The temperature had dropped by 15°C in the last couple of hours and was below freezing.



Looking up at the steep slope and the bare, stony ridge, there was no clue of the location of Anderson Pass, somewhere tantalisingly close, yet I couldn't see it.

Autumn in the Uintas Mountains in 2019 brought me to the Highline Trail, an iconic, high-altitude, *Grande Randonnée* hike in North America. After a 28-day solo trek down California's John Muir Trail in 2019 and with my 70th birthday only a year away, I knew this would be my last chance. The door was closing. Now, as the cloud started to roll up the peak behind me I considered if I could bivouac for the night among the rocks, but then felt two new sensations: fear and panic. After years of backcountry exploring and remote area snow skiing, these were emotions that I couldn't indulge.

With my back to the wind, I leaned again over the map, kneeling on it so the wind would not tear it from my grasp. I consulted the compass again, urging the needle to swing and settle. The mountain itself was probably interfering. The map told me I should be right on the pass, but a broad saddle above me stretching to the right seemed to be the obvious passage off this side of the mountain. But the map said that wasn't where the pass should be.

"You don't have to do this anymore," a voice said above the howling wind. I turned around, stunned that someone else was up there on that wild afternoon deep in the mountains. But there was nobody. The long slope I had climbed fell away behind me into the dense, rising bank of cloud below.

A sudden image of my two grandsons appeared before me, and I realised the most important thing in the world was not striving for new goals and adventures but preserving life as long as I could to spend time with them.

"There isn't anything left to prove. You'll be 70 next year and time is short. You don't want to make it even shorter by climbing Kings Peak in the autumn alone." The voice, clear as a bell, spoke to me again, but no one was there. I turned back to the map. With years of navigational experience behind me, I was confused. It is easy navigating across the flat, endless terrain of inland Australia. The jagged peaks of the Uintas Mountains are a much tougher challenge. Altitude is unforgiving. Thankfully, I had a storm-tossed epiphany.

"The pass is above you, straight up, not in front of you," the voice said.

I had to back years of experience and fight the rising tide of panic, trusting that all my cal-

culations were correct, that the map was accurate and that 500 feet above me, over the steep, screed slope, was Anderson Pass. I knew there was a killing drop straight down the cliffs on the reverse slope. I had to get it right. I couldn't stay where I was.

Slinging on my pack, I started climbing – straight up. Sure enough, half an hour later, I emerged on the ridgeline, where a narrow slot between the rocks beckoned. This was Anderson Pass. It looked nothing like I had expected, nothing like the broad saddles I had crossed daily for the last week. There was an outpouring of relief as I knew I would survive, and I headed straight down the mountain into safety. The storm beat and howled against the eastern slope of Kings Peak.

Like all men who retire, I wondered how to fill up the last third of life. How do you replace the easily quantifiable results of running your own business when you no longer own that business? How do you set goals? How do you measure if your goalsetting is successful, as often they will be non-monetary goals? More prosaically, what

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makes a man get out of bed every day if they don't have to go to work?

After returning, exhausted from the Kings Peak hike, I wrote some suggestions for men my age who are retired or about to be.

Retirement from work is not retirement from life. You may live for several more decades, and it has to be a productive and fulfilling time.

Set realistic goals. My post-retirement bucket list goals of solo hikes along the John Muir Trail and the Highline Trail are achievable for someone under 60. For someone in their late 60s, it is arguable – they were not realistic. Don't ever set goals that may kill you.

Attempt to set goals and have a plan *before* you retire, not when it has already happened.

Be flexible and adjust gracefully to the limitations advancing age places on your body. I could once carry a 35kg backpack with ease. Now, about 22kg is the limit. This is not a matter of shame. I can no longer swim confidently at Manly through a big surf. I just don't have the aerobic capability, so I swim on calm days. After being buried in an avalanche in Colorado several years ago, I have given up heli-skiing and back-country skiing, but I now snow ski every year, aiming to perfect my technique.

Realise that priorities will change as you get older. This is especially the case with grandchildren, a new and rewarding experience that is often unplanned for by men.

Nurture interpersonal relationships. Men do not have the broad and deep social networks of women of the same age. Many Australian males have activity-based relationships rather than emotionally based relationships, and these, of necessity, diminish through time. Never let your social circle shrink if you can avoid it.

Know the difference between your acquaintances and friends, whom you can trust with what parts of your life and whom you can't. Women are better at this than men.

Before finishing work, attempt to develop interests that you are passionate about and can be undertaken with the greater time available on retirement. When I retired, I applied for and was accepted into the Australian Film and Television School to study cinematography. While challenging for me, for no other reason than being 30 years older than the other students, it was a challenging but rewarding experience.

Realise that the things you find enjoyable and challenging may seem strange to your friends and companions. They may travel to Europe in the summer and drink red wine in quaint villages on the Cinque Terre. You may wish to go cross-country skiing in Finland in winter. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do something and it's enjoyable.

Remember, in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make and that life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans.

(Veteran stockbroker and investment manager, Kieran Kelly retired in 2017 after 38 years in the securities industry. He has also been a journalist, a long distance swimmer, adventurer and climber who has written several books about his adventures. He is a regular guest on ABC radio's "Australia All Over")

FINDING THE PERFECT BOAT

By now our holiday visitors would have worked out that Port Stephens and the surrounding coastline are a boating and fishing paradise. If you have never been into boating and fishing this is the time to join in.

If you are considering buying a boat there are a few variables to keep in mind.

How many regular passengers would you have on board – with an emphasis on regular? How far would you be travelling (Broughton Island, Myall Lakes, up the Karuah River)?

Once these decisions have been made you will be able to select an appropriate boat size and motor. Take into account a boat shed and the vehicle which will tow the boat. Color and comfort are an afterthought.

You may have heard of my boat "Stinkpot" in which I have been fishing and exploring the reefs around Fingal Bay for over 40 years. "Stinkpot"

is just over 3 metres in length with a mighty 9 hp motor to drive it along. I launch at Fingal Beach and fish for snapper in front of the Lighthouse.

"Too small," I hear you say. Nor for me and occasionally a mate. Observe the rules, have a lifejacket and know the tide and weather conditions. A little skill with oars if necessary as well as knowledge of the engine also helps. And work out how best to launch your boat.

There's nothing like being close to the action.

Big fancy boats might suit some, for me Stinkpot is perfect and has served me faithfully all these years. Make sure yours is also perfect.



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

ABOUT A GIRL... ABOUT A PEARL

Kristin Weidenbach with Alison Brown

Published by Cygnet Bay Pearls

Available from sales@pearlsofaustralia.com.au

\$30.



This is the story of Alison Brown whose husband and father in law and his brother who began the now well known Aussie Pearl Company Cygnet Bay Pearls in WA and now more recently Broken Bay Pearls in NSW.

However this fascinating family story of penniless pioneers who started a small pearling enterprise that has grown into the

successful Cygnet Bay South Sea pearl business, is also very much a woman's adventure romance!

For a 19 year old bride leaving her home in WA's wheatbelt country to move to far flung Cygnet Bay 200kms north of Broome on the Dampier Peninsula WA to live in a rough paperbark shack shows Alison's determination and spirit of adventure.

Having visited the Browns at Cygnet Bay pearl farm (now run by Alison and Bruce's son James) some years back I can attest to its remoteness but also its astounding beauty and how one can become caught in the lure of the pearl.

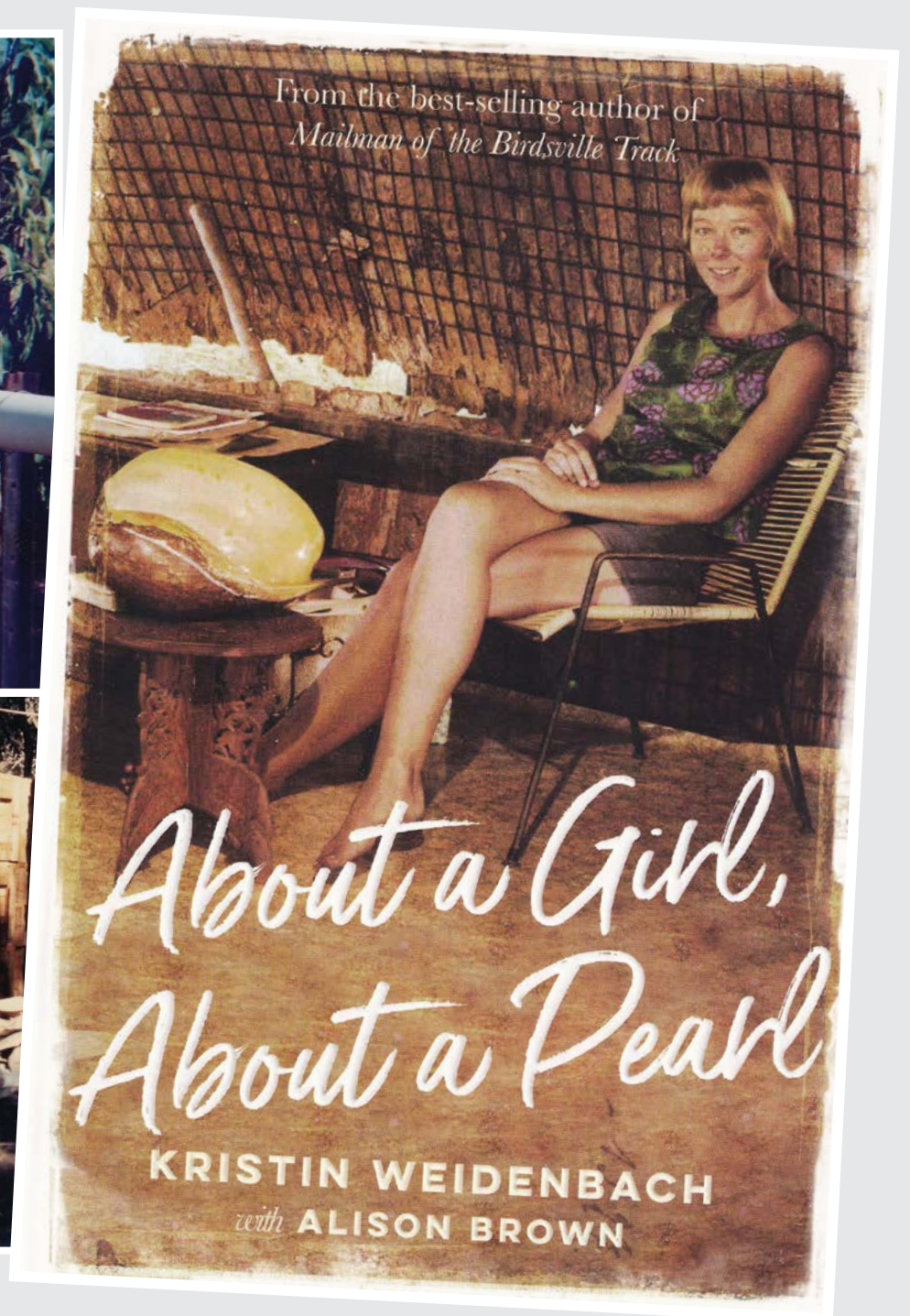
Australian South Sea pearls (as they became known) are unlike any other pearl in the world, and their story is as swashbuckling,



Alison drying pearl meat



John Boxer packing pearl shell



romantic and dangerous as any book or movie.

Alison's story of the Brown family's involvement in establishing a cultured pearl industry with its dramas and highlights in an extraordinary area of Australia is fascinating in itself but add in the excitement, tragedies and highlights of family life, a unique business in a wonderland wilderness, well, it all sounds more like a novel!

Alison's story reinforces the knowledge of so many intrepid, indomitable and strong women who have been pioneers in our country side by side with their menfolk and continue to do so. It's good to hear the story from an intrepid female point of view as told to biographer Kristin Weidenbach!

DM



The purpose-built DMB which brought in many bountiful harvests of cultured pearls.



Bruce Brown's original boat now disintegrating in the mangroves



Alison Brown her daughters and granddaughters

THE SUCCESSOR.

(THE HIGH-STAKES LIFE OF LACHLAN MURDOCH)



Paddy Manning

Published by Black Inc.

RRP \$34.99

For some time, I kept telling myself that the malign influence of Rupert Murdoch couldn't last much longer because upon his inevitable demise things were bound to improve as he was replaced by his more enlightened son Lachlan.

Having read the *Successor* I now feel that my optimism has been sorely misplaced.

It is always risky for an author to write an unauthorised biography of someone rich, famous, and powerful, particularly someone who seems to have no particular qualms about launching the modern version of the duel-Defamation proceedings. This book was not authorised by Lachlan Murdoch and he was never interviewed by Manning. However, the *Successor* is a well-researched and quite detailed account of his life and activities up to the present time, although I suppose that the most interesting part of Lachlan Murdoch's life's tale will only be able to be told many years down the track after he has had full control of his father's empire for some years. However, the book does provide us with enough detail of the behaviour and attitudes of Rupert Murdoch's eldest son to date to enable fairly accurate forecasts about what to expect when Lachlan assumes complete control. And it's a depressing prospect.

Paddy Manning has, during his more than twenty years as a journalist worked for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* and won several awards for journalistic excellence. He has authored six books including the biography of Malcolm Turnbull.

Manning takes us on a fascinating journey from the early life of a child who was born into a life of obscene wealth, naked power and sibling rivalry for the affections and favours of their father. Rupert Murdoch has been married four times and has had a total of six children with Lachlan being one of three children born to his second wife, Anna. It is only these three children, Lachlan, Elizabeth, and James who have ever had any prospect of claiming the title of the *Successor* to the Murdoch empire, and competition for that role, particularly between Lachlan and James, has been intense.

The book reveals that both Lachlan and James have had their ups and downs in their business careers and Lachlan certainly made a wobbly beginning. Manning reminds us of the One.Tel financial disaster involving a young Lachlan and his mates James Packer, Jodee Rich, and Brad Keeling. James rightly felt the heat of the blowtorch with the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal where it was revealed that it was common practice for the paper to illegally hack phones to obtain information, even the phone of murdered schoolgirl Millie Dowler. Most readers will recall Rupert's comments to the House of Commons inquiry into the practice that it was the most humble day of his life.

Luckily for Lachlan, at the time of the hacking revelations he was not actively involved in News Ltd activities being busy wheeling and dealing on his own business affairs in the relative backwater of Australia.

Elizabeth had quit any active role in the Murdoch empire in 2000 but in 2005 Lachlan was still involved as a senior executive. However, he seems to have not been getting the respect that he thought that he deserved '... as deputy CEO, and as Rupert's successor and son.' So, he quit and returned to Australia from the United States to begin his own business called Illyria. However, he still remained as a director of News Corp.

Manning points out that at the time that Lachlan was setting up his own business in Australia his politics seemed to be moving distinctly to the right. All his political donations were to Republicans and at an event where Al Gore was speaking about climate change, Lachlan apparently cheered on two climate change sceptic News Ltd commentators who challenged Gore on the issue.

In 2013 Lachlan clearly demonstrated his right-wing leanings when his strongly supported Tony Abbott taking a strong climate change denialist position.

Lachlan has never been a fan of the simple life and throughout the book we are given example after example of this, from buying top of the line yachts, cars, and motor bikes to the \$23 million purchase of a Bellevue Hill mansion *Le Manoir* which he and wife Sarah then renovated,

bringing the overall cost to some \$35million. We are told this:

Especially important to Lachlan was an underground cinema, gym and James Bond-like access to a three-car garage for his wheels which included two Porsche Panamera sedans he'd bought for \$300,000.00 each. (He wanted the manual, which wasn't available in right-hand-drive Australia, so he'd had them custom built).

In 2018 Lachlan snapped up *The Beverly Hillbillies* mansion, set on 10 acres in Los Angeles, for a mere \$150 million. It had just what every family home needs with eleven bedrooms, eighteen bathrooms, a tennis court, swimming pool, space for 40 cars and a 12,000-bottle wine cellar.

It had seemed that when Lachlan was building his Illyria business in Australia that James might become the anointed successor, but the phone hacking scandal upset those plans and in 2014 it was decided that Lachlan would return to an active role in the family empire. By mid-2015 it was clear that Lachlan had leapt over James who would then report to his older brother.

It has been Lachlan's role with Fox news that seems to have entrenched his reputation as some kind of right-wing warrior. Initially after Lachlan's return to the fold, Fox News was still under the control of Roger Ailes, but after sexual harassment complaints against him Ailes was dismissed with a modest \$40 million severance package eventually leading to the cementing of Lachlan as the one in control.

Under Lachlan's leadership Fox News has been a megaphone for right-wing commentators such as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity. Manning provides numerous examples of some of their rantings. Some examples are the refusal by Carlson to condemn neo-Nazi protesters at Charlottesville, his attacks on Black Lives Matter protesters, and his support of the wacky but dangerous QAnon conspiracy theory. And then over a two-week period, Fox News, in full support of Donald Trump's false claims, cast doubt on the presidential election result on 774 occasions.

James Murdoch became so disenchanted with the bias of the Murdoch empire that he eventually resigned

from any active role, although like his other siblings, he remains the beneficiary of its fabulous wealth.

Although Lachlan seems often to have suggested that he does not tell the commentators what views to express on the basis that he supports free speech, his right-wing political views became clear when, after the election of Joe Biden, he suggested that Fox News would behave as the 'loyal opposition.' This was seen as an admission that Fox had a deliberate partisan bias, and yet he continues to maintain that what is said on Fox News does not represent his own thinking and has 'often sought to downplay his responsibility for the content.' At the end of the day does it really matter whether the views expressed on Fox News are Lachlan's own views or whether he simply facilitates the expression of those views?

It will be up to the readers to draw their own conclusions about the influence of the Murdoch family, and in particular that of Lachlan Murdoch on American society which now seems hopelessly divided on racial, economic, social, and political grounds. The reader will also have to decide the main basis of Lachlan's motivations although at the very end of the book Manning suggests that:

Lachlan's agenda was simple: it was not about right or left, Republican or Democrat; gender, race or class; war or peace. It was just ... business.

This book is well written although I found some of the detail about various complex business transactions a little tedious and not always easy to understand, but such detail was probably important to paint a full picture of the reality of the type of life lived by Lachlan Murdoch. The type of life which to most of us seems to be lived in another universe.

I highly recommend this book.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet. Personal stories of nine inspiring women who cherish Earth.* and *The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas.* John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group.

REVIEW OF THE SETTLEMENT

By Jock Serong

Published by Text Publishing.

RRP \$32.99



I recently wrote a review of *Black Lives, White Law* in which criminal lawyer Russell Marks exposes the scandalous way that Australia's legal system unjustly deals with our Aboriginal communities in the present day, and the dishonest colonial origins of that injustice. I wrote:

Marks takes us on a journey through the brutality of colonisation and demonstrates how, the so called fair and impartial British justice system was anything but fair and impartial when it came to the treatment of our First Nations people. Many were slaughtered by white settlers with no action generally being taken against the offenders.

This disturbing, sometimes dark work is a perfect follow up read in which Serong reimagines the way in which the Tasmanian First Nations peoples were cruelly dealt with by the invading European settlers. It is particularly inspired by the ill-conceived and failed activities of George

Augustus Robinson who led the forced displacement of Tasmanian Aboriginal people to Pea Jacket Point on Flinders Island.

Like Marks, Serong has a background in the law, although his main passion is clearly writing, having authored several novels, the most recent, apart from *The Settlement*, being *Preservation* (2018) and *The Burning Island* (2020).

This is his most ambitious project to date and Serong is clearly conscious of the potential pitfalls of a non-indigenous writer wading amongst the issues raised in the book because the narrative is preceded by a Statement Regarding First Nations Cultural knowledge where it is explained that 'multiple First Nations organisations and individuals have been contacted for consultation.'

In 1831 the invading Europeans were being impeded in their efforts take over Van Diemen's land (Tasmania) previously occupied by the

Aboriginal population who refused to go quietly. Most of the invaders had no qualms about using brute force and unrestrained violence to steal the land. However, one person, initially known as 'The Man', tries to save them by gathering them together and peacefully removing them to an island settlement. To convince them to accompany them The Man enlists the assistance of Aboriginal 'Chief' Mannalaremma but can only convince him to help through a series of false promises, lies and deceit. Significantly once *The Settlement* is established The Man becomes the Commandant.

As the book progresses the reader realises that The Man's motivation is not just, or even primarily, providing physical protection, but includes the Christian version of spiritual salvation. It was to be the Man's job to 'Christianise and civilise' them. Later it becomes clear that he also has another motive, being the obtaining of gruesome so-called scientific evidence in the form

of the body parts of dead Aboriginal people, although his true motivation is not so much advancement of science as the obtaining of personal recognition.

As the narrative moves to a lonely windswept island on which The Man has gathered the Aboriginal people who have managed to survive the violence of the rampaging pastoralists, we meet a number of flawed non-indigenous individuals such as the Catechist, Storekeeper, the Surgeon and the Coxswain who have various attributes ranging from pure evil to simple cowardice. They are contrasted with the two young Aboriginal orphans, Whelk and Pipi, struggling to survive the evil arrayed against them.

The windswept island settlement ultimately does nothing to preserve and protect the lives and culture of the Aboriginal people who have been removed to the island, and although they might have been saved from death at the hands of the pastoralists, disease, ignorance, abuse and loss of Country and culture leads to the same tragic outcome.

I fully agree with the book cover comments of Paul Daley from the Guardian where he says:

A shocking but perversely beautiful evocation of the endurance and dignity of Aboriginal resistance to the sadism of the colony's God and guns. Its gripping plot, extraordinary Black and white characters, and elegant prose will haunt you long after the last page.

Highly recommended.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet. Personal stories of nine inspiring women who cherish Earth.* and *The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas.* John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group.

HUMANITY'S MOMENT A CLIMATE SCIENTIST'S CASE FOR HOPE



Joelle Gergis

Published by Black Inc 2022

RRP \$34.99

Joelle Gergis is an award-winning climate scientist and a lead author for the *Sixth Assessment Report* of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

However, this book is not in any sense solely a dispassionate scientific treatise, although it does contain much scientific detail relating to the issue of climate change, most of which is derived from the *Sixth Assessment Report*.

The report is the outcome of hours and hours of work by 234 expert climate scientists from sixty-six countries. Every part is fully peer reviewed and checked and checked again. Much of the work is voluntary.

Although the sub-title mentions that the book presents a case for hope, by well past the halfway point I was feeling no sense of hope, but plenty of despair and some degree of hopelessness.

The book is arranged in three parts titled 'The Head', 'The Heart' and 'The whole'.

The Head is very much a summation of the findings of the sixth report, and it paints a bleak, if not depressing picture of the potential catastrophe facing humanity unless swift and effective action is taken to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The author points out that the planet has previously undergone periods of naturally caused warming and cooling, but that such changes were over very long periods. She comments that:

It took the planet about 5000 years to warm around 5 degrees Celsius recovering from the height

of the last ice age; that's a rate of 1 degree Celsius warming every 100 years.

And:

We know that the planet is warming, but just how quickly and

dramatically things are changing is stunning the scientific community.

And:

The most confronting thing about the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report is that the situation is now so bad that

you don't have to dig too deeply to get a sense of the true scale and magnitude of the problem.

And:

...it is likely that the Earth will experience sharp regional transitions even under moderate levels of warming, with the collapse of some vulnerable ecosystems like the Amazon rainforest and tropical coral reefs occurring over human timescales of years and decades. In Australia, we have seen at least 50 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef die off since 2016.

As I absorbed all the distressing detail about how we humans had caused such potential devastation I felt some anger about how this was allowed to happen, and by the fact that effective action is still not being taken to address the issue.

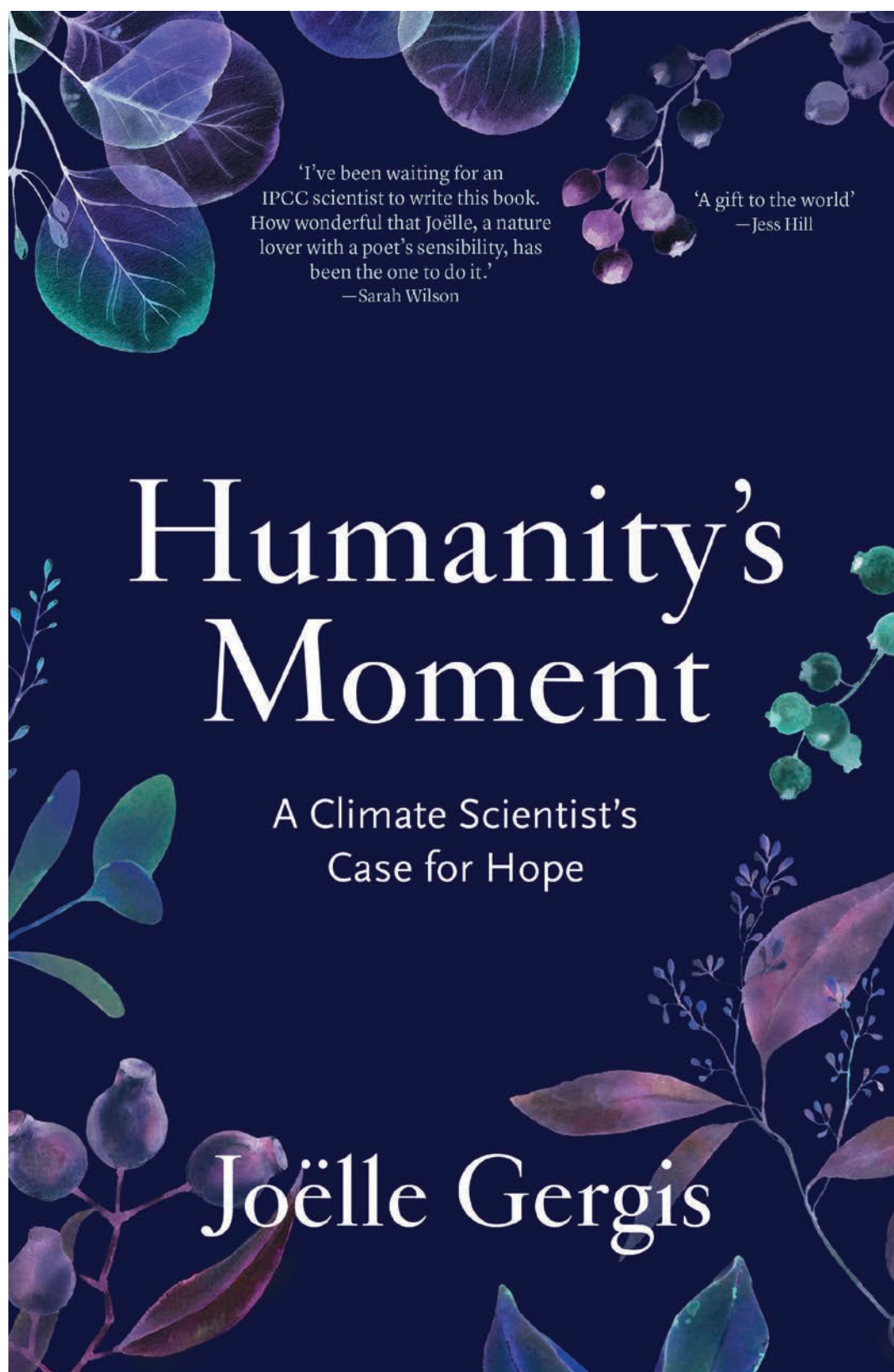
A friend of mine recently received an email which said as follows:

There has been a lot of rubbish put forward since the eighties about global warming, which morphed into climate change when conditions didn't suit the narrative.

Geology Professor Ian Plimer has written several books on the real climate changes over millions of years. We are paying a huge price, both economically and socially for the renewable solutions which are being foisted on us.

If you were to read "Green Murder", you might see another side to the story....

This attitude needs to be called out for the intellectual stupidity that it is. Relying upon the opinion of this geology professor on the issue of climate change is akin to someone who has received



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a diagnosis of terminal brain cancer from several neurologists and then seeks a more comforting opinion from a local chiropractor.

Whilst it is possible to excuse some people with such attitudes on the basis of ignorance, those who cannot be excused are those in positions of authority, such as politicians and business leaders, who have failed, and continue to fail to act despite being fully aware of the serious nature of the problem. Even with the recent change of our Federal Government insufficient action is being taken. Gergis says:

....the truth is simply this: we must leave fossil fuels in the ground to stabilise the Earth's climate.

Despite this the Albanese government continues to encourage and subsidise coal and gas mining.

In *The Heart* Gergis outlines how climate change has and will continue to damage and destroy nature and how it will affect humanity:

Globally, between 800 million and 3 billion people are projected to experience chronic water scarcity due to drought associated with 2 degrees C of warming, with this number increasing to around 4 billion with 4 degrees C of warming.

Whilst this book contains much rigorous science, where it is unusual for a book written by a scientist, is that the author often details how the climate change consequences have affected her at a personal level, including a deepening of her depression, and becoming burnt out. She says:

It's three a.m. and I'm awake again. Since working on the IPCC report, my work as a climate scientist now keeps me up at night. I keep having dreams of being inundated. Huge, monstrous waves bearing down on me in slow motion.

For my taste, I found the introspection somewhat overdone, but others will no doubt disagree. In some ways an excess of personal emotion can weaken an otherwise strong argument based on the facts. And in this book, there are facts aplenty.

The final part is titled *The Whole* and here is where we are given some glimmers of hope, although at no stage is it suggested that all of the consequences of climate change can be avoided.

Gergis makes it clear that many of the changes are now irreversible but that the extent of the changes which will occur depends upon what action is now taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions saying:

The most important message here is that the risk of climate change increases with higher levels of warming. Right now, things

are still in our hands, but the longer we delay, we run the risk of crossing critical tipping points that could see the world radically transformed in just a handful of decades.

Gergis finds some light in the darkness in the outcome of the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in late 2021. Although the outcome of that meeting was far from perfect, she acknowledges that:

.....human history is an endless tug of war for social justice: a struggle between those wanting to maintain the status quo that protects the interests of a few, and others who fight for equality for all.

She notes that Australia played a disappointing role at COP26 and only reluctantly agreed to a 2050 net zero emissions target and that the powerful fossil fuel lobby is shamelessly doing its best to protect its own interests and to block effective efforts to address climate change.

In Chapter 11 Gergis suggests that art in all its forms and the role of creatives can play a crucial role in changing views and forcing social change. I'll leave it to the reader to decide whether the role of art is a little overstated.

The author claims that the renewable energy transition is certain but that the restoration of the world's ecosystems is going to be more difficult. She suggests that we already have the technology to drastically reduce emissions but that the main obstacle is lack of political will. She dismisses the idea that carbon capture and storage will be part of the solution. It is unproven technology and would have the effect of prolonging the use of fossil fuels.

The book media release says:

This book is a climate scientist's guide to rekindling hope, and a call to action to restore our relationship with ourselves, each other, and our planet.

By its end the book does offer some hope, although hope that is heavily qualified and limited.

This is an uncomfortable book to read but I strongly recommend it, particularly to those who still harbour some doubt about the seriousness of the climate change crisis and especially to those such as the email correspondent mentioned above who think there is no issue to even be concerned about.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet. Personal stories of nine inspiring women who cherish Earth.* and *The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas.* John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group.

WANDERING WITH INTENT



Kim Mahood
Scribe
RRP \$35



Her knowledge and insights are brilliantly transposed for us in a series of essays as she rejoins communities, friends and workers in desert communities. Her philosophical take that their art is a roadmap for life, culture and history, is a fascinating thread in the book.

The contrast between this world and that of representatives, well meaning and dedicated mostly, from the Australian government is often hilarious to the outside observer reading her words. The chaos of daily life, the deeply held and respected

cultural learning, the clash of white convention and happy upheaval of community life is conveyed with humour, deep understanding and affection by Mahood. She describes the book as "a sort of written equivalent of hunting and gathering."

Her knowledge, acceptance into community midst, and insight come from a childhood growing up in Central Australia and later travelling from her home base in NSW to a community in the Kimberley. This book is a result of 15 years of observation and friendships, written with skill, insight, knowledge and warmth.

You feel privileged to travel with her.

DM

Kim Mahood's previous books have illustrated not only her skill at evoking place, culture, history of Aboriginal country through her work as an artist, collaborator, friend, observer, but also her deep understanding and exposition of Aboriginal culture and way of life in all its humour, disarray, confusion and passion.

In her previous books, "Craft for a Dry Lake" and "Position Doubtful" her artist's eye captured more than the scenery but a depth of understanding of desert culture, history and often shambolic (to us) present way of life through Aboriginal communities she has known and worked with maintaining the links of friendship and collaboration.

CHASING WRONGS AND RIGHTS



A personal journey of fighting for justice around the world.

Elaine Pearson

Scribner RRP \$34.99

“All power, no matter how absolute is always fleeting. Only Justice is permanent.”



Elaine Pearson

These are the words of Leila de Lima, the fearless and tenacious lawyer and chair of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights who was the first Filipino official to seriously confront the mayor of Davao City, Rodrigo Duterte, who would later go on to become the President of the Philippines and order the killing of thousands of citizens he called “drug smugglers”.

Elaine Pearson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch and author of “Chasing Wrongs and Rights” was speaking of her work in the Philippines from 2007. She writes of her admiration after witnessing the extraordinary bravery of people like Leila de Lima: “She paid a heavy price for her advocacy against the many extra judicial killings across the country sanctioned by the government,” says Elaine. “De Lima was imprisoned for five years at the Philippines Police National Headquarters often incommunicado and remains one of my human rights heroes. Despite her incarceration on politically motivated charges, she is still inspiring a new generation of younger Filipinos and activists world-wide,” says Elaine.

However she is not the only victim of abuse. Another woman who dared to challenge Duterte’s actions is Maria Ressa, journalist and founder of website Rappler.com, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her courageous journalism in 2021.

Elaine Pearson has spent her career, since graduating as a lawyer from Perth’s Murdoch University, travelling the world documenting war crimes against humanity, writing reports for agencies such as the United Nations Security Council, attending conferences and giving speeches

about the conditions and injustices that exist world-wide. She shows courageous determination and unflappable energy in the face of often personally dangerous situations in order to accurately record the human rights that are being violated so frequently.

In her book, “Chasing Wrongs and Rights” she details the history of people struggling against oppression. Through the valuable work of Human Rights Watch she challenges the brutal acts against people who agitate against oppression, human trafficking, genocide, torture, the crime of enforced disappearance practiced by dictators in countries such as Sri Lanka and the inhuman detention by Australian governments on the Pacific Islands of Manus in New Guinea and Nauru.

Paradoxically, Elaine’s desire to spend her career uncovering uncomfortable truths and exposing injustices that are often ignored or buried, was initially sparked by Senator Pauline Hanson who began her parliamentary career railing about Australia being swamped by Asians.

“Something in me snapped,” she says. “As someone who is Asian and whose family had tried desperately hard to assimilate when we migrated to Australia, those words felt like a kick in the guts.

Prime Minister John Howard blamed the protesters and not Hanson’s racism which made me even more furious,” she admits.

Elaine was determined to spend her life documenting abuse. The idea of social justice and how the law could be used as a tool to empower people meant she needed a law degree, which also meant defying her Asian “tiger mother” who wanted her to do a business degree.

On graduation, Elaine spent her first three years with Anti-Slavery International interviewing victims of trafficking and human slavery, writing reports and learning how to navigate the hotly contested definition between trafficking and sex work.

In Kathmandu, Nepal, she was arrested while in a crowd of 30 women activists and robbed in Uganda’s capital of Kampala while volunteering to work for an organisation investigating the horrors inflicted upon children forcibly recruited into the Lord’s Resistance Army.

After a number of years focusing

on trafficking, migrant workers and women’s rights, Elaine decided she wanted to concentrate on the bigger picture of human rights. When she was offered the chance to join the world’s leading human rights organisation - Human Rights Watch - at the age of 32, she saw it as her dream job. Suddenly she was responsible for a range of countries, staff and a kaleidoscope of issues.

“Thank goodness we are a team at Human Rights Watch, for as divisional editor my job was to interrogate the facts presented, measure the alleged violations against international law, as well as edit the style, structure and coherence and then test the logic and strength of our arguments.”

“In Human Rights Watch there are also emergency researchers whose job it is to interview victims, their families, lawyers and activists and gather as much detail as possible”, writes Elaine.

In view of the current consideration we are all giving to those wonderful women in Iran who have been fighting for months for the right to throw off the hijab, perhaps the most fascinating chapter in her book, is the one about controlling what women wear in Indonesia. “You might not think that a woman’s right to choose what she wears is not the most pressing concern in Indonesia,” says Elaine. “Talking to women throughout the country they all say it infringes on their human rights and want the freedom to decide whether to wear it.” Human Rights Watch agrees, calling the actions by the Sharia police if left unchecked, as opening the door to even more abuse.

Most distressingly, Elaine found it discriminates against poorer women enforcing them to wear the Jilbab, while wealthy women in cars and those politically connected are not stopped at checkpoints by the Sharia police.

Elaine says her lasting memory of Manus which she visited twice, is of the haunted look in the eyes of the men she met there, banished like criminals and locked up by the Australian government.

“Our government claimed this harsh system of detention was necessary to deter asylum seekers and the media aided successive governments who sought to demonise these people as ‘queue jumpers’,” she says.

Human Rights Watch saw this as manufactured cruelty and Elaine admits she was shocked. There were serious human rights violations that deserved more international attention.

The first people she and her cameraman met on Manus on her second visit was Aziz and the Kurdish Iranian journalist Behrouz Boochani. Both were strong advocates for other detainees and natural leaders.

Another writer on Manus Elaine was keen to meet after much emailing was Imran Mohammad who fled Rakhine state at the age of sixteen due to the Myanmar government’s repression of his people. He reminded her of how the impact of detention is like being a caged animal.

“I spent a week on the island and noticed a significant deterioration in the mental health of these people. Self-harm and suicide among refugee men was escalation in all ages, religions and ethnicities,” she says.

In Australia resettled refugees think they are safe, but Elaine found they were regarded by their authoritarian governments as ‘errant citizens’ who must be punished for their actions. “They were sending not only abusive officials here from abroad, but detaining or harassing family members who remained, to silence criticism as this brought ‘shame’ on the government.”

Human Rights Watch, as a global organisation, is well-placed to investigate these sorts of disturbing allegations. It records victim statements of these abuses, speaking out publicly even though it may carry serious risks of reprisals. However, it is only by documenting human rights abuses for there to be any hope of the arrest and possible prosecution of a state leader.

This book is a truly remarkable personal story by Elaine Pearson and gives extraordinary insights into how injustice can be confronted and how hope and justice can ultimately prevail.

As Geoffrey Robertson QC AO writes . . . “It is essential reading for those who want to help, because it illuminates the courage, commitment and collegiality needed to work towards a better world.”

Sherry Stumm.



ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collect the past and invest in your future, with an accumulation of knowledge from great finds.



A collection of old, carved ivory netsuke.

I love the information that comes from searching out and researching the finds that people make.

Australia Day celebrations are with us again and it is time to reflect on what makes Australia a great place for us all. Yes, we have hardships, yes, we have problems, but the only way to solve these problems is to work on them together, working towards a solution. Blame, disunity and an expectation that someone else will solve it for us gets us nowhere. We should strive to make our country a place where Australians, in fifty plus years, can look back and say that the decisions made in 2023 made Australia a more equitable, more environmentally sustainable, and safer and better place to live.

We learn from our mistakes. Our mistakes make us think things through more carefully. Our environment, our families, our neighbours and this great country we live in require every one of us, not to repeat the mistakes of our forebears but to make our future bright, productive and full of good will to others. It starts with each of us as individuals.

I was lucky enough lately to find and buy some lovely Japanese carved objects called NETSUKE. A *netsuke* is a small, sculptured object which was developed in Japan

over a period of more than three hundred years. The golden era for netsuke was from 1600 to around 1850. *Netsuke* (singular and plural) initially served both functional and artistic purposes.

The traditional form of Japanese dress, the *kimono*, had no pockets. Women would tuck small personal items into their sleeves, but men suspended their tobacco pouches, pipes, purses, writing implements, and other items of daily use on a silk cord passed around their *obi* (sash/belt). These hanging objects are called *sagemono*. The *netsuke* was attached to the other end of the cord preventing the cord from slipping through the *obi*. A sliding bead (*ojime*) was strung on the cord between the *netsuke* and the *sagemono* to allow the opening and closing of the *sagemono*.

The entire ensemble was then worn at the waist and functioned as a sort of removable external pocket. All three objects (*netsuke*, *ojime* and the different types of *sagemono*) were often beautifully decorated with elaborate carving, lacquer work, or inlays of rare and exotic materials.

Subjects portrayed in *netsuke* include naturally found objects, plants and animals, legends and legendary heroes, myths and mystical beasts, gods and religious

symbols, daily activities, and myriad other themes. Many *netsuke* are believed to have been talismans. These items eventually developed into highly coveted and collectible art forms.

With transition to European dress, the use of *sagemono* and *netsuke* declined, nearly disappearing over the period from the end of 19th to the first quarter of the 20th century but the production of *netsuke* did not completely go away. Instead, under a strong influence of Western collectors visiting Japan in larger and larger numbers, *netsuke* developed into a form of fine art and exists as such today with true master-carvers from all over the world still creating these little masterpieces.

Katabori is the most common type of *netsuke*. They are compact three-dimensional figures carved in a round shape and are usually around one to three inches high. (2.5 to 8.5cm)

Netsuke have been made from many materials. Ivory – the most common material used before ivory from live animals became illegal. *Netsuke* made from mammoth ivory (huge quantities still exist in the Near East and Siberia) fill part of the tourist trade demand today. Boxwood, other hardwoods – popular materials in Edo Japan and still used today.

Metal is used as accents in many *netsuke*. Hippopotamus tooth is used today in lieu of ivory. Boar tusk is mostly used by Iwami carvers.

Also used are Rhinoceros horn, clay/porcelain, lacquer and Cane (woven). More unusual forms are hornbill, black coral, fossilized wood, walrus tusk, walnuts and agate.

Netsuke are fascinating small figures and range in form from comical to mystic. They are still made today for the tourist market, but the most ardent collectors seek out the older forms.

Sad news, Dave is leaving our shop, Antiques and Old Wares at 12 Isabella Street, Wingham. He and Barb are seeking the sun and heading north to join family and the banana benders. We have been good mates for upwards of 25 years. Our last three years working the shop together has been fun, informative, entertaining and very enjoyable. I will be working the shop, individually, from February. I will miss a good friend!

Collecting is always fun, you are always learning and it is something that can be done for the rest of your life. If you have treasures you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals or sales. Forty years of collecting experience. Ring Rex – 0427 880 546

COASTAL DEVELOPMENT OUT OF CONTROL

'Zombie' development applications (DAs that were granted decades ago before proper environmental regulation), dodgy ecological assessments and offsets, hundreds of hectares of threatened species habitat at risk, new buildings on sites prone to floods and fire, increasing pressure on services and infrastructure – this is what rampant coastal development looks like. Coming to a town near you, and you probably won't have a say.

Development pressure is happening up and down the NSW Coast. Councils are under enormous pressure from both developers and the State Government to open up more land for housing. With the Federal Government announcing that 1 million additional homes will be built over the next 5 years to ease the housing crisis, just where will these homes be built never mind all the infrastructure/facilities needed. Housing our communities is

a high propriety, but equally, our natural environment must be protected. All levels of government must now ensure that communities aren't threatened by the natural disasters that are mounting with global warming.

Port Macquarie/Hastings want to focus on more medium density dwellings within existing urban areas. In theory, Council's Local Housing Strategy contains statements about sustainability, diversity, affordability and connectivity of housing. In practice, developers are always pushing

for a high profit margin and are unlikely to meet the needs of the community and the environment. A review of the outdated PMH Local Environmental Plan is critical. It was written in 2011 before much was known about our local biodiversity, including increasingly rare koala habitat. The good news is that Council can rezone rural land to environmental protection without compensation (unless Council specifically acquires that land). Here is a golden opportunity to ensure that high conservation rural land can be exempt from

urban development. And let's not accept dodgy 'offsetting' that employs false carbon accounting and doesn't protect local native habitat.

We need housing for our struggling citizens but let's do it so that there is no more clearing of native vegetation. Protecting our bush is the least costly and most effective way of sequestering carbon in this time of climate emergency.

Les Mitchell

(Originally published in Inklings magazine.)

Getting home safe is what matters most

\$2000 safety rebate and free training available



Over 180 people have been killed in quad bike incidents in Australia since 2011, with roll over the leading cause of death.

Wear a helmet, install a roll bar and use active riding skills to help prevent a quad bike roll over.

Eligible farmers in NSW can apply for a \$2000 rebate to improve quad bike safety, with free training also available.

For more information visit safework.nsw.gov.au or call 13 10 50.



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