

The Manning Community News

FEB / MAR 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

YET ANOTHER DISASTROUS DEVELOPMENT . PAGE 9

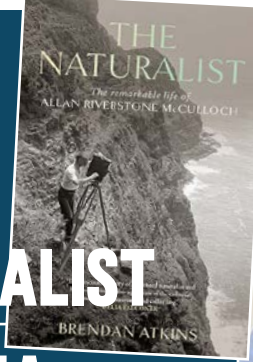
Council takes tentative step into the future

PAGE 7

Plus PAGE 16
Book Review

THE NATURALIST

AUSTRALIA: PAGE 6
MESSENGER OF DEATH



Independent standing up for community

PAGE 1 & 2



AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE IS MAKING THE ELECTION A LOT MORE INTERESTING

The Nats Are Nervous!

Local anaesthetist Dr Jason Bendall has joined the ranks of election candidates for Myall Lakes in the March Election seeking to usurp years of National "caretaking."



Dr Jason Bendall and his Mum Marjorie

Dr Bendall brings experience in many fields and a big heart to the area. He may have a warm and friendly bedside manner, but he's smart as a whip. He was quick off the mark to challenge Premier Perrottet when he dropped briefly into Taree, flanked by his Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Health Bronnie Taylor.

Dr Bendall swiftly queried the Premier's announcement of an "additional \$114 million" to upgrade the Manning Base Hospital over and above the \$100 million announced before the last election to build Stage Two of the hospital.

Dr Bendall pointed out that the last promise by the NSW Coalition National Government for the MBH Stage 2 in 2018 *was yet to be delivered*.

The Manning Base Hospital senior staff along with Dr Murray Hyde Page, Chair of the Medical Staff Council at MBH, agree that the hospital has to be finished with stages 2 and 3 completed before addressing the long spun out issue of a Forster Public Hospital spruiked each election by the sitting member and now his former Staffer Tanya Thompson who is the National's candidate.

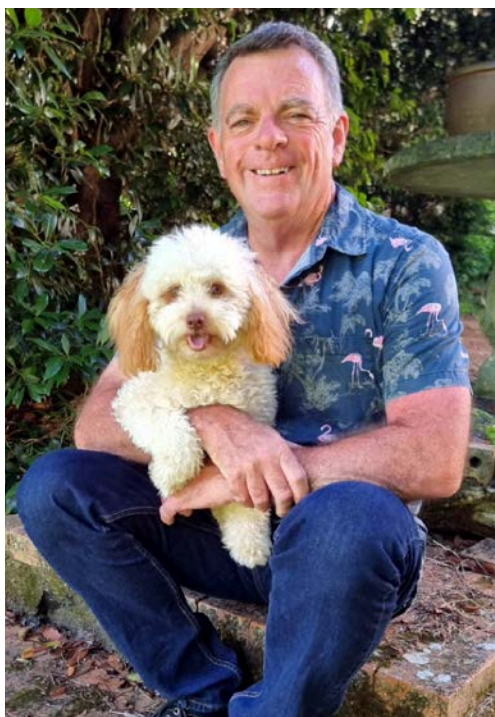
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MEET THE CANDIDATES

Mark Vanstone Labor Candidate



“Firstly, I’m a proud father of 5 children and one Cavoodle poodle puppy - ‘Archibald’. Most of my children are adults now, however my newest is 2 year old girl going on 25. You might think it becomes easier with a spectrum of ages in my children, but parenting always brings fresh surprises.

I have lived on the Midcoast, one of the best regions of Australia, for almost 20 years, where I’m currently the After Hours Supervisor at an Aged Care Facility in Forster. I love this place. The community, the townships, the countryside and our flora and fauna. In all my travels, there is no place like home on the Midcoast.

In my professional life I’ve been a Registered Nurse and Midwife for 40 years. I’ve worked across many disciplines, with many Australians, including First Nations people in remote regions of the Northern Territory. My experience has allowed me to see the first few minutes with over 80 babies brought into this world, and comforted many other people spending their last. It is an honour to care for so many in the full circle of life.

From raising a toddler to supporting adult children and looking after our elderly, I’m acutely aware of the challenges all our generations face. Talking to so many locals, people are in need and want better support and services. I see the critical need for Government to look after our communities and to leave the country and the planet in a better position than how we found it. And that’s the reason why I’m standing for Parliament.

With 40 years in healthcare, I have seen firsthand the system

evolve, change and become tormented. I know the state of Health Care and Aged Care, especially in Myall Lakes, with one of the oldest demographics in NSW. I can’t sit by and watch it get even worse and do nothing. It is in my heart to support and drive better outcomes for the community that I love. With my wisdom and years of service, it is under my skin to care and act. It’s got to change and, as the Labor candidate for Myall Lakes, I’m determined make the difference that we all need.”

You might like to follow Mark on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/markvanstoneMyallLakes/>. Otherwise you may write to Mark by email mark.vanstone@nswlabor.org.au or by PO Box 4346, Forster Shopping Village, Forster, NSW 2340.

Mark is also seeking donations to help his campaign to make a difference. Contact Mark on ‘how to donate’ or go to https://www.nswlabor.org.au/donate_myall_lakes

Independent Candidate



Doctor Jason Bendall

Is a Senior Staff Specialist Anaesthetist at Manning Base Hospital, John Hunter Hospital and as an executive for NSW Ambulance.

“I was almost born in Taree having been adopted by my wonderful parents. I went to primary and high school at Chatham graduating in 1990. As a teenager I volunteered for St John Ambulance winning a National First Aid Championship. I progressed from a cadet at Taree to the NSW Commissioner and the Chief Paramedic for St John Ambulance Australia being recognised

through promotion to Commander in the Most Venerable Order of St John (CStJ). I was also a volunteer for the Manning Rescue Squad (VRA) volunteering every uni holiday. Service of others is in my blood and I have a track record of delivering outcomes as well as be kind and compassionate to others. As a local kid, paramedic, doctor, academic and public servant I know how to get things done and advocate free from partisan positions - I will be your independent voice to create positive change.”

Dr Bendall is determined to improve rural healthcare, having worked initially as Clinical Dean and Associate Professor of the Manning Clinical School training the next generation of doctors and then as Clinical Director of the struggling Department of Anaesthesia which Dr Bendall resuscitated to a standard meeting external accreditation.

He says he has spent time quietly yarning with locals at the markets, around town, and following up requests and discussions, and so he decided the best thing he could do is to step up and run as an Independent candidate.

“The NSW Nationals have left no legacy in healthcare over the past 12 years in Myall Lakes” Dr Bendall said. “As a critical care doctor I am trusted to make life and death decisions. This requires experience and maturity. Patients put their lives in my hands and trust me to keep them safe. As a medical expert I listen to other experts, appraise and synthesise evidence, I consider the benefits, risks and alternatives for each situation. As a local member I will be able to work to effect changes for the better. Not just in hospitals but in Aged Care Homes and in the community, as well as care of our precious environment. We need a strong pipeline of staff, specialists and funding. We need housing. I have a long list!

I am experienced in bringing teams together to solve complex problems. Today’s issues are complicated and require a qualified and experienced community leader who listens and cares. I will do the job for the community - not for myself and my mates. As an Independent I will work with whomever can achieve the best for our community.”

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Eleanor Spence The Greens Candidate



Eleanor Spence (Ellie) has lived in the Manning Valley for over 40 years and was a candidate in the 2019 State election and the MidCoast Council election in 2021. Concern over the environment, growing climate impacts, and the disadvantage experienced by many in the electorate, motivated Ellie to contest the upcoming election.

Working as a Registered Nurse at Manning Hospital and in General Practice, Ellie was involved in responding to the pandemic by vaccinating thousands. Ellie views public health and education as being chronically underfunded; the Myall Lakes electorate, in particular, suffering from decades of neglect.

Ellie sees coastal development as an urgent issue, and says so many already approved projects are inappropriate and environmentally damaging.

“Continued logging of state forests and land clearing is destroying koala habitat and impacting water quality, as well as compounding our climate crisis. The Greens have a plan to transition away from native forest logging”, said Eleanor.

Ellie is a keen parkrunner and bushwalker and wants to work towards our local communities being more liveable, with pedestrian and cycle-friendly streets.

The impact of family violence, gambling and insecure housing, are issues Ellie hopes to discuss with the community during the campaign. Ellie says she is keen to highlight Greens policies that respond effectively to these issues.

<https://greens.org.au/nsw/person/eleanor-spence>

FB page: Eleanor Spence- Greens for Myall Lakes myalllakes.state@nsw.greens.org.au

Tanya Thompson The Nationals Candidate

"I have been lucky enough to call the Myall Lakes my home for 25 years.

I have raised my family here, built and run a business, and spent much of my career listening to the concerns of our community through my work in public office.

I decided to run as The Nation-



als candidate for the NSW election because I have seen the difference good government can bring to every corner of our region and am driven to deliver the services and facilities that our region needs, like better roads, improvements to regional health, and affordable housing.

For the past 2 years I have been on the ground as Stephen Bromhead's electorate officer and through this position I have come to understand the real concerns people have. This first-hand experience has been invaluable to me in developing the skills to manage positive relationships with community members and government offices, as well as building the knowledge of who to reach out to when someone comes to me for help.

However, I am not just a political staffer, I've worked in hospitality and real estate, run an award-winning small business at beach street seafoods, and been a member of numerous local business and community organisations like the Girl Guides and Tuncurry Dolphins. My life's work has always been about helping people whether it was helping a family find a place to call home in my role as a Property Manager, or my passion for mental health advocacy.

I have come to know and love our incredible community through a variety of different avenues which has given me the qualifications and experience to understand the needs of the Myall Lakes Electorate."

tanya.thompson@nswnationals.org.au

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COUNCIL'S MADE A START, BUT SAVING OUR ENVIRONMENT STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO.

This publication has, over the years, catalogued many of the MidCoast Council's inadequacies when it comes to preserving the state, quality and function of this region's incredibly varied biodiversity and the productivity and integrity of habitats. These environments underpin our regional economy, and they characterise our region, attracting both residents and visitors.

It is increasingly clear that since European colonisation, the Australian environmental landscapes and ecosystems have been damaged for utilitarian goals and unsustainably large populations resulting in the unravelling of the texture of habitat and biodiversity. In the process, complex ecosystems have been cleared for grazing, agriculture and urban development and unique plant and animal species with stories and adaptations and resiliencies have been (and continue to be) lost forever.

State of the Environment reports at all governmental levels demonstrate an unsustainable decline; very much a human-driven crisis.

For many, this loss imparts a deep sense of grief, despair and powerlessness for which environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht has coined the term solastalgia.

Pulitzer Prize winning author Annie Proulx wrote that she 'spent years learning that if your delight is in contemplating landscapes and wild places the sweetness will be laced with ever-sharpening pain', as she referred to the eco-grief we can feel at the state of the world.

It is easy to feel some despair at what is **not** being done by our governments and Australians at all levels to protect and improve the environment, so I thought it might be useful for a change to mention a few positive things that have recently been achieved by our local Council in relation to the environment.

MidCoast Council's agreement to support lobbying

the NSW State Government to stop logging in Bulga State Forest is heartening though this is very much a nation-wide issue.

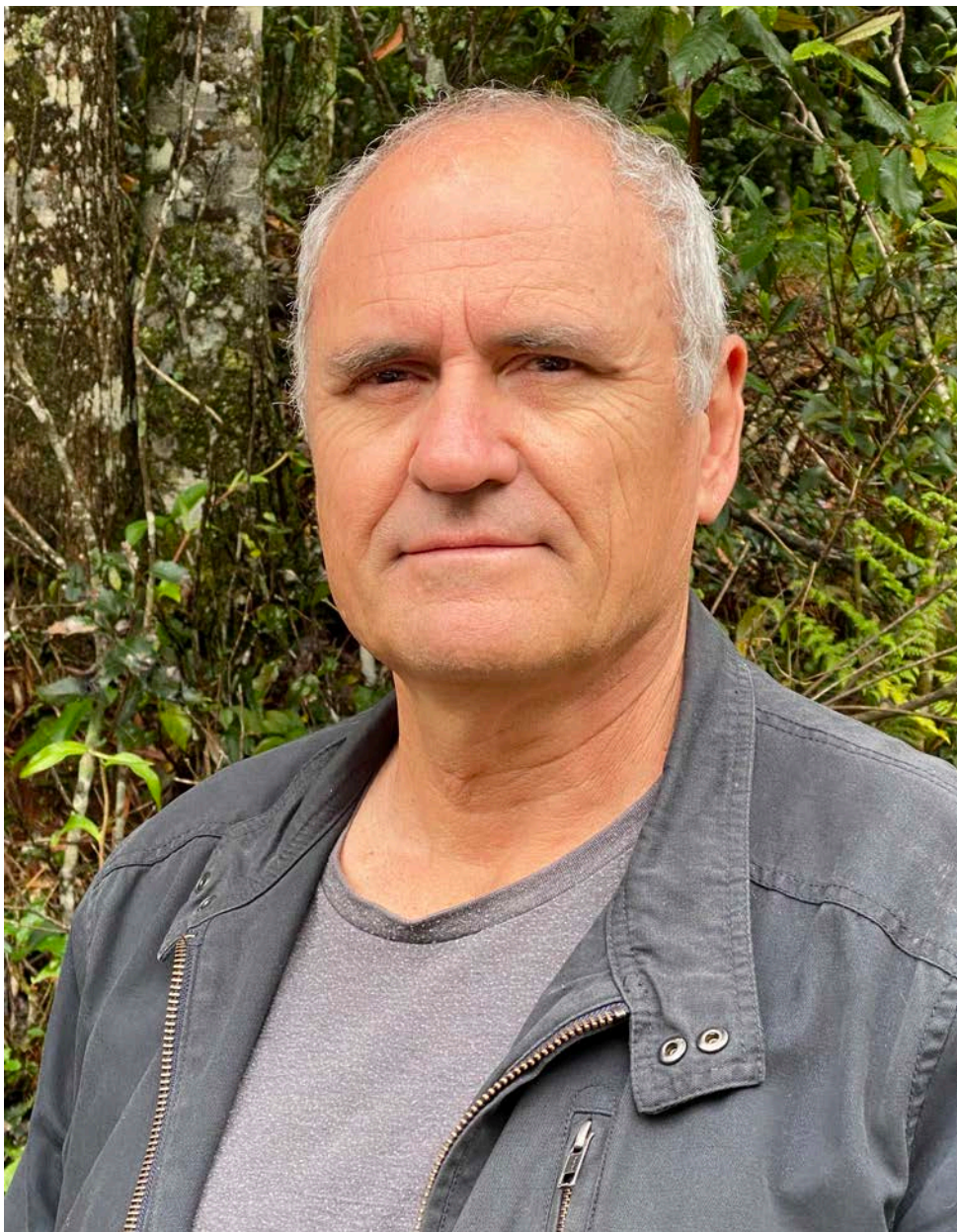
A recent exhibition of three artists at the Manning Regional Art Gallery called *Unseen Transitions* reflected on the psychological weight imposed by eco-grief; the despair at the paradigm that prioritises exploitation over balanced respect, care and connectedness of humans and nature.

But the exhibition does not focus on despair. It does not wish there to be angst over the unwholesome and unproductive burden of grief that comes from environmental trauma and awareness of loss. Instead, the exhibition espouses a message of hope and action. In this manner, David Quammen (in the Song of the Dodo) wrote '*Despair, despite being fruitless, is far less exciting than hope*'. And Amery Lovins, of the Rocky Mountain Institute, spoke of the value of applied hope, which, '*is not mere optimism, but is a combination of vision, persistence and most of all, courage.*'

In order to feel a sense of positivity, we need to work within a framework that includes at least a degree of applied hope. The psychologist Camille Preston suggests that hope is linked to optimism and is an attitude or outlook that good things will happen and that our wishes will ultimately be fulfilled. That hope serves as a buffer against negativity and stress, though not everyone shares such optimism.

LAND CAN BE MORE VALUABLE UNDEVELOPED!

With the hovering horror of the zombie Development Applications coming back to life, the push for more housing, more developments, more money, fewer trees and nature habitat – an unexpected saviour appears! Some of the smartest brains in the country have developed a Not For Profit company – Accounting for Nature.



Manning Local, Dr Ken Henry AC

This group, first backed by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists was established five years ago with an impressive line-up starting with its Chairman Peter Cosier AM, a Former Director and Member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists among a

long list of scientific and environmental credits.

The Board also includes Manning Valley local, Dr Ken Henry AC, former Chair of the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation at the ANU and NAB, former non-executive director of the Australian Securities Exchange and Cape York Partnership, and former

Secretary of the Department of the Treasury.

By using sophisticated technology, waterways, fisheries, forests, farms, grazing land and potential housing developments, groundwater sources, soil, even degraded land, can be tested to learn its hidden potential value – not only its potential to store more carbon in the landscape, but through restoration of native ecosystems, create habitat for threatened species like the Koala, improve the health of waterways, and leave the catchment better able to adapt to climate change.

Assessments made by Accounting for Nature (AfN) are proving to be a more practical method for making decisions on managing our environment and is a rapidly growing trend worldwide. If occasionally abused by unscrupulous international operators.

I asked Ken Henry about the background to AfN.

“Before the formation of AfN, a group of us had been discussing how you might go about measuring the state of the environment at any scale, from a paddock to a river valley, to a continent, across all relevant environmental asset classes. I was Treasury Secretary at the time. Peter Cosier was leading the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists.

Another person in those discussions at that time was Peter Harper, then the Australian Deputy Statistician and Australia’s representative on the United Nations Working Group on the System of National Accounts. In those days, our interest was in improving the quality of environmental data available to governments, to inform better policy making. Over several years, the Wentworth Group

scientists produced a large volume of scientific papers on the sorts of metrics that could be used. This was world leading research. Then one day we got a call from the Queensland Government who were launching their Land Restoration Fund, to pay landholders for carbon absorption (sequestration) and biodiversity co-benefits. Carbon benefits are relatively easy to measure, in principle. But demonstrating improvement in environmental condition is really quite challenging. Being aware of the Wentworth Group work, they encouraged us to establish a not-for-profit entity that could ‘bring the science to the farmer’, so that taxpayers could have a high level of confidence that their money was being used to secure a genuine improvement in biodiversity. That’s how AfN came to be formed.

Today, we are assisting landholders all over the country prove the environmental benefits of their farming practices. And there is a growing interest in us internationally as well. We still offer world’s best practice.

Late last year, the Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG) Natural Resource Management (NRM) group completed an environmental account using AfN. This is the world’s first regional scale environmental account. Across Australia, there are 54 NRMs. I am hopeful that within a few years we will see all 53 other NRMs complete regional environmental accounts. By putting these together, the Australian Government would then have the world’s first national environmental account. That would be a big thing for Australia.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

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lia. But it would also be a big thing for decision-makers in councils like Mid-Coast because, for the first time, they would have access to comprehensive measures of the condition (extent and quality) of all of the environmental assets under their care. And, through frequent data collection and publication, the residents of the Mid-Coast would be able to see for themselves the impact of Council's decisions on the natural environment, in hard, scientifically robust facts. There is also the potential for new revenue streams for landholders to assist them with nature repair work, in the form of both carbon and biodiversity credits.

Revenue streams from markets in biodiversity credits are probably still a few years off, but both the Australian and NSW Governments have committed to supporting their development. Markets in biodiversity enhancement demand very high quality data, which is where AfN comes in. New revenue streams linked to biodiversity could, over time, transform the way land is managed in the MidCoast region, enhancing farm profitability and repairing nature at the same time."

I spoke to Mr Cosier who is based in Adelaide.

"One of the advantages of degraded land is that a lot of it is capable of restoration," he said. "When you restore degraded land you also store carbon to help deal with climate change. The great goal of environmental accounting or environmental markets is that you start using the benefits you get by restoring degraded land, which obviously improves biodiversity and also improves soil health, the quality of the waterways and fisheries. But at the same time, for the same investment, it also helps heal the planet from excess greenhouse gases – because trees absorb carbon, which is where fossil fuel came from – the trees. **We're currently burning a million years of fossil fuel every year that's the reason we're heating the globe...** a million years of decomposition. This is what turns into coal and oil and gas, vegetation that's died and decomposed. So a million years of dying vegetation is now being put back into the atmosphere by humans every year. And that is really the driving problem of climate change. So the irony is that by storing carbon in native vegetation you're actually making a big contri-



Scientist Mr Peter Cosier

bution to helping solve the climate crisis.

If this is done cleverly, which is where environmental accounting becomes very important, you also restore your landscapes and catchments. You improve your soil, the water quality, protect habitat for endangered species. . . all the things we've done to cause degradation can be repaired with new investments. But you can't do any of that, if you don't measure the outcomes so that anyone who wants to invest can easily be shown the outcome of their investment. And that's what AfN does, it measures the condition of the soil, the water, the wildlife and habitat which can be improved by a particular investment . . . fencing off a waterway, baiting feral animals, or whatever the activity is, AfN measures the impact of the investment and says whether that investment is having a good impact or not. And from that you can equate the value of the investment.

If the world really wants to have a healthy environment and a healthy economy then you must be able to measure the condition of the environment at a farm scale, at the local catchment scale and a national scale.

So why haven't we done it? We've never had the technology we have today to make it feasible and cost effective to measure environmental condition. Greenhouse gases are complicated enough, there are 16 greenhouse gases but they're still just molecules. But with biodiversity of infinite complexity – the species themselves and species that interact with other species, all that complexity is very complicated scientifically to accurately measure. But in recent years technology advances through satellites, remote sensing, eDNA.

TEST YOUR WATER!

There are layers upon layers of information we can now use. For example you can take a sample of water from a river or creek and send it to a lab in Melbourne. At a cost of \$80 the lab will spit out a list of all the living creatures that are in that waterway! Mind boggling!

When we did the first human Genome mapping project 20 years ago it cost \$3 billion. And it has now come down to just \$80 to measure a whole ecosystem! All through innovation technology and human engineering.

We're now exploring technologies using drones with infrared cameras and all sorts of sensors on them that can for example, pick up and count how many koalas might be in a piece of bushland.

We can do all that assessment and create an economy without degrading the environment – what people are now calling a nature positive economy.

If I were a council, I'd be investigating such ideas that help the economy and create jobs, rather than causing the opposite.

It's the most important thing in my opinion for human progress and environment in the next century to get these accounts done. From a council's perspective there's little and big firms full of scientists who used to work in state and federal agencies who can offer their services to local councils, local farmers, those in natural resource management. One of these firms can run their satellites over your land and they can tell you the carbon potential of that piece of land. You can also learn how much carbon was there ten years ago and estimate how much there might be in ten years'

time. It's all just so exciting. As soon as Accounting for Nature hung out our shingle we realised there's an enormous demand from people to know all this stuff. We're overwhelmed with people wanting to do this. There is a charge and there's no government grants for this in NSW, so one of our great challenges is to get costs down. But we've made enormous progress in the last few years, and we expect to get the costs down even further. Our major clients are some of the large carbon storage organisations but we're now seeing agriculture companies come on board, like AA Co, so there are all sorts of people coming to us. We approve a method that is scientifically robust and then we certify the environmental account. Those trained

people who are actually preparing the accounts are driving the costs down because they're innovating and being efficient in how they use the data.

As to the bad image some carbon credit schemes have caused (note the ABC TV Four Corners episode "Carbon Colonialism" screened Feb 13' 23 Ed.) last year Minister Bowen commissioned a former chief scientist of Australia, Ian Chubb, to establish an expert committee to review the carbon credit issue, and he's recommended quite a number of submissions to tighten up all of those issues and those recommendations have been accepted and we're heartened by the speed at which Minister Bowen accepted the recommendations. So I'm very confident that what the community is paying for is what they will be getting."

Adds Mr Cosier, "At the end of the day, a democracy means we elect people to protect our interests and one of the things we keep asking our government to do is to protect our environment, and yet we see around the country, for example in NSW and in the Northern Territory and Queensland, land being cleared that is clearly being done without proper scientific scrutiny. And people have every right to demand our governments do better.

There is a famous saying . . . *The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.* We are letting this happen because we're not insisting they do better. It's up to the local community to demand better from their councils and elected governments," stated Mr Cosier.

**Hear. Hear.
DM**

AUSTRALIA: MESSENGER OF DEATH

Australia is the messenger of death. It plays a unique war-fighting role in US defence arrangements.

The base at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs, is one of the US's most important bases anywhere in the world. And yet most Australians have little knowledge of it.

Traditionally, Australian governments have simply called it a relay station of some sort and not elaborated further. Australian politicians themselves don't get told much about it for fear they could discuss it in their memoirs.

As they said in World War II: "loose lips sink ships". Politicians approach every issue with an open mouth.

The top secret 1947 UKUSA Agreement, between intelligence agencies in US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (the "five eyes"), was not mentioned in public until 1973 and was not published in full until 2010. No Australian politician learned about it until 1973 (which is when commentators such as myself also learned about it).

Moore's Law (named after

Gordon Moore, one of the founders of Intel) is based on the idea that computer power doubles every two years and halves in price every two years. Moore's 1965 prediction has been one the most important predictions to affect our lives this century.

Moore's Law also works in the field of US satellite intelligence. Indeed, what is probably the world's biggest collection of computers is held by the US National Security Agency (NSA) near Washington DC.

Pine Gap was established almost 60 years ago, during the US-Soviet Cold War. It was a signals intelligence base to track the radio communications (telemetry) between airborne Soviet missiles and Soviet controllers. It was said to aid transparency and confidence-building because the US gained a clear idea of the USSR's real missile power.

I was involved in a campaign in the 1980s to internationalise Pine Gap as part of a United Nations

International Satellite Monitoring Agency (ISMA). Colonel Howard Kurtz and Rev Harriet Kurtz had campaigned on this proposal ("Satellites for Peace") and then France took it up at the UN in 1978. Unfortunately, nothing came of that proposal.

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s did not reduce the significance of Pine Gap.

On the contrary, as the decades have rolled by so its importance has increased. It is no longer just a base for the CIA in its worldwide surveillance and NSA's detection of missile launches.

Pine Gap is part of a worldwide US satellite monitoring programme that scoops up all the data from everything: missile tests, military and civilian e-mails and phone calls. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, Pine Gap could listen in to the individual radio conversations of Iraqi tank commanders. All the electronic communications of the readers of this newspaper are

being recorded and stored.

The invention of drones has brought an extra change in war-fighting. Drones can travel long distances and then hover over potential targets waiting for the instruction to kill people. US drone strikes have killed thousands of people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere.

Some of those killed, especially targeted assassinations, may be war crimes. They may make Australia an accessory to committing war crimes.

Some of the targeting relies on the work of Pine Gap. It helps locate the targets and then monitors how much suffering was caused by the attack.

Pine Gap's work raises several questions. It makes Australia a potential nuclear target. The destruction of Pine Gap would blind the Americans in one-eye. The US system could continue fighting but it would be at a disadvantage.

During the Cold War some of us assumed that Pine Gap would be a Soviet target. Now the likely attackers would also include China or North Korea. For example, any Chinese invasion of Taiwan would be monitored by Pine Gap, and Pine Gap would be involved in any US retaliatory measures.

An attack on Pine Gap would be both an attack on the US and yet not a direct attack on US soil. It would give the US an opportunity to think about whether it would want to respond in kind or just sue for peace.

Therefore, Pine Gap could be a casualty in a 'limited' nuclear war – or part of the first wave of an attack in an all-out nuclear war. It would depend on how the US decided to retaliate.

Australians need to know more about Pine Gap and the risk we are running by hosting it.

Dr Keith Suter
Global Directions
www.globaldirections.com.au



COUNCIL TAKES TENTATIVE STEP INTO THE FUTURE

At its February meeting, Midcoast Council agreed to advocate for the permanent protection of parts of the Bulga State Forest, but more importantly, it supported a just transition from native forest logging to ecologically sustainably managed plantations and farm forestry.

In doing so it stepped into the future. Logging of our native forests, like whaling, belongs in the past, to an era where resources seemed limitless. Now we know the value of the older trees and the huge contribution they make to sustaining water flows, nectar and pollen production, storing carbon, cooling the land and providing the life support system for the unique animals and plants that call the forest home.

To those who say, but this forest has been logged for a hundred years, the answer is yes, and that is why the trees being left are skinny little things with no canopy and no habitat for the hundreds of animals that depend on a complex forest dominated by big old trees. It is also why there is almost no rainforest left in the entire local government area and why koalas are hard to find, when once they were common.

There is no doubt councillors were swayed by the plight of the animals, eloquently outlined in a letter from the children of Elands, but equally they recognised that healthy communities depend on healthy catchments and healthy catchments depend on healthy forests.

With each truck load of logs, goes another patch of forest that has delivered our region a bountiful supply of water since long before Europeans arrived. But the reliability of that water supply is jeopardised by logging. Instead of forests of old trees that store the rain that replenishes the creeks, the forests are now young and thirsty. It will take decades of no logging to restore river levels to what they once were. As the climate warms and we move into another El Niño cycle, that lack of water may well become catastrophic.

Council rightly supported a just transition. It's not about protecting logging jobs, it's about protecting

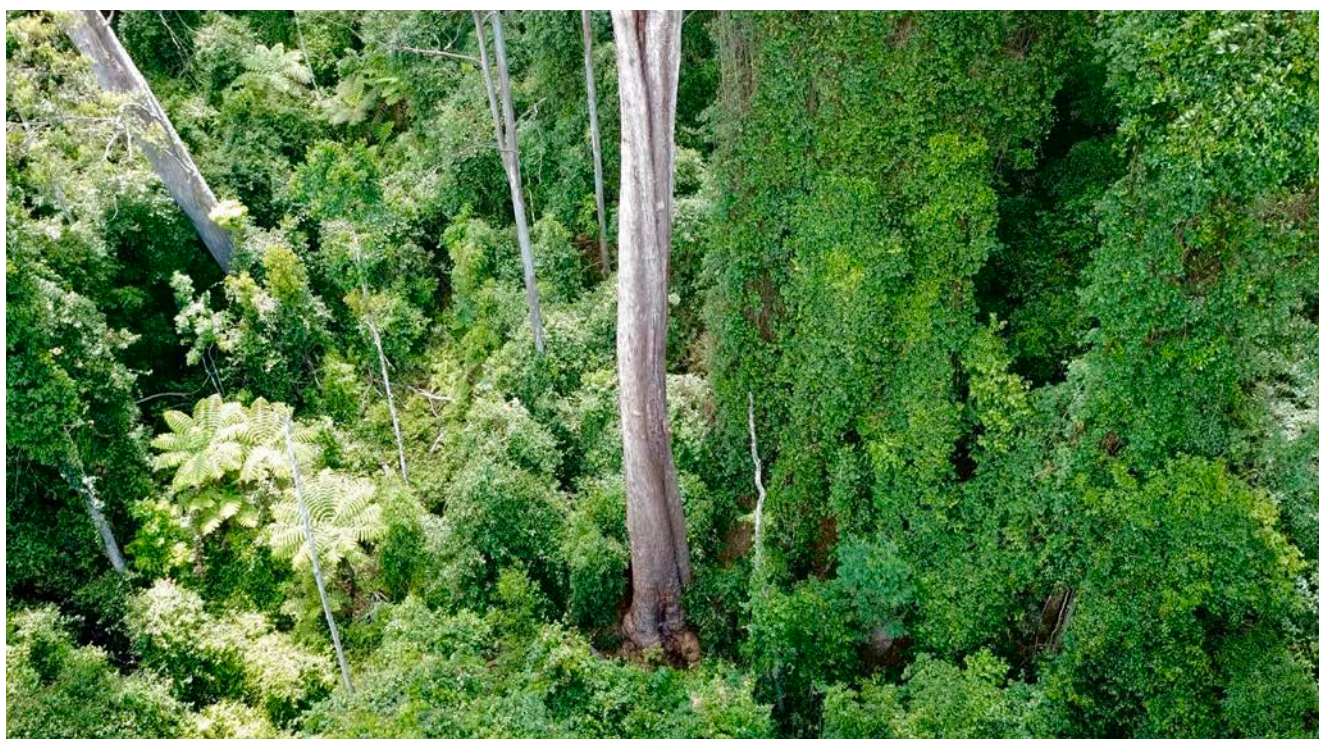
workers and making sure they aren't left in the lurch. Plenty of work for big machinery drivers in repairing the State's roads that have been smashed by devastating floods.

Midcoast Council has recognised

that we are in a climate emergency. Seeking a transition from the forests is entirely consistent. Remember that the deserts of the Middle East were once the Garden of Eden. If we don't stop the logging soon, we will have

converted paradise into a degraded and eroding weed-scape and our descendants will curse our stupidity forever more.

Susie Russell



Unlogged Forest



Logged Forest

SO WHO HAS THE SAY SO ON BEAUTIFICATION IN WINGHAM?

According to Google the “Wingham Advancement Group Inc is a not-for-profit community organisation dedicated to making Wingham, New South Wales in Australia, a better place for our community and visitors.”

WAG was founded on 5th June 2000.

It has given Wingham the dreaded bedpan waterfall amongst other “beautifications” unsuited to a heritage village. It decided free overnight camping at the small Riverside Park area was a good idea which has been a disaster. And unnecessary. The showground has amenities and facilities the riverside does not. (Whether there are spaces available or not is sadly, a sign of the times.)

The latest doozy someone has contemplated for Wingham is a planned mural for the toilet block in the Central Park of what appears to be vicious snapping turtles by the evil look in their eye. Whatever artistic merit aside, it has been pointed out that even if it is supposed to be the Manning River Helmeted Turtle (Purvis’ Turtle) that species does not appear at The Brush or in the estuary as it is exclusively a freshwater species.

Many locals feel this toilet block should not be adorned with murals. The toilet block quietly reflects and, most importantly, does not deflect or detract from the surrounding heritage buildings and the centrality of the town square.

There were proposals to paint this toilet block in gaudy hippie-style colours and patterns *a la Nimbin*, shortly after it was constructed, but locals, opposed it for the same reasons.

The much touted Wingham “beautification” plan by Council is a pretty pathetic effort it seems. Visit other heritage towns and you see large shady trees, immaculately restored heritage buildings, shops and cafes that reflect the town’s olde worlde appeal.

Wingham has lost Flett’s cottage, the Stationmaster’s Cottage, the wonderful railway Goods Shed, the grand Emporium, The Wingham Hotel with its magnificent Cobb and Co stables, to name a few.

Heritage homes are knocked down to build “modern” boring boxes. Thank goodness the beautiful old home at the Bungay roundabout is being privately restored. We need to save many others.

Wingham could be so much more. But it needs professional guidance, not amateurs even if well intentioned.

DM

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Ongoing adversity associated with natural disasters and Covid have generally depleted our communities’ psychological capital.

A strong element of hope seems to be a belief in the capacity for situations in which we despair to improve. And for the institutions on which we collectively rely to deliver community-good outcomes have capabilities and a record of achievement on which progress can be made. So, one of the key questions in this context is whether MidCoast Council and its staff as well as its local residents have the experience, skills, resources and, importantly, the will, to provide us with a hope of saving and protecting the environment on which we all depend. Or is Council and a portion of its residents shackled to developmental interests, servient to endless growth, regressive agriculturalists and the selfish politics of profit and exploitation? Is it paralysed by a state and national legislative regime that consistently and obviously fails biodiversity and the natural environment? These are a seriously complex questions.

We should look at the Council’s record of achievement bearing in mind their abilities and influence in the broader context of an abysmal State and National environmental policy framework.

In the sad context of uncourageous, pro-development decision-making, the legacy of zombie DAs, the absence of complete and effective tree and vegetation controls because of weak State Government legislation, the absence of a corridor protection framework and so on, there may be reason for some hope.

MidCoast Council has delivered some environmental achievements with real outcomes that defy the wider trend of environmental decline, and which can form a platform of enhanced success for the future.

A few examples:

MidCoast Council has achieved more outcomes for innovative and proactive wetland conservation and repair than probably any other Council in NSW. Wetlands are essential for the quality of our lakes, rivers and fisheries. The combined projects at Darawank and Cattai together with wetland acquisition and conservation schemes at Tuncurry, Minimbah and Bulahdelah, have repaired decades old coastal acid sulfate problems. Sites once described as being impaired like “toxic waste dumps”, with drains generating acidified water equivalent to battery acid, have been acquired, drainage systems removed, rewetted, and returned from unproductive grazing land to rich and productive wetlands.

Thousands of hectares of land including threatened ecological communities and threatened species habitats have been added to public conservation management through the actions of Council.

Catchment Management Program, a NSW government system, driven by its agencies in association with local government is a good and effective Council led program in NSW. Water Quality Programmes were propelled from the former Great Lakes Council experience with the tragic Hepatitis A event in Wallis Lake and is proactive and strategic. It supports landholders through a sustainable farming to more sustainable practices. And the catchment program delivers exceptional Council-led pro-

grams for threatened species recovery, including funnelling external funds into on-ground outcomes for regional priority species, such as the Manning River turtle.

The combined State and Local government approach for protecting the water quality of the lakes, rivers, creeks and wetlands is deservedly award-winning. It is informed by both science and social marketing and is working to preserve the precious water assets that are the focus of maximum urban growth, for biodiversity and agricultural, urban and recreational uses.

Council has reached agreement with the NSW Government to be one of the eight NSW koala regional partnerships to deliver outcomes under the NSW Koala Strategy. This will access *hopefully* substantial resources for koala recovery and conservation actions within the MidCoast region.

The Council Biodiversity Framework is a progressive, well-intentioned document that defines the toolkit for Council to deliver. Assembled with intensive extension and consultation with stakeholders including the community, the Framework, as good as it is, will only be measured as a success via its effective and timely implementation.

In my own backyard, the Gloucester Environment Group has had a fruitful relationship with the Council in relation to the Group’s koala tree planting program known as Koalaways, and is in serious discussion about the Council undertaking a survey of koala numbers in the Gloucester area within the next 12 months.

Of course, having positive plans is one thing but implementation is another, and all those concerned about the environment should closely monitor Council activities and actively participate, looking at practical ways to get the job done. Obvious recent examples are the apparently slow implementation of its Greening Strategy the fact many areas still have no protection from urban tree and shrub removal and the recent destruction by the Council of a grove of mangroves.

There is still much to be done but as they say, ‘Let’s give credit where credit is due’.

The Council can only do so much in light of woefully inadequate state government environmental laws and policies. So, with a state election on the offing, check all the candidates’ credentials and promises before you vote.

John Watts
(President Gloucester Environment Group)

(And there are many good citizens and local groups doing what they can. For one, I single out Dr John Stockard who led the recovery and restoration of the Wingham Brush in the 1980s and continues to clear weeds, monitor problems and pick up rubbish left by high school students, uncaring local bush-pigs, drug-dealers and even some visitors, especially illegal campers. If we love where we live, care for it. It’s no good going for a walk and kicking the rubbish aside. Pick it up when you see it. There is a tendency to expect “the government” to do everything for us. One of the biggest problems is a lack of education and awareness. We need more environmental education in our schools. Ed)

YET ANOTHER DISASTROUS DEVELOPMENT.

361 Blackhead Rd Hallidays Point is a 27 acre/10.63 h vital chunk of a designated koala habitat/corridor in Hallidays Point (1999 Council habitat study).

It is heavily forested and supports a range of wildlife on the threatened species list including brush-tailed phascogales, microbats as well as koalas. Hallidays Point is also a high bushfire risk zone that was heavily impacted in the Black Summer fires. (Google Holden Road fire truck ember storm).

361 Blackhead Road is a perfect example of the zombie DA phenomenon that is impacting all along the East Coast of NSW. In 2004 it was approved for an Aged Care facility including a nursing home despite it being in a high bush fire zone and vulnerable to local flooding.

At the time it was recognised that the development would also likely impact on threatened and vulnerable species with the result that the initial approval required the retention of "a significant tract of vegetation." In October 2009 the DA was due to lapse but at the very last second a token gesture was made by removing some small saplings which saved the DA (although the receipt from the work done was dated a month later raising the question of whether the sapling removal actually occurred within the designated time period).

In May 2020 the DA again came up for approval, this time due to a modification from onsite building to essentially manufactured homes.

What was not made clear enough though is that it is now subject to upgraded Bushfire Risk Assessments and the upgraded BFRA which requires the whole block to be treated as an internal Asset Protection Zone with the destruction of almost all of the vegetation. This is to comply with less than 15% tree canopy and no vegetation near any of the intense building footprint. So this involves the removal of over **two thousand** trees and clearing, concreting and mowing of the bulk of the site.

The motion to accept the DA in the 2020 form was put forward by Councillor Len Roberts. It was narrowly passed by one vote.

Despite being a recognised koala corridor (with a koala sighted crossing the road nearby within the last month) and the site containing a number of koala food trees, this is not a consideration to prevent the clearing.



New South Wales Sotheby's - 'Il Vasari' 361 Blackhead Road, Hallidays Point



The presence of glossy black cockatoos and this small fringe of food trees is likely to be impacted by the road widening.

The displacement and probable loss of current wildlife is massive.

After the 2019-2020 fires this land has been an important part of the wildlife recovery. We also believe that the bushfire risk assessment is flawed in that it relied on an earlier assessment and did not include a current onsite visit. The plan also includes emergency exits onto private and E2 land that will not be permitted by current owners.

Placing an Aged Care facility in a high risk bushfire area is highly dubious given there is only one road out in case of another bushfire. The nearest hospital or ambulance service is at least 25 kilometres away.

The land sold last for 1.8 million dollars in 2019. With the modified DA approved in May 2020 it was rapidly put up for sale and was listed with Sotheby's in Sydney for around the 20 million dollars mark.

The clearing of this land will effectively create a major gap in the corridor. It will add to the local extinction of a number of threatened species including koala, phascogales, micro-

bats and spotted tail quolls. It will also put elderly and infirm residents at risk should there be another bushfire.

There is strong community opposition to the DA going ahead with most locals distressed by the loss of wildlife and also in disbelief that this is an appropriate place to site an elderly persons facility.

Kym Kilpatrick

(This is heartbreaking. Uncontrolled, inappropriate development has got to be monitored and accountable. As does our Council. Ed)



TASTEFEFEST

— ON THE MANNING —

FIFTY FOOD & DRINK VENDORS COMING TO TASTEFEFEST!

On Saturday 1 April

Lions Club Taree will host Tastefest on our beautiful Manning River Foreshore from 10am to 9pm.

After a couple of rough years, including floods and a last minute change of location last year, *TasteFest on the Manning* is back in 2023 with a vengeance.

This year, the event will showcase nearly 50 food, wine, craft beer and spirit vendors, and other yummy gourmet offerings, as well as fabulous food from vendors out of town.

We are really excited about a large range of new vendors who are joining us for the first time.

So come on down and tantalise your tastebuds with a great variety of different foods and drinks to try. For a gold coin donation, we guarantee it's the best value day out in the area.

TASTEFEFEST ENTERTAINMENT – THE 80'S SHOW

The Manning RiverStage will be buzzing all day with muso's including popular local faves The Trapps and Matty Zarb.

The headline act for Saturday evening is *The 80's Show* which hails from Sydney.

The greatest tribute to the greatest de-

cade! If you like Bon Jovi, ACDC, U2, INXS, Bryan Adams, then this is THE show for you!

So squeeze into your acid wash jeans, pull up your leg warmers, pack a picnic rug, grab your fave food and drink from one of the TasteFest vendors and sit back and bop away to all those fun 80 hits with your friends.

The 80's Show starts at 730pm so don't miss it!

TASTEFEFEST PRODUCERS DINNER, FRIDAY 31 MARCH

The *Producers Dinner* was a huge success last year so we are doing it again, host-

ed in conjunction with Taree Quota Club.

Chef Laurent will be master of the kitchen and his menu will highlight our wonderful Barrington Coast local produce.

Tickets to this dinner sell quickly, so keep an eye on the TasteFest Facebook and Insta socials for further announcements. Tickets are limited to just 80 and will be for sale via Eventbrite.

An event like TasteFest takes many many hands, but special thanks

must also be made to our sponsors Mid Coast Council, Barrington Coast, Valley Industries, Ray White Manning Valley, JR Richards, National Australia Bank, Toby Uglow Painting, MaxFM, 2RE and Tinonee Bus Company.

If you have any TasteFest questions, feel free to email Taree Lions at tastefest.tareelions@gmail.com or visit the TasteFest Facebook page or our website www.tastefest.com.au

We hope to see you on the 1st April for a terrific day of foodie fun! (And let's hope the weather gods are kind to us this year.)



TELLING OUR STORIES WAY TO GO!

Hooray For The New Federal Government Arts Policy

The arts policy launched on January 30 by Prime Minister Albanese and the Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke, is aimed at revitalising the performing arts in Australia. It refers to it as *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place — Australia's cultural policy for the next Five years.*

The policy is accompanied by an injection of \$286 million, putting their money where their mouth is. Not something you see every day in the arts world.

Of significant interest to the local area is an increase to the regional arts fund of \$8.5 million, and \$11.8 million to support loans from The National Gallery of Australia's collection to regional galleries and museums.

There is significant support for indigenous arts, and assistance to improve the Resale Royalty Scheme for visual artists.

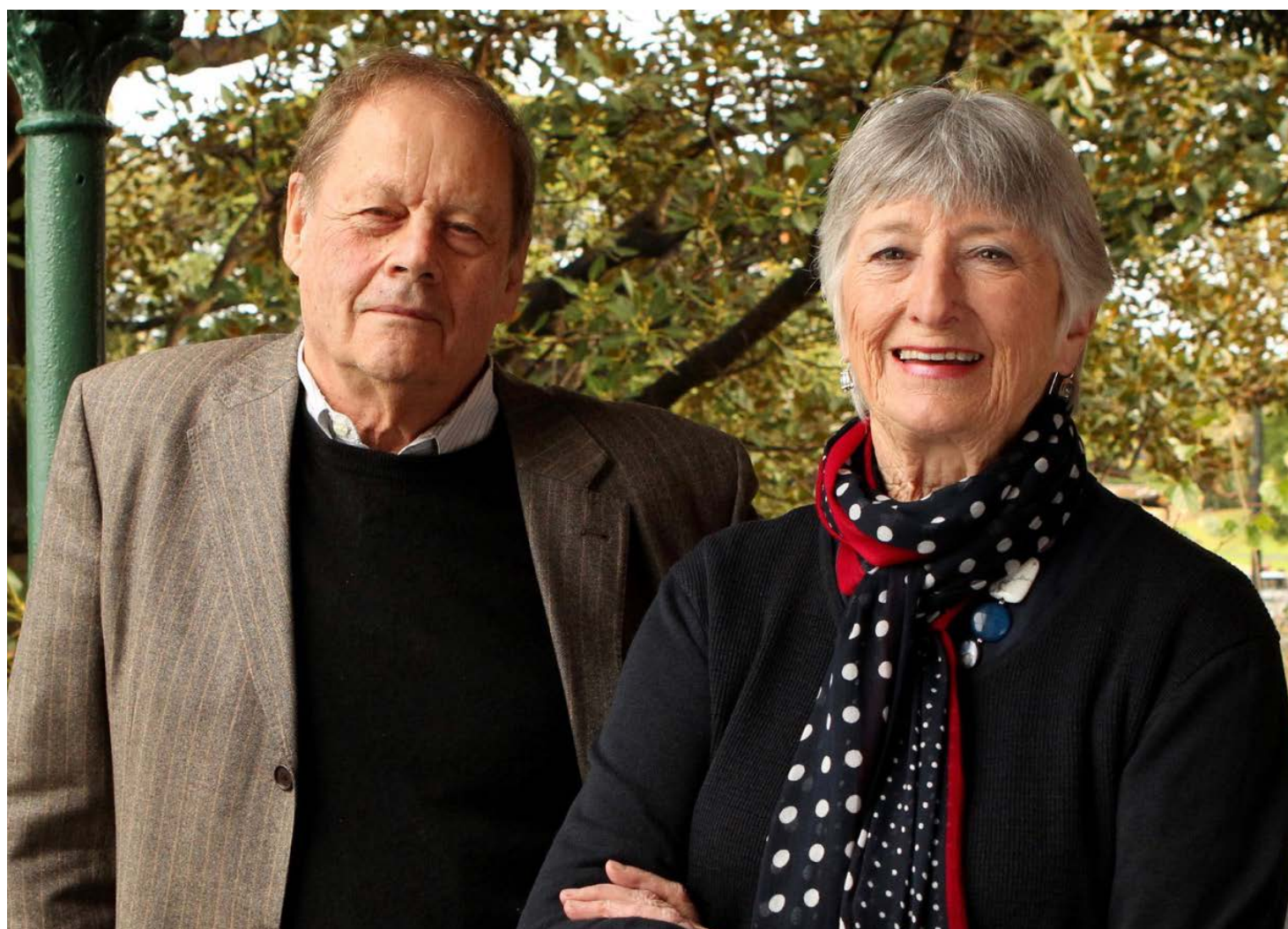
What sounds like big changes are afoot for the national arts funding and advisory organisation, the Australia Council, which after fifty years is to become a body called Creative Australia, with newly named satellite bodies such as Music Australia, and Writing Australia, and a new First Nations Board.

One hopes that this move from The Australia Council to Creative Australia will not be an exercise in moving the deck chairs, but will provide real energy and enhancement to support for the Arts.

Not covered in the announcement was desperately needed repairs to the National Gallery and the National Library, which we're told will be included in the May budget. Hopefully adequate funding for Trove, the NLA's amazing digital research resource, currently under threat of being lost due to lack of funding, will also be included.

Also not covered in this announcement were Film and Television but there is a lot happening in the background there.

Most significant is the move for requirement for Australian content on the streaming services. The previous government chipped away



Producers Sue Milliken and Bruce Beresford

at content regulations for the free to air networks, most notably reducing the requirement for Australian children's television material. The streaming services, naturally, do not want regulation on what they spend on Australian programmes, saying that they are already investing in significant Australian production.

To some extent this is true. Television drama is busy, with series such as *The Twelve* on Foxtel, *The Secret She Keeps* and the upcoming *One Night* for Paramount Plus, *Bali 2002* and *The Tourist* on Stan, and *Boy Swallows Universe* for Netflix. But Australian feature films struggle, badly affected by the change in cinema-going since lockdown.

The government has said that it will introduce legislation on Australian content requirements for the streamers in the third quarter of 2023, to come into effect in July 2024. Deciding on how these

requirements will work will be the subject of vexed negotiations in the meantime.

International productions, such as *Thor*, *Love and Thunder*, *Ticket to Paradise*, *Shantaram* and the currently shooting *The Fall Guy*, are providing work and income for film crews and some Australian cast. The Australian-generated *Elvis* and the *Mad Maxes* fall into this category also. These films are valuable foreign currency earners, to the tune of hundreds of millions of US dollars. But the location incentive fund which was established to attract them here is largely spent, and it is not certain what if any subsidy will replace it. The industry would like a flat 30% tax rebate, open ended, but it is more likely to be another finite cash fund.

On the one hand the offshore mega films suck the oxygen out of the local industry by raising rates and employing the top crew, on the

other hand in a properly regulated environment, there should be room for both. Time to grow the pool of experienced technicians and expand infrastructure – ie studios - would probably see, as exists in Britain, local and international film industries existing productively alongside each other.

While the government is under pressure to continue the subsidy to attract offshore film productions, most importantly it needs to ensure that Australians are able to compete with stories that reflect ourselves and our culture, for Australian audiences and the rest of the world.

The Federal Government has a busy year in front of it across all the performing arts.

Sue Milliken
Sue Milliken is a film producer (*Ladies In Black*) who grew up in Wingham.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT TO THE GP!

Not that long ago, the family doctor was a cottage industry. Many GPs worked solo from a dedicated clinic attached to their residence.

That was my way of life for over 30 years, and I enjoyed the informality and low practice expenses. If a patient was late, I could go out and pull some weeds from the garden.

The other standard model was for two or more doctors to own a practice in partnership. Either way, the community knew who the doctors were and their particular interests. Dr Stork might be good at pregnancy and birth, but Dr Pelican was good with cardiac and diabetes. For drugs and mental health, patients gravitated to Dr Bamboo.

Most doctors would have a regular round of home visits also, fitting them in at the request of the local hospital while on call. It could be interesting. I recall answering a home visit request on the weekend from a woman with kidney pain. When her husband unexpectedly came home, he assumed I was visiting his wife for all the wrong reasons. In a fit of misplaced jealousy, he pulled out a knife and I had to run for my life as he chased me down the stairs to my getaway car. After that incident, I learned to always park in the escape position.

Home visits are less common today. Convenience and security are an issue. But the home visit allows the doctor to be a medical detective. A quick squiz in the fridge speaks volumes about nutrition in family life. The bathroom cupboard could be scary, a jumble of coloured pills providing evidence about the patient's compliance and competence.

The modern doctor more commonly works under time constraints imposed by corporate employers. This shift has changed the land-



This is a sketch done by a patient's partner during a consultation

scape of family medicine. Doctors are not so much in charge, and medical treatment is more slanted toward the profit motive. Everybody knows about waiting for the doctor, sometimes for weeks. Getting 'on the books' with a practice can help if you ever do need help in a hurry because you belong.

In retirement and with increasing age, my role has shifted from being a doctor to being a patient. I wouldn't say I like the less personal style, the white windowless row of rooms of today's standard in consulting room architecture. But it is what it is, and I must adapt to a reverse doctor-patient relationship. But after conducting thousands of consultations, I do have some idea of not wasting the doctor's time by rambling on and the importance of forward planning for the consultation. An experienced patient gave me his impression of the doctor's attention span. 'For the first problem, you get full attention, then about 50% for the next thing. After that, the doctor is wondering about the next patient.' An insider's view.

Nowadays a person is lucky to get the same doctor for follow-up

appointments. Doctors in training rotation are here today, gone tomorrow, but computer practice programs can smooth this problem, as notes from the previous doctor on the screen can help the next one pick up the threads. And if there is another doctor in the practice who suits you better, no one takes offence or will even notice. A patient once told me she had a doctor she kept for essential things. She did not want to 'use up the good one.' For scripts and easy routines, anyone would do. It seemed a bit weird, but I got the point.

Another case amplifies a vital point. A friend told me of her consultation, 'When the doctor said cancer, I don't recall anything after that.' If there is a takeaway from this article, especially for a consultation involving decisions about operations and treatment, take along a trusted friend or relative. That second pair of ears can pick up things the anxious patient may miss. At a subtle level, the presence of two people can balance out the invisible power structure, after all, the patient is a supplicant on the doctor's territory. There is always an extra

chair at the desk, and no reasonable doctor could object, but beware - some receptionists are fiery dragons protecting the boss. If this is your plan, don't get separated between the waiting room and the inner sanctum. Asking permission may invite the response, 'We'll call you in if we need to.'

There is much more to discuss in making the health system work for you or your family, about specialists, hospitals, emergency, vaccinations, bodywork and ancillary services. It can be a maze.

Dr Atul Gawunde, in his book 'Being Mortal', reckons that podiatry is an essential service for older people because a good pair of feet enables more activity. Health is not just about what others can do for you but about what you can do for yourself. You can't deputise someone to take your walk. Moving the legs is as beneficial to the brain as solving a crossword puzzle. Socialisation, nutrition and sleep hygiene, so essential in maintaining health, are up to the individual. It is motivating to have a regular physical routine. There is such a wide choice of activity, you should be able to find something you like - circuit training, qi-gong, pilates, biking, walking, swimming, singing, dancing or the gym. For best results, you have to be your own doctor.

I recall a GP at a conference who remarked that the patients like 'to feel they have a friend walking beside them.' If you have a GP like this, you have found a great treasure.

David Miller
Former GP
Brunswick Heads

HASHTAG “YOU COULDN’T MAKE IT UP!”

(In our last edition Karen Gilbert wrote of the trauma of her protracted dealings with council over suddenly needing a DA for the successful Hicamp she and her husband had run for tourists, and their heartbreaking decision to sell as meeting the council requirements was too hard, too expensive. To now discover this final blow or, as it could seem, this “coincidence” from Council has her hopping mad.)

Karen writes - On the 6th October 2022 a media release was issued by the NSW Government which proudly declared that “Farmers across NSW will soon be swinging their gates open to visitors, thanks to a new policy that makes it easier to set up agritourism opportunities”. These opportunities include opening farm gate stalls, opening up farm stay accommodation, hosting weddings or putting on farm events such as food tastings or animal interaction days.

This long overdue policy reform which took effect on 1 December 2022 was aimed directly at farmers like us at Bluebell Hill Farm in Burrell Creek. We had all struggled through drought, bushfires, floods and the pandemic. This policy reform allowed Primary Producers (zoned RU1) who owned over 15 hectares, to supplement their ever-dwindling income without the need for a costly and complex DA.

By opening up farms to the fast-growing domestic caravan and camping market, local councils would ultimately reap the benefit of increased tourism in their local area. It was a win win for farmers and for local councils.

UNLESS YOU LIVE IN THE MID COAST COUNCIL LGA IT WOULD SEEM!

At Bluebell Hill Farm, we had run a very successful Hipcamp business (where farmers allow self-sufficient campers and caravans to spend a few days on their land) since 2019. We had been aware that great changes were coming as Hipcamp had been petitioning the NSW Government to remove the red tape for some time. Our DA for “primitive camping” had been ongoing with MCC since 21 August 2021 and despite the ever-increasing costs necessary for engineers



Karen and Ian Gilbert

reports and the classic “We don’t accept satellite images so you’ll need to pay an expert to draw a site map, and yes it will cost thousands and look exactly like the map you submitted but hey ho!!!” we were still hopeful.

Sadly for us a DA didn’t eventuate; with our last communication to MCC being on 15 August 2022. It was a classic David and Goliath battle but after two years of fighting, David had had enough. We

sold the farm in October 2022 and left the Mid Coast for a better life.

But here’s the thing...after we sold our property, I was contacted by another farmer in the MCC LGA who were facing the same battles as we had. It seemed the compliance officer who visited us back in 2021 was staying true to his word...going after anyone operating a Hipcamp even though the policy reform states, “the types of development you can do as farm

stay accommodation under exempt and complying development include: “erecting tents and have caravans or campervans on your land as exempt development”.

The rules changed as of 1 December 2022 but it seems council did not get the memo?

Sadly, the last laugh seems to have been at our expense. I have a Bluebell Hill Facebook/Insta page where I post all about our travels. It is normally an upbeat social site but on 3rd February I came across a local news article which stated that “the Mid Coast Council was the sixth most complained about council to the NSW ombudsman”. I shared that post saying that anyone who knows what Ian and I have been through will not be surprised to read the headline and I hashtagged the council so that their social media person would see it too.

That post went out at 10.08am.

At 12.35pm I received a text letting me know that our Primitive Campground DA had been approved!!! I was totally gob smacked and checked the NSW Planning Portal immediately... and there it was in all its glory. Submitted and approved at 12.04pm just 2 hours and 4 minutes after my Facebook post. Nothing had been received from council since my last submission to them on 15th August 2022, but following a social media rant, approval was suddenly granted 518 days after submission. Oh, and even weirder, it was backdated to the day before my social media rant. Coincidence, or no?

Karen Gilbert.

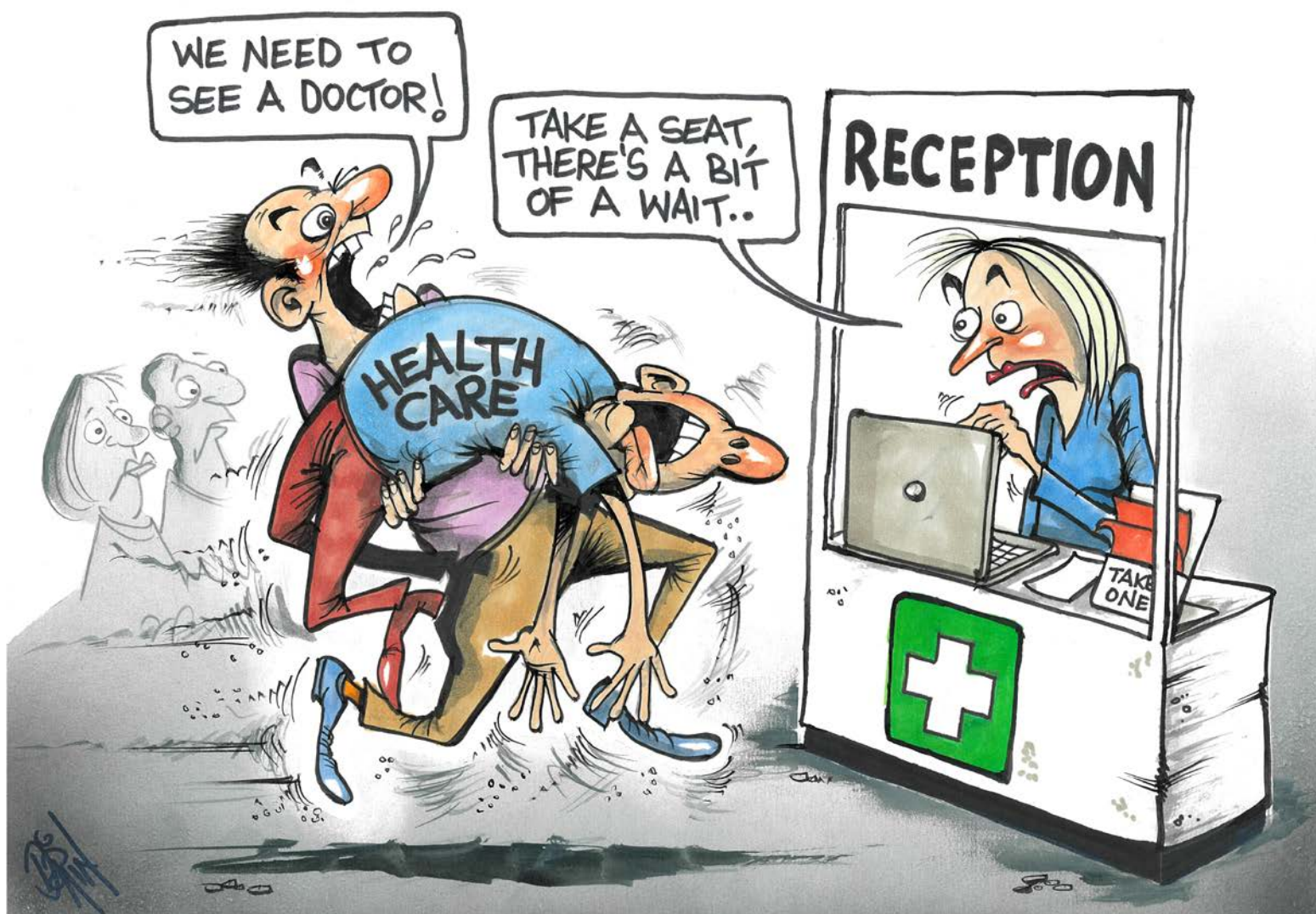
(Currently homeless, living in a caravan with her husband Ian, deciding what to do next. Sadly she is hearing of others who have experienced the same issues and have never been informed of the change in the DA concerning campers on their farms now being allowed.)

See **Your Say** on page 23.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

This old photograph shows a patriotic procession in Taree in the early 1900s. The procession is passing Croad's Royal Hotel and Harry Smith's Billiard Parlor. Fotheringham's Hotel is in the background.

I'd be glad to learn more about the photo and the occasion it depicts.
You can email me, Greg Ray, at greg@phototimetunnel.com



LOCAL DOCTOR'S ADVENTURES UP THE CONGO, SUPPORTED BY ROTARY, SAVES LIVES

Taree Rotarian, Dr Grace Maano, has returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo where she provided Emergency Obstetric Care Training Workshops.



Dr Grace awards AMURDC VP Dr Kitenge (Association of Emergency Medicine in the Democratic Republic of Congo) with certificate of achievement with Dr Etwell looking on



Dr Grace Maano prepares to board canoe for 200 km journey from Lotumbe to Mbandaka capital Equateur Province

Kinshasa, was modern, but the two rural venues in Equateur Province had no electricity, running water, oxygen tanks or other basic emergency care.

“Medical personnel were so eager for the training that at every hospital workshop arrivals overflowed pre-registrations,” Dr Maano recalls. From around Lotumbe, village medics traveled by canoe for more than 36 hours.

Dr. Maano adds, “The further we got from the city, the bigger the challenges but the lovelier the people.”

Many Rotary clubs, the World Health Organisation, the DRC Emergency Medicine Association www.amurdc.org, the African Federation for Emergency Medicine, individuals and businesses have been collaborating with HandUp Congo on emergency medicine education since 2015. For information see www.handupcongo.org or email handupcongo@gmail.com or see *Building a Healthy Congo* (DRC) project on the Rotary Australia World Community Service website www.rawcs.org.au.

Taree Rotary meets on Monday nights 6pm for 6.30pm start at Club Taree (golf course).

“Join Rotary and you become part of a global network of volunteer leaders who dedicate their time and talent to tackle the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges at both the local and international levels,” declares Dr Maano.

Frances Rosamond

For information:

Dr Grace Maano - gmaano@gmail.com

It was not without its adventures as well as bringing much needed care to very remote families. Dr Maano has over 20 years of work experience not just in obstetrics and gynaecology but also in emergency medicine. She is a Taree women’s health specialist and a Fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and founder of [Hiraya MidCoast Women’s Health Clinic](#).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Dr Maano provided training in emergency obstetric care at three locations including a village accessible only by dugout canoe.

This was the second training trip to the DRC for Dr Maano, who is also president of Taree Rotary Club. She travelled both times under the auspices of Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) and HandUp Congo, a small Australia-based non-profit with long-time ties to the Congo. It is led by Wingham resident and fellow Rotarian Lucy Hobgood-Brown.

The 2023 training equipment and workshops were funded by donations through RAWCS and HandUp Congo,

along with proceeds from a raffle and ticket sales to the *Avatar: Way of Water* launch at Fay’s Cinema, organised last December by Rotary Club of Taree. This event raised \$3,233.20 for the obstetric emergency training.

The DRC is among the five poorest nations in the world, notes Dr Maano. “Maternal mortality rate is 800/100,000 compared to Australia’s 8/100,000,” she says. “Due to poverty, most women can’t afford health checks to diagnose issues like pre-eclampsia, much less pay for anaesthetics for surgical interventions when needed. We heard horrifying stories of women who had to be forcibly held down by healthcare staff when they needed C-sections, just because they couldn’t afford anaesthetics.”

The central African nation of 90 million people also has high rates of infectious disease and child mortality. Common diseases are malaria, tuberculosis, lower respiratory infections, neonatal disorders, diarrheal and water-borne diseases.

Dr Maano explains that much of the population lives in very remote areas, accessible only by canoe. “We travelled by motorised canoe to one

training venue called Lotumbe, in Equateur Province,” recalls the physician. “It took us 13 hours and was a beautiful journey for our volunteer team. However, it was a reminder of how inaccessible and unaffordable healthcare is for most of Congo’s population. Hospital care must be paid for in advance by the patient, and their family must provide cleaning and food service. If they can’t afford hospital care or medications, they may die.”

HandUp Congo has constructed a free health clinic in Lotumbe, with free medicines made available to the village of 6000’s most vulnerable. A general reference hospital is also located in the community, accessed by 87,000 people living in the world’s second largest rainforest. Dr Maano’s training workshop was held at this hospital, which has served as a treatment hub for Ebola and Covid cases in the area.

Training at three DRC hospitals focused on newborn resuscitation, shoulder dystocia, postpartum haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia, breech and bedside basic ultrasound scanning. The training venue in Congo’s capital,

THE NATURALIST



(The Remarkable Life of Allan Riverstone McCulloch) By Brendan Atkins
NewSouth Publishing 2022
RRP \$34.99

Most Sydneysiders will be very familiar with, and many will have visited, the lovely old 19th century sandstone building at the corner of College street and William street within whose walls is the Australian Museum.

We often think of such institutions as being perhaps a bit stuffy and staffed by eccentric scientists who patiently, co-operatively and calmly go about their business of sharing their scientific knowledge by presenting the public with displays of rare fauna and artifacts from remote areas of the globe. We generally don't think of museums as being places of personal conflict and political intrigue.

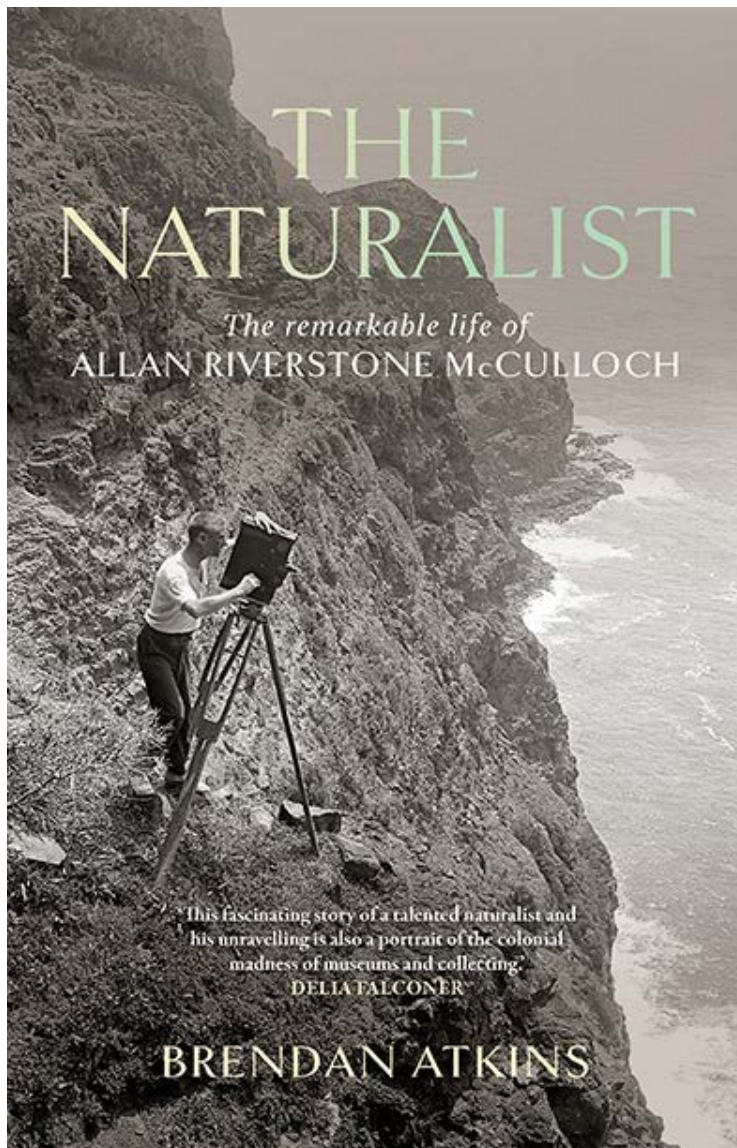
Although the obvious purpose of this book is to resurrect and promote the reputation of Allan McCulloch, who was a senior curator at the Australian

Museum 100 years ago, I was equally as intrigued by the insights into the turbulent behind-the-scenes workings of the Museum over the years and found it to be equally fascinating. Brendan Atkins was the editor of The Australian Museum's *Explore* magazine from 2006 to 2015 and for many years worked as an ecologist in the management of rivers and wetlands and clearly understands how such institutions operate.

We are told that right from its early days' things were stormy at the Museum and that in 1853 Curator William Wall "was kept busy documenting and storing the collection....all the while fighting as rearguard action to preserve his job from the new Board."

And then in 1865 the head of the museum Gerard Krefft had run-ins with the Board culminating in his sacking. However, "Krefft refused to leave. Barricading himself into his rooms, he had to be physically ejected. Dramatically, two prize fighters.... smashed a door panel to gain access before carrying the defiant Krefft-still seated.... into the street."

Allan McCulloch, who was to become one of the world's leading fish biologists (ichthyologist) and a



talented illustrator, joined the Museum as an unpaid cadet at the age of 12 in 1898. It was where he would spend the rest of his life, training on the job, having never received any formal qualifications.

McCulloch's grandfather Thomas Macculloch (the spelling was later changed), a Scot, was transported to Australia after being convicted of high treason for taking part in an uprising against British rule.

By the time that Allan was born in 1885 his family was part of the Sydney establishment although with a mixed reputation. He had relatives that worked in the law, in business and in architecture. Allan's father was a barrister who became a judge, although dying from tuberculosis almost immediately after his appointment. His uncle Andrew joined the NSW Parliament in 1877 and, consistent with a long tradition of NSW politicians, used his position as an MP to boost the value of his own real estate developments. He was described by one historian as 'something of a shonky land developer.' He eventually went bankrupt, was accused of fraud, and left town in disgrace causing the family to change

the spelling of their name.

At the time that McCulloch joined the Museum its main fish expert was one James Ogilby. He had once been a full-time staff member but by the time that McCulloch joined he only worked on contract because of 'an extreme and indiscriminating affinity for alcohol.' It was Ogilby who interested the young McCulloch in fish.

The Preface says:

More than a leading scientist, McCulloch was a popular staff member and museum educator; a talented illustrator; innovative photographer and cinematographer; an artist and adventurer; a musician-truly a renaissance man...

Why, Atkins then asks, has such a man, after whom the Murray Cod received its scientific name (Maccullochella), had such little recognition? Even the official history of the Museum published in 1979 apparently paid him scant regard.

The book takes us through the details of McCulloch's career with the Museum which included adventures to Lord Howe Island, other Pacific Islands and New Guinea where he undertook ground-breaking and world class research. He played a significant role in dealing with the rat plague that threatened many native species on Lord Howe Island.

As the book progresses, we learn that one of his main contributions to science was his ability to communicate complex scientific concepts to the public in a simple and entertaining manner, particularly by his use of Lantern Slides, and then cinematography. He also showed great skill in designing attractive exhibits. We are told:

McCulloch's artistic eye and practical training helped him design exhibitions and prepared specimens for display. There was plenty of demand for lectures too....

The book deals with the sensitive issue of the collection of artifacts from indigenous communities and their repatriation, and this became a real issue for McCulloch starting with a trip to Murray Island in the Torres Strait. He and his colleague collected

many items which later appeared to have been specifically prepared by locals for the collectors.

However, it was his expeditions to New Guinea with filmmaker Frank Hurley that caused his real strife when they showed little cultural sensitivity and were accused of thieving material from the villagers. Atkins provides much interesting detail about McCulloch's exploits in New Guinea.

Sadly, McCulloch had begun to experience serious mental health issues from the age of 35. His condition had deteriorated after his New Guinea experiences and in March 1925 he had a complete nervous breakdown requiring him to take one year off work. He eventually took his own life in Honolulu with a single bullet to the head on 1 September 1925 aged just 40. Apparently, he feared death less than exposing himself to the crude mental health treatments of the day.

The book concludes as follows:

Over his relatively short life, McCulloch made significant contributions, both personal and professional. He described and illustrated many new species of fishes and other animals. He mentored a generation of museum curators and remained an enthusiastic advocate of museums for public education. He seemed aware of his own talents and, to a lesser extent, weaknesses.

This is an informative book and although it is primarily focused on McCulloch's life it deals with many side issues along the way. I did find that it jumped a bit too readily from one topic to another and from one period to another, and that sometimes too much attention was paid to the side issues which I felt interrupted the flow of the book. One example is where he goes into great detail about the issue of conscription during World 1.

Overall, this is an interesting biography of a brilliant but troubled man who should not be forgotten. It is well worth a read.

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.



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SUPPORT OUR NATIONAL BROADCASTER TO TELL OUR STORIES!



For the past ten years ABC Friends has campaigned to defend the ABC. Nowhere was this more important than last year when we campaigned vigorously to protect the ABC and remind voters and political candidates of everything the ABC gives us.

In its first budget the Albanese government made good on its election commitments and the ABC was granted a reprieve.

But we can't be complacent.

The stark fact is that \$783 million was removed from ABC funding between 2014 and 2022 with serious consequences for jobs, programs and services.

Last year, the federal government restored \$84 million in operational funding to the ABC and reintroduced indexation. But this was a fraction of the funding lost over nine years, and the formula used to calculate indexation won't keep pace with inflation.

IN SHORT, WITHOUT ADDITIONAL FUNDING THE ABC WILL GO BACKWARDS.

We'll lose even more high quality drama, investigative journalism, and state-based news and current affairs programs - and more.

Australia needs a quality public media organisation that tells the stories other mainstream media ignore. Stories like Robodebt. The ABC has reported on problems with the scheme since they emerged more than five years ago and, unlike some media, it has covered every day of the current Royal Commission hearings.

By contrast, just this week we learned that the previous government placed stories in "friendly" News Corp outlets to hide the truth that Robodebt was destroying people's lives.

WE NEED A PROPERLY-FUNDED ABC THAT PRESENTS NEWS WE CAN TRUST.

One where we can be confident in the veracity of the reports we read and hear. One that holds powerful voices to account and is immune to special deals. One where we can engage in vigorous argument on the basis of shared facts.

We need an ABC with the resources to reach all Australians as it combats the loud voices of disinformation.

And so, this year ABC Friends will again campaign to restore the ABC, and once again we're asking for your support.

The entrenched hostility to our public broadcaster from a small but powerful group in our community hasn't gone away. The bitter campaign to privatise the ABC is hidden in plain sight.

IN 2023, OUR WORK TO RESTORE THE ABC WILL BE AS IMPORTANT AS EVER.

Our challenge is to guarantee its future as a vitally important part of the fabric of our democracy.

Thank you again for your incredible support in 2022. Thanks to you, ABC Friends had its most successful campaign ever.

We hope you'll stand with us again in 2023.

Kind regards
Cassandra Parkinson
 National President
 ABC Friends

THE UNCAGED SKY



Kylie Moore-Gilbert
Ultimo Press
RRP \$34.99

“The Uncaged Sky” will challenge your perception of yourself and test your ideas of how you would have survived years of mental and physical abuse in the face of terrible hardships.

For Kylie Moore-Gilbert believes her language abilities as an academic of Islamic and Middle East studies saved her from going insane during her accumulative twelve months in a small isolation cell, a prisoner of the feared Iranian Revolutionary Guard during her 804 days of imprisonment.

These are the same ruthless men responsible for the death of Muhsa Amini, the young Kurdish woman who died while in their care and which kicked off the current ongoing unrest in Iran.

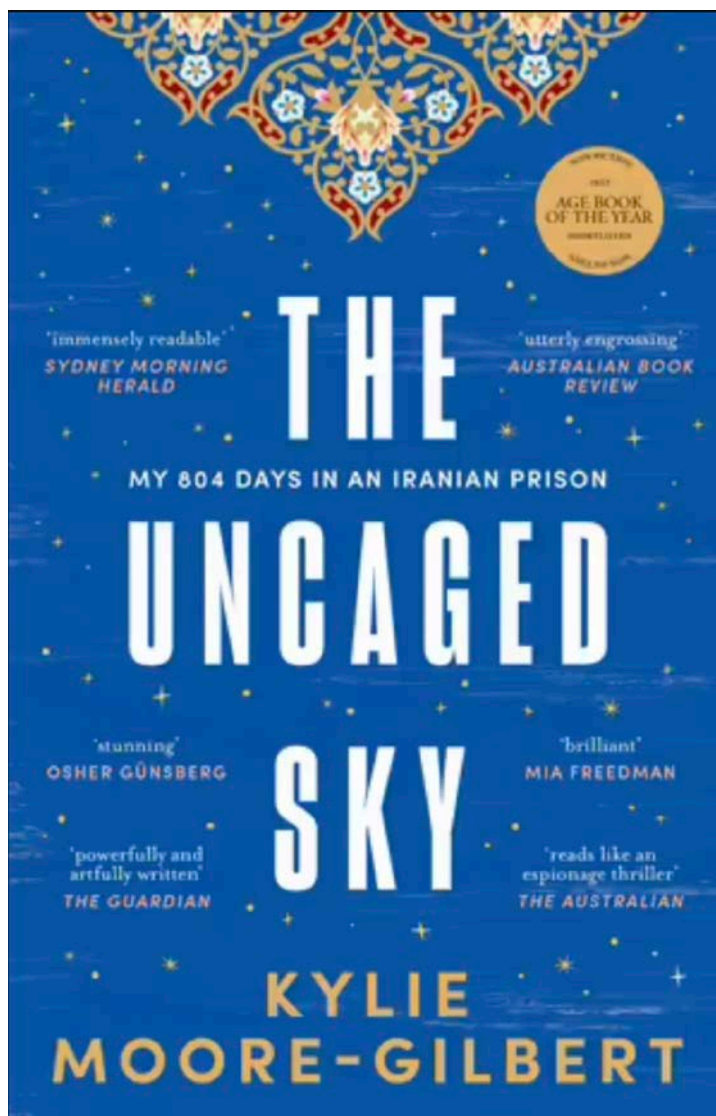
Kylie says her solitary confinement, sleeping on a concrete floor with no amenities, and her long imprisonment in Evin and Qarchak prisons turned the fundamentals of her life upside down, tested her beliefs about herself and her resilience to the edge of her endurance. Her marriage, her career, her relationships with loved ones at home who tried to support her, were all, and still are, deeply affected.

Since her release, she is often asked how she was able to survive for so long despite the number of hunger strikes she conducted, and the constant interrogations and threats she endured. She writes she was able to do so because the practical part of her brain was able to somehow detach itself from, and repress, her emotions.

This process of numbing the acute pain, angst and trauma, particularly in the early months of her solitary incarceration enabled her to adapt to the cruelty and deprivation inflicted by the prison guards, both male and female.

“I became determined to live each day in the moment, to switch off my brain and focus on mundane activities like eating and sleeping, adopting a robotic existence in order to cope”, she recalls.

In prison, she realised that this emotional disassociation became a



form of power and helped her avoid the overwhelming and crippling despair she fought against when confronted with the bitter realities of being an innocent person trapped in a brutal and corrupt system.

“I remain in awe of the human brain’s powers of adaptation and survival. I also know that language played a crucial role in my capacity to make sense of what was happening to me. I became determined to master the Farsi language, for it gave me a goal to work towards and a motivation to get up each morning. Farsi became my means of clawing back power from those guards who sought to use my linguistic limitations against me.” She adds that her dignity was the one possession they couldn’t take away.

“My principal interrogator wanted to recruit me, but he needed to utterly subjugate me first”, she says. “The best way to assert my dignity I knew was to refuse, while laughing, mocking and belittling him. The power to humiliate me became personal between us”.

This behaviour was particularly important as her interrogator doubled his efforts to recruit her as a spy. “Agree you will spy for us, you are married to an Israeli, you speak

Hebrew. You have studied Arabic and now Farsi, this is your one chance.” He would constantly threaten or cajole, promising to free her from her imprisonment immediately.

“What if I agreed and once free, I ran away,” she asked. “Then we would find you and eliminate you,” he said. Kylie knew he meant it.

Her stubborn refusal to entertain his frequent requests and her realisation that this emotional disassociation made her more open to taking risks with her captors meant she didn’t care about the consequences. It helped her adapt to the cruelty of the treatment in the 2A Women’s Wing and ignore the passage of time, punishments, lying, and the promises which never eventuated as well as the deprivations that were purposefully inflicted to punish her.

Early in her imprisonment she remembers being grateful to a business woman called Roya who shared her cell for a short time and gave her timely advice. “This isn’t the West, Kylie jan. These men have egos; enormous fragile ones. The Revolutionary Guards are used to being feared, you can’t laugh at them. You need to be deferential. You need to stroke their egos if you want them to do anything for you.”

“I decided as I came face to face with their pettiness and meanness that I would play along with this knowledge, weeping uncontrollably one day, raging and destroying my cell the next,” Kylie writes.

“The Uncaged Sky” left me wondering whether I could ever be resilient enough to sustain such mental torture and physical degradation.

Kylie’s book is an exquisitely detailed, well written account of her confusion, suffering and of the life-saving friendships she made with a number of fellow prisoners, most of whom were Iranian, who continue to languish in Evin prison, either awaiting trial or serving long-term sentences as activists or for participating in the 2019 protests.

Now that she is free, Kylie feels it is her duty to speak up about what happened to her and to her friends

and the truth be recorded.

“The forty-three years of Islamic Republic has plunged Iran into a crisis of human rights of unfathomable proportions,” she says. “The regime is brazenly holding foreign citizens like me, using them as pawns on the international stage, persecuting civil, political and women’s rights activists as well as members of religious minorities such as the Baha’i.

“The authorities and the religious elite are determined to maintain their grip on power at all costs and many ordinary Iranians who are wonderful, generous people, plus those who are impoverished and living on the streets through no fault of their own, are being thrown into prison in unprecedented numbers.”

Many Iranians Kylie met told her their country has now become an open-air prison of 84 million people.

“We who live in freedom must speak out for those who are still struggling for the everyday liberties we take for granted.”

Kylie’s story is a horror tale, but it will make you appreciate the freedoms we enjoy in Australia. Her book drives home how precious it is to live in a democracy, to dress as we like, go to work every day and not worry about being arrested and locked up on spurious charges without judicial protection.

Kylie had travelled to Bahrain for research purposes and attended an academic conference in Iran to which she had been invited.

While in prison she lived in constant fear of the death penalty until the judge, favoured by the Revolutionary Guard for his harsh verdicts, gave her a ten-year sentence.

The verdict was crushing and took courage to walk from the court room, but Kylie Moore Gilbert has that in spades.

Sherry Stumm

Kylie Moore Gilbert was released to the Australian Ambassador Lyndall Sachs in Iran thanks to the efforts of Nick Warner the special Australian negotiator who signed her release forms. Kylie spent a night at the Australian embassy before accompanying Nick Warner on a private jet back to Australia organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs. “It wasn’t until we left Iranian airspace that I finally believed I was free and my heart was overwhelmed with hope.”

WHITEFELLA WAY

By Jon Rhodes

Published by Jon Rhodes in 2022.

RRP \$45.00

Distributed by Woodslane. www.woodslane.com.au



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.

I then reviewed *The Settlement* by Jack Serong where I said:

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.

In a year when we will be asked to vote on a proposed amendment to the Australian Constitution, *Black Lives White Law*, *The Settlement* and now *Whitefella Way* will all be important aides to any voter wanting to understand more about the brutal history of white settlement and why the proposed constitutional changes are so important and necessary.

Jon Rhodes, as well as being a quality writer, is a talented photographer, and this book is a beautifully produced hard cover work, which is not only well written in a clear informative style, but which also contains many informative photos and illustrations.

This book is a sequel to his *Cage of Ghosts* published in 2018 and in this book the reader is taken on nine journeys to various important sites where the writer deals with the interactions which occurred between the

original inhabitants and the invading white settlers.

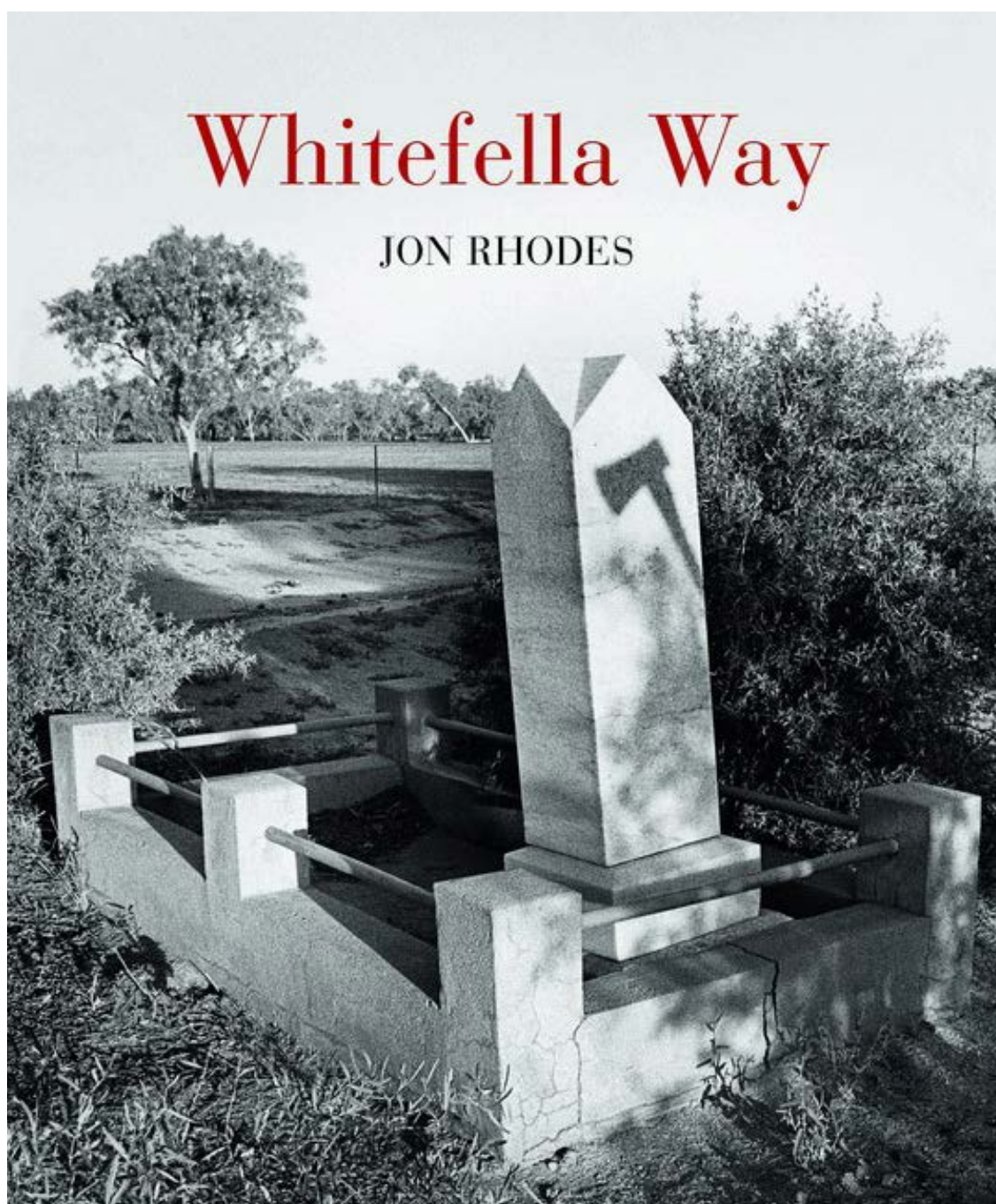
The brutality and duplicity of the invader is evident from chapter one which is titled *Bennelong and Collins Cove*. In this chapter the narrative revolves around the Eora rock engravings on Grotto Point in Sydney. We are introduced to many characters whose names will be familiar because they are now well-known Sydney place names. Names such as *Bennelong*, *Phillip*, *Collins*, *Bradley*, *Barangaroo* and *King*.

The much-vaunted British Justice System was certainly not on display from the very beginning of white settlement when it came to the invaders' dealings with the Black population. In November 1789 Phillip gave an order for the capture of two 'natives' who turned out to be *Bennelong* and *Colebe*. The capturing party, led by Lieutenant Bradley,

trapped the two by pretending to be friendly and offering them some fish before seizing them and herding them into a boat. Bradley later wrote:

The noise of the Men, [and the] crying & screaming of the Women & Children, together with situation of the two miserable wretches in our possession was really a most distressing scene.

Any pretence by Phillip of not leading a brutal regime soon dissolved when, after the spearing of his gamekeeper McEntire by Pemulwuy he ordered a punitive expedition which was to 'bring away two natives as prisoners; and put to death ten... to cut off and bring in the heads of the slain.' Remember these were not to be Aboriginal people who had done anything wrong, but any that the expedition could find and capture. So much for British justice.



The other eight chapters take the reader to other important sites and surrounding events around New South Wales including the Balls Head rock engravings in Sydney, the grave of Yuranigh near Molong, Black Jimmy's grave at Bellingen cemetery, the *Bundjalung* bora ground and to the *Gubbi Gubbi* stone-walled fish trap at Sandstone Point on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

The events outlined in chapter 9 show that even by 1928-9 nothing much had changed when it came to the way that Aboriginal people were treated by the so-called justice system. The events described in the chapter, known as the Coniston Massacre, took place in the Northern Territory to the north-west of Alice Springs, then known as Stuart.

After a dispute between one Aboriginal man and one white man, the white man was killed. Police were then dispatched to apprehend the offender and, in the process, managed not only to not apprehend the suspect but to massacre 17 other innocent Aboriginal people.

A subsequent Federal Government Board of Inquiry found that the killings were

all 'justified' and exonerated the police. It was on any view a complete travesty.

At the end of this final chapter Rhodes asks, 'when will the fundamental truth of the 140-year-long Australian Frontier War be wholeheartedly acknowledged and memorialised by the government of the Commonwealth of Australia?'

Perhaps one way to begin the process of acknowledgement would be for Australians to vote in favour of the referendum, which is simply about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations of Australia, and providing them with a body to speak to Parliament and government in order to improve decisions, policies and laws that affect them.

Highly recommended.

John Watts



ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collecting antiques and old wares has been a wonderful hobby throughout my working career and now has extended into retirement. The accumulation of knowledge, about finds and the enjoyment created have been a fantastic part of life thus far. I hope it continues!



I love the information that comes from searching out and researching the finds that are made.

Please visit and support your local antique haunts. Your support may keep them in business in slow times. Local Taree and Wingham businesses: Adam, Robbie & Anna at Clancy's (High St) near the MRD Hospital, Taree. Barry at Isadora's Antiques – Victoria St, Taree (opp. Camera House), Col in Commerce St - near Taree West Newsagency. Sue at Delinquent Funk – Isabella St in Wingham right next to the chemist. Antiques and Old Wares – 12 Isabella St, Wingham.

Since the early days of the colony in Australia, the timber industry in New South Wales has been central to the economic and social viability of many regional communities across the state. The timber-getters and their bullock teams that worked the big timber forests are long gone but they played an important part in the development of the early settlements. In most cases, the timber-getters came to the area well ahead of the pioneering families who later toiled to turn the cleared areas into farmland. Townships soon sprung up close by. The timbermen were able to advise the settlers, who followed them, just where the best land was located for future farming pursuits.

Timber was in high demand for houses and ships, and after the 1860s, for sleepers and other railway associated construction; later

again, telegraph poles added to the demand for timber. Local farmers naturally used the timber on their own properties, and many found cedar so abundant that it was common to build barns and other functional buildings with this valuable and now scarce timber.

Much of this timber was cut, sawn and transported by hand to saw pits dug out close to where the timber was felled. The timber was then transported with bullock teams, a method long carried on even after the arrival of the internal combustion engine, when bullocks would drag the felled logs down from the mountains to 'dumps' more accessible to trucks.

They were tough, resourceful men who were responsible for "opening" much of NSW. The axe their friend!

One of my earliest influences in my collecting, came approximately forty years ago through an auction catalogue that was sent to me from a collector of many amazing things. One of the lots was an axe, an old 15th Century - Executioners axe. English in origin and manufacture. No, I didn't even bid! I knew what Jen's reaction would be. To me, this axe told the story of a piece of history. We can't change history, but, if we learn from our forebears' mistakes, hopefully they won't be repeated. At least we don't have executions in Australia now. Ronald Ryan was the last person executed in Australia – 3rd Feb. 1967. (Not with an axe was he Rex? ed)

Edge tools are among the earliest tool forms, with surviving primitive axes dated to 8000 B.C. E. Early axes were of stone used in the hand, then with hafted handles applied. As metals came into vogue handles were applied in different ways and the quality of metals improved and hardened. Axes were used for shelter, hunting and warfare.

The handles took on a variety of shapes, some indicative of their place of origin, others relating to function. The length of the handle had more to do with the arc of the swing that was required. Felling axes took a full swing and therefore needed the longest handles. Early axes have their handles fitted through the eye from the top down and the handles remain in place by locking into the taper of the eye, so they could be removed for sharpening.

Later axes, however, have their handles fitted through the eye from the bottom up, and have a wedge driven in from the top. This permanently locks the handle to the axe and was much preferred by Australian woodsmen. Many axes found today had been discarded because the handle was split or broken off. In most cases they can be bought at a fraction of their value and, with another handle, can be restored to their original condition. Most axe handles might have been replaced two or three times throughout the life of the tool.

Pricing of antique axes runs the entire gamut from a few dollars to

several hundred. Examples of well-made axes would include the Plumb, White, Kelly, Miller and numerous others. Beyond these are axes of sometimes lesser quality, but built to a price, and sold by the thousands. The better the quality of the steel the longer an axe will keep its edge.

There are several types of axes out there such as: Basic felling axes, double head felling axes, broad axes, goosewing axes, shipwrights or mast axes, cooper's axes, coachmaker's axes, ice axes, fire axes, mortising axes, turf axes and hatchets.

It always amazes me the variety of old wares people collect. Sharp edged tools such as axes, adzes, rabbit trap setters, old saws, pocket knivesthe list goes on.

Antiques and Old Wares at 12 Isabella St is undergoing re-organisation and renewal as Dave has left for Queensland. The trip back and forth for over a year became too much. I will miss working with him. I don't think we have had a cross word in our 25 year friendship.

Drop in and say hello. I am happy to help, if I can, answering questions on antiques and old wares.

If you have items that you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals and/or sales. I love the history and stories of old and interesting treasures. Phone Rex – 0427 880 546.

Take care and stay safe!

WHY YOU SHOULD USE POTTING MIX IN YOUR POTS AND CONTAINERS



Australia is a leader in the development and manufacture of good-quality potting mixes. Potting mixes have been developed to ensure that potted plants have the best environment to grow and develop. They are used in the production of nursery plants and by home gardeners.



Potting mix is manufactured from composted bark ensuring that a by-product of the timber industry is recycled into a valuable commodity. The bark is composted under stringent conditions to ensure that it is fully broken down and suitable for growing plants.

Bagged potting mixes meet an Australian Standard to indicate that not only are they fully composted, but also that they contain the right balance of solid particles and air spaces, are neutral in pH (the measure of soil alkalinity and acidity) and are not contaminated, for example, by weed seeds or toxins. A basic potting mix that meets the Australian Standard is indicated by black ticks on the bag. There is also

a higher level of potting mix called Premium potting mix, which is indicated by red ticks on the bag. It also meets the Australian Standard but contains slow-release fertiliser that will feed potted plants for at least 5-6 months before additional fertiliser is needed.

Why Not Just Use Garden Soil?

Potting mixes may seem like an added expense for the gardener; however they perform much better in a container than garden soil, which may become compacted, weedy, fail to drain well and can pass on pests and diseases from the soil to the plant. Soil behaves differently in a container than it does in a garden bed where it is cultivated and naturally aerated by soil organisms.

Containers filled with soil are also very heavy.

Quality potting mixes will produce happy, healthy and rewarding plants for every type of container and garden situation. They are a worthwhile investment in your gardening success.

Some potting mixes also contain a soil wetting agent, so mixes are easy to water and absorb and hold moisture. This is of particular importance for indoor plants, balcony plants and those growing in hanging baskets.

Why You need A Specialty Indoor Potting Mix

As well as general mixes, manufacturers have developed specialised mixes that suit the needs of certain groups of plants including

vegetables, Australian native plants, acid-loving plants (such as azaleas and camellias), orchids, cacti, and succulents. With the rise in popularity of indoor plants, potting mix manufacturers have also developed mixes that suit indoor plants. Specialist mixes may contain vital trace elements (nutrients that are needed in very small amounts) and the correct ratio of the major plant nutrients of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). All this information will be outlined on the potting mix bag to help consumers understand what they are buying. Better still, come in and have a chat with us at the nursery and get all the dirt on our mixes.

Wingham Nursey & Florist
02 655 34570



TENDERHEART

Hetty Lui McKinnon

Published by Plum, RRP \$59.99, photography by Hetty Lui McKinnon.

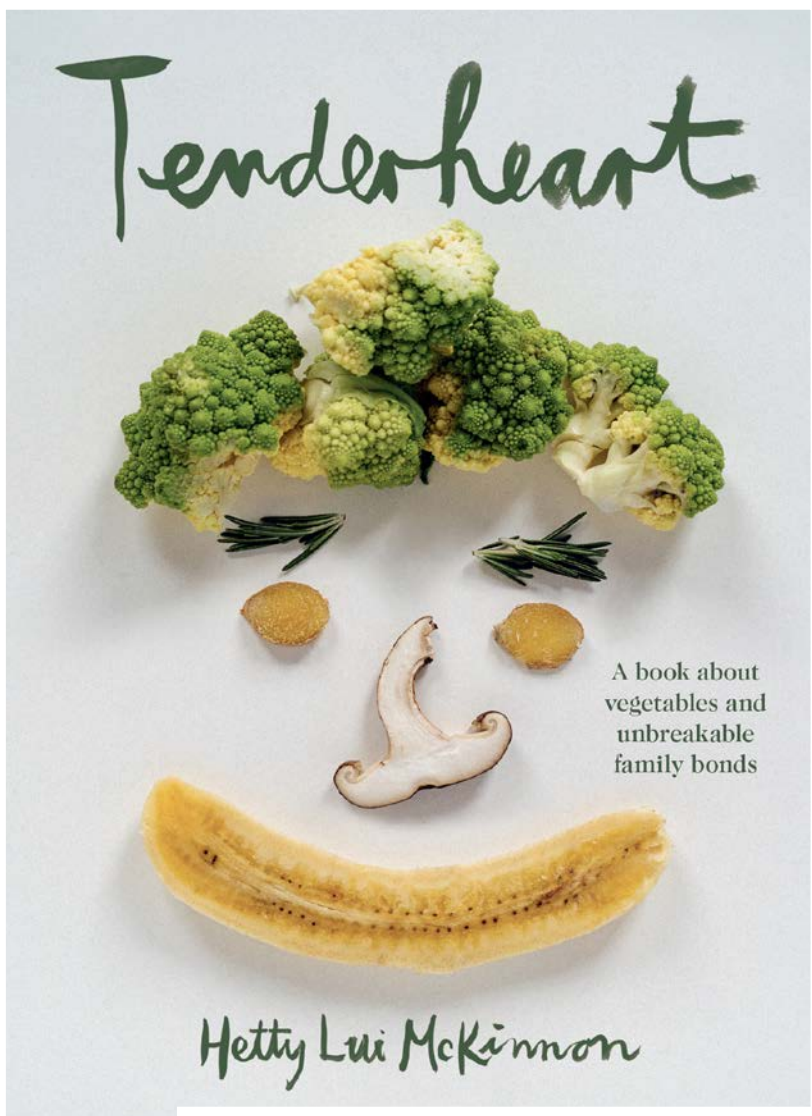


Photo of Hetty by Shirley Cai



Sweet potato rendang

Rendang is a dry curry with origins in Indonesia and Malaysia. It is traditionally made with beef that has been cooked low and slow in a heavily perfumed melange of coconut, lemongrass and alliums. Sweet potato is not the usual rendang ingredient, but it adds a smooth mildness that tempers the punchy sauce. This recipe is faithful to traditional rendang recipes and techniques – a robust spice paste of eschalots, garlic, lemongrass and ginger (galangal is also used traditionally) is cooked down until it caramelises and clings onto the sweet potato. The resulting curry-like ‘stew’ is spicy, sweet and tangy. Classic rendang includes kerisik, a fried coconut paste that is buttery and creamy. I cheated by using toasted desiccated coconut, but if you have kerisik, please use it.

SERVES 4

- 3 tablespoons neutral oil
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ¼ teaspoon whole cloves or ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 star anise
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom or 2 cardamom pods, smashed
- 1 lemongrass stalk, white part only, cut into 5 cm pieces and smashed
- 900 g sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2–3 cm thick chunks or discs
- 250 ml (1 cup) coconut cream
- 1 tablespoon tamarind puree
- 45 g (½ cup) desiccated coconut
- 5 makrut lime leaves, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- white or brown rice, to serve
- handful of coriander leaves, to serve

Rendang spice paste

- 4 eschalots (about 200 g), chopped
- 4 cm piece of ginger or galangal (about 30 g), peeled and chopped
- 2 lemongrass stalks, tender white parts only, roughly chopped
- 6–8 dried red chillies, soaked in warm water for 10 minutes, drained
- 4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

Gluten free and vegan

Vegetable swap • sweet potato: potato, mushrooms

To make the rendang spice paste, place all the ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend until you have a thick paste. Alternatively, you can use a mortar and pestle to pound all the ingredients together.

Place a large saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the oil, along with the spice paste, and cook for 2 minutes, until fragrant. Add the cinnamon, cloves, star anise, cardamom and lemongrass, then reduce the heat to medium-low and stir for 2–3 minutes, until the paste is starting to caramelise. Add the sweet potato and stir for 2 minutes to combine. Add the coconut cream and tamarind puree, along with 250 ml (1 cup) of water. Stir, then cover with a lid and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes, until the sweet potato has softened a little.

Meanwhile, heat a small frying pan over medium heat. Add the desiccated coconut and stir constantly for 3–4 minutes, until golden.

Add the toasted coconut, makrut lime leaves, 1 tablespoon of the brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of sea salt to the sweet potato mixture. Stir, then cover again and cook over low heat for another 18–20 minutes, until the sweet potato is completely tender and the liquid has thickened. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of sea salt. The rendang should be spicy, sweet and rich. Serve with white or brown rice, topped with coriander leaves.

Note: If you prefer less spice, remove the seeds from the dried red chillies before soaking them.



SUPER SNAPPER SNAP

If there is better snapper country than Port Stephens, I would like to know where it is. You can catch cracker snapper anywhere over the extensive reef system that stretches from Birubi to Fingal and then on to the islands, Boondelbah, Little Island and Broughton. A little further towards Seal Rocks is also great snapper habitat.

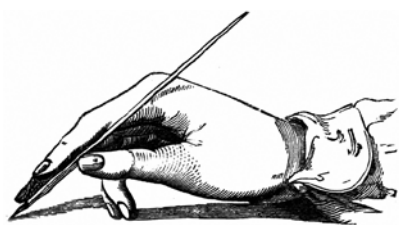
Visitor from Sydney, Alex Shipley, had an outing he won't forget in a hurry. Tossing a 7 inch plastic around Boondelbah Island when - Whammo! - a monster took off like the last bus to Anna Bay. After a mighty battle, up came a thumping 97cm big red, estimated to weigh around 15kg.

There is a reason why snapper fishing is fantastic in our waters and it all begins in the feeder streams that flow into Port Stephens. Filtered by the hectares of healthy mangrove forests and oysters, the water that enters the Port is clean and rich in nutrients, ideal for the growth and development of juvenile fish - mulloway, bream, whiting, flathead and the thousands upon thousands of tiny squire, baby snapper, that infest the port. At a stage in their growth the snapper head to sea.

There is a message - wherever you are - protect our water quality to protect our fish!



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



YOUR SAY

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

Dear Editor,

My wife and I have operated a tourism micro-business on our property on the Barrington River outside Gloucester since 1999. We built the house ourselves and, though we live in Newcastle, we spend a lot of time at Water Gums. The property was purpose-built as a tourism rental and it provides a large portion of our income now that we are retired.

Recently we were shocked to read in the council's draft regional strategy the following words: "MidCoast Council is proposing the following rules for tourist accommodation in rural zones: "By establishing clear and consistent planning framework that enables a diverse range of tourist and visitor accommodation, events and facilities, Council can also partner

with communities and land owners to ensure tourist services and facilities are effectively managed for long-term sustainability. A key principle for this will be that in all rural and environmental zones, tourist and visitor accommodation, events and facilities will only be permitted where there is an existing dwelling on the site, that is occupied by managers of the facility or event. This ensures that any tourist and visitors unfamiliar with the area and property, can be provided with a great visitor experience during our peak seasons, and a safe visitor experience, even during our worst weather events."

This amounts to a death sentence for our little business and the loss of the livelihood we have carefully planned for and created. There is no way we can live on-site and rent the property, and no way we can afford to hire a caretaker.

We think it is totally unfair and completely unreasonable. Sad to say, this is the second time the council has posed an existential threat to our business. The first time was when we discovered, purely by chance, that an extremely high-impact development proposal was about to be approved nearby, with no advice to us. Only last-minute action saved us. Now we discover, again purely by chance, that our livelihood is to be extinguished with the stroke of a pen. Our low-impact and demonstrably sustainable micro-business will be destroyed, while high-impact facilities will be encouraged to become even more high impact.

Kind Regards,
Greg and Sylvia Ray



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