

The Manning Community News

NOVEMBER 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.
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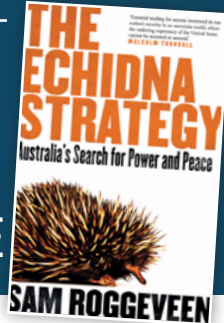
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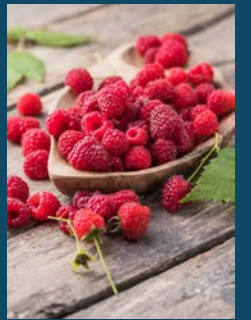
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NATURE AND FARMING CAN CO-EXIST

We are accustomed to hearing tales of the old cockie who believes in the saying that goes something like this:
"If it grows, then cut it down, and if it moves then shoot it."

Chris McRae and son James run a successful and environmentally friendly dairy farm a few kilometres from the small village of Barrington outside Gloucester.



That might have been the thinking years ago, and we still see farms where trees seem to be regarded as weeds, and where every native animal is regarded as a pest. But there is a new breed of thoughtful and educated farmer who believes that conserving the natural world in and around the farm is not at all incompatible with the running of a thriving commercial enterprise.

Chris McRae and son James are two such farmers. Between them they run a successful dairy farm a few kilometres from the small village of Barrington.

Not only do Chris and James believe that nature and farming are not incompatible- they take the view that looking after nature promotes better farming outcomes.

Raelands Farm has been owned by the McRae family since the 1860's, not long after the Barrington area was first settled by Europeans and has operated as a dairy farm since early in the 20th century. Both Chris and

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Gully restored at Raelands Farm



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James grew up on the farm and now run it as a partnership. Chris largely learned the basics of the business on the job, although he has attended many courses and workshops over the years, and has always been keen to learn new and different ways of doing things. James says that he was interested in agriculture from an early age and studied agriculture/business management at Charles Sturt University before focussing on the dairy farm about ten years ago. He comments:

“Whilst I learned a lot about farming and agriculture at university, I think the most valuable thing I absorbed was the ability to think

critically and to analyse problems and issues.”

The McRae property comprises 450 acres made up of irrigated pasture, dry run and remnant bushland

leading up to and onto the Buccan Buccans, otherwise known as the Gloucester Bucketts, at the rear. It presently carries about 175 cattle with 96 milking cows.



Chris's says that his father always cared for his local environment, being on a national parks committee, and from an early age Chris had an interest in nature, sometimes heading up to the Barrington Tops for a bushwalk.

It was in the early 1990's, particularly after the 1994 drought, that he began to realise that some parts of the farm had become degraded, particularly in the gully areas. It was at about this time that Landcare became active in the Gloucester area. He says:

“We had one badly washed-out gully that had vertical sides of about twelve feet, and it bothered me a fair bit, and I thought that we could do better, and so I got some advice and encouragement from Landcare about how to plant and fence the problem areas. The main motivation at the time was to stop erosion, although now it's probably more about creating habitat as well as preventing erosion.

Once you fence an eroded gully to keep out the cows, the grass and other plants start to grow, which slows the flow of the water and prevents erosion.”

Chris was president of the local Landcare group for about ten years, and the group carried out weed control and planting on other local properties. He comments:

“You really need to have the interest of the landowner for regeneration work to be successful. I

remember we'd carry out privet and other weed removal, but if the farmer wasn't committed it would just grow back. I became a bit discouraged with some of the lack of interest and decided to focus on our own farm. We've planted over two and a half thousand trees in the last 20 years.”

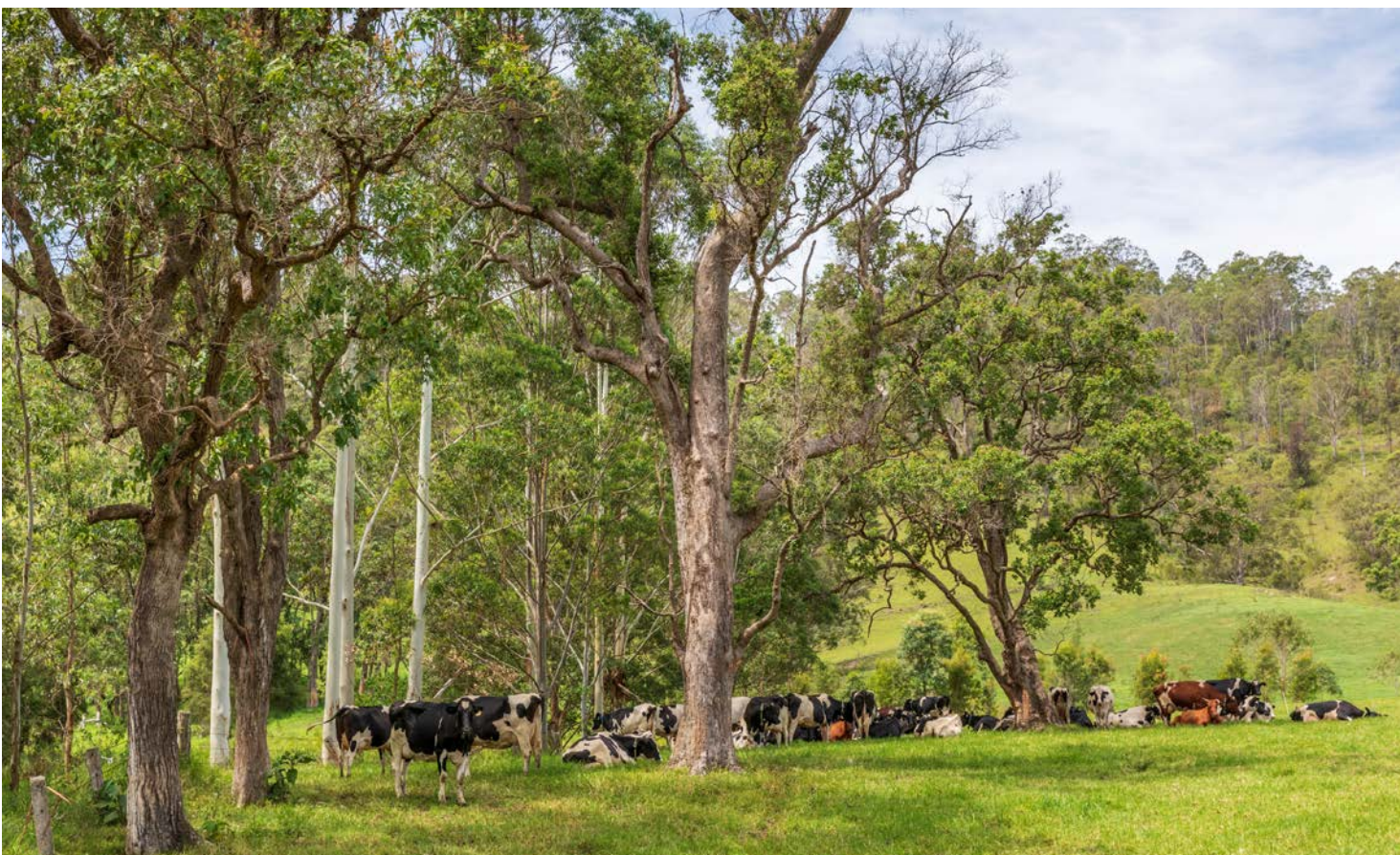
I asked James what benefits he saw from tree planting and gully fencing in relation to the cattle:

“They provide much needed shade and cool the surrounding areas, and they are very important in improving water quality. When the water runs, it runs clear and not cloudy, and the nutrients are filtered out.”

I asked Chris and James about funding of their regeneration activities. They told me that funding help had come from several sources such as MidCoast Water, Landcare, private sources, and even from Woolworths.

In a few weeks' time the Gloucester Environment Group will be carrying out a tree planting with the assistance of MidCoast Council through the group's koala program.

It became obvious from chatting to Chris and James there was nothing



Relaxing in the shade of beautiful cool trees

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amateur or ad hoc about the way they now looked after their farm and its environment. It seems that on Raelands dairy farm, computer programs and technology are more vital than gumboots. They employ arial mapping to track everything that's going on, and to help them plan about where fencing and planting should be carried out, and where water troughs should be located. As little as possible is left to chance.

I asked what Chris and James saw as the main philosophy behind the way the farm was run. James' response was illuminating:

"I learnt at Uni that if you want to have a productive and profitable farm then you have to balance the triple bottom line which is profit, people and the environment. If one of those three is out, then things will start to fall apart. We can't care for the environment on our farm if we are not profitable so that we try to have productive paddocks surrounded by biodiversity. But you also must make sure that your people are properly cared for and we make sure that Dad and I look after each other and have time for family."

Chris indicated that he had noticed a significant improvement of the farm's biodiversity over the last 20 years, particularly its birdlife, insects, frogs, reptiles and wallabies. They recently invited MidCoast Council to undertake a koala survey using sniffer dogs and encouragingly they found a significant amount of koala activity in the forested areas.

The forested part of the farm has now been dedicated as a biodiversity conservation site with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust.

It is clear that Raelands Farm is very much a work in progress. As Chris said:

"While we seem to have done a lot, I think we are only really scratching the surface. There is much more to do but you just have to do what you can, when you can and within your budget. We are now looking at further ways to reduce the emissions generated by our cows, such as the use of seaweed supplements. We have a 24kw solar system and are working towards net zero emissions."

So often we seem to expect environmental problems to be dealt with by governments or by someone else. People such as Chris and James McRae show that the task of restoring our ravaged environment often starts in our own backyard. What an inspiration.

John Watts

(Photos kind permission of Dallas Kilponen)

WHAT ARE THEY HIDING? WHAT'S WITH ALL THE SECRECY IN COUNCIL???

We are hearing a lot of complaints about the closed door attitude of prevailing secrecy in MidCoast Council.

The Pool Closure fiasco has highlighted the dangerous culture of closed mouth, say nothing secrecy in MidCoast Council.

The whole idea was dodgy to start with and typically, to save money, the council hit the community up first. Without asking or any consultation. This seems to be the modus operandi of our council, try and sneak things through to be approved before we or the councillors know about it.

Gloucester as well as Wingham were incensed when they heard that council was planning to shut down the pools. No communication or consultation. Apparently the councillor for Gloucester, Katherine Stinson, (who ironically chaired the Council meeting standing in for the absent mayor) had no idea about the pools closure either.

If anything the issue united the entire council area! Word spread like wildfire and communities swung into action. People are now waking up to how council operates and wondering just how many issues that concern them have quietly slipped through council without us being aware until suddenly there are trees coming down, roadworks starting and building next door which we knew nothing about. If it wasn't for Cr Pe-

ter Epov spotting things and asking hard questions in council everything could slide through.

Recently someone applied to GIPA (it used to be called The Freedom of Information Act 1989 NSW (FOI) and in 2017 was changed to The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 NSW (GIPA) and requested access to certain information from MidCoast Council and learned that 800 requests were ahead of him!

SSSH SAY NOTHING

Have you noticed how many matters are now deemed "Confidential" or "Commercially in confidence"?

Some councillors feel they're being left in the dark at times or not being given the full facts of a matter. Also one can't help wondering just how diligent councillors are in reading thousands of pages of detail pertaining to each council meeting with only a few days notice. Is this deliberate obfuscation and pressure to skim rather than read and analyse?

The public find it difficult to get straight answers when they ring council. We have been told of someone ringing council and asking to speak to a specific person. The girl who answered at council initially

grilled him at some length, why was he calling, did he know the person, had he spoken to him before, what exactly did he want to know and by the way that person is no longer on staff. So when he asked to speak to whomever had taken over that role and was asked for his own details and what he wanted to talk about, he said "What's with the third degree, can I speak to XXX as I've spoken to him before." She hung up on him.

Others have been told that Council now has a staff response policy of a maximum of ten days to respond to you!

So is this MCCs new way of doing business? You are not allowed to talk directly to any staff member, you can only talk to a senior staff member after your call is vetted by the communications section?

So we obviously have to kowtow and realise that the senior staff are very busy (doing what exactly???) and cannot talk to us plebs.

There must be something in the coffee at council which is why they are completely out of touch with reality. And obviously don't give a fig for the community. Back off ratepayers and let us get on with our bigtime important wheeling and dealing folks.

DM

TIME TO FACE THE REAL FACTS

Lies, disinformation, false facts, plain ole racism and discrimination, let alone petty politics tossed around with no truth analysis, seems entrenched in our society. Surely truth and fact checking should be enforced in any future government referendum or proposal put before the public.

Of course, some not very bright, biased, political-ly motivated and unethical people will always twist the truth to suit their agenda.

Social media has a lot to answer for . . . it was galling to hear people say they voted No “cause I saw something on Tik Tok about it being a land grab...”

Why do some regional and rural people vote for The National party believing they have their interests at heart? The days of the “country party” are gone, big business beckons. There are a lot of farmers who understand the dire threat of Climate Change, who understand the value of saving forests, especially the old growth ones, regenerative farming, the need for tree cover to reduce temperatures, the protection of creeks and rivers to remain clear and clean, the value of water, of bushfire protection and maintenance, and slow burning. Jammed housing estates with no tree cover or gardens and black roofs that are plonked on rural land with no amenities is another anathema.

This is no longer greenie lefty thinking. Climate action is needed. Urgently.

It's time a lot of politicians stopped running the country to suit themselves for financial gain, legally or not. Those inflated life pensions and perks are frequently not warranted, particularly if they've sat in the big house for a short time. Neither should former polities be able to walk immediately into cushy jobs linked often to their portfolio and connections

straight off the bat. Especially the lucrative fossil fuel companies.

So it was depressing yet again to read the same old bleating mantra from our very own Federal Member, Dr David Gillespie. (How much did those misleading lavish Vote No brochures he sent out to people in the electorate cost? Did taxpayers foot the bill?)

In an enlightening and intelligent article on how we're running out of time to act on Climate Change in the esteemed The Saturday Paper (Oct.21) by respected Independent Member for the Federal Sydney seat of Warringah, Zali Steggall, she writes how *“Human-induced global warming is a global emergency. The UN's warnings should be a rallying call for world leaders to prioritise climate action and resilience-building measures to protect our communities from the impending threats. . . . with wind and solar energy already far cheaper, experts agree nuclear power makes no economic sense. . . . The protracted time frame for nuclear - which stretches to at least a decade - benefits the Coalition politically, enabling it to sow confusion about the direction of transition and delay the phasing out of coal and gas even longer, maintaining the profits of some of its biggest donors.”*

She then quotes our Federal Member, Dr David Gillespie telling parliament that week, that *“Renewable energy is cheap if you can get it, but all the grid costs, all the land use costs, and all the environmental destruction just gets a leave pass. We need to stop this*

madness now, maintain our coal plants and consider clean zero-carbon nuclear energy which has none of these problems.”

Give us a break! Dr Gillespie.

It should now be obvious to everyone that the National Party has been completely captured by the fossil fuel industry and will do whatever it can to stop the transition to renewables.

At every turn, whether it be a halt to deforestation, protection of our koalas and native wildlife, or a transition to renewables, we get nothing but mindless opposition from the Nationals.

Dr Gillespie also recently had this to say:

“Existing power stations should be maintained until they can be replaced by new zero-emission, modern nuclear technology which can be plugged into the existing grid...”

What he failed to say was:

- That such nuclear technology was still unproven and may never be viable
- That it will certainly be much more costly than renewables
- That at best it will be many years away, and
- Where would such plants be built? (Forster, Old Bar, Harrington, Black Head?)

All in circumstances where urgent and immediate action is needed to address a climate emergency.

Perhaps Dr Gillespie should take the time to read the recent report from the Australian energy market operator which indicated

that renewables supplied nearly 40% of electricity in the 2023 September quarter, and that total carbon emissions from the power sector, Australia's biggest single source of emissions, were down 11% on a year ago.

If we followed the absurd urgings of Dr Gillespie then carbon emissions would not be falling, but probably increasing.

Fly over the Hunter Valley mines (or any mine) and weep. Give a wave as you pass to our former Deputy Prime Minister and former Leader of the National Party, Mark Vaile (educated at Taree High School) now Chairman of Whitehaven Coal.

However maintaining profits for The Nationals naturally favoured the No camp. Until our electorate of Lyne, gets a balanced representative we have to live with the “new Nats.” These days it seems the National Party is no longer the voice of the boys from the bush (apart from Leader of the Farmer's Federation Fiona Simson) but a promotor and supporter of the fossil fuel industry.

Time to wake up folks. It's going to be a helluva summer, and this is just the beginning. It's real, it's here. Climate Change cannot be stopped. If we throw everything we know at it, it may be controlled enough for us to adapt to its conditions. Ignore it at our peril.

DM

COUNCIL COULD BE CLOSING OUR POOLS!!!

In what promises to be a dangerously hot summer, MidCoast Council has announced it may be closing many pools in the electorate.



Former Mayor of GTCC Paul Hogan and Cr Peter Epov in 2017 fighting for Wingham memorial pool

2017 protest to save Wingham Memorial Pool

time which is overwhelming public support.

Due to Council's fluffing around and despite calling for, but ignoring, community suggestions, nothing has happened. Cr Peter Epov's idea of buying the bowling club land and constructing the

bridge on the southern side of the existing bridge to save the Wingham pool was feasible but knocked back.

The government refused to fund a new pool.

So far some of the many council recommendations are :

-All outdoor pools will be closed during the middle of the day, but there are no details of the proposed closing times.

-the Gloucester pool will continue to be managed by council's staff despite that pool having a safety rating score of 74% which is below

the YMCA pools at Forster (98%), Taree (96%) Wingham (93%) Tea Gardens (84%).

Council has earmarked the Krambach pool for closure and that the Wingham pool will only receive minimum maintenance and will eventually close.

All councils in NSW have the same issues with their swimming pools. Our council will be holding their so called conversation with the various communities who need to tell council their pool is an important part of life particularly in small communities and these pools are part of council's community service obligations.

CEDAR PARTY BRIDGE

At present it seems council doesn't know what to do. After the community consultation over replacing the Wingham Cedar Party Bridge and pool closure seven years ago, designs for the bridge were based on building the new bridge in situ, but after making an announcement all went quiet.

Seems the original bridge designs were of a poor quality and had to be done again, perhaps because the design brief was incorrect, but whatever the reason, council must have spent

several million dollars on this project and still do not have a preferred tenderer. Because of the stuffing around by council, costs have escalated and so who knows what the final cost on the project will be.

Whatever it is Council most likely don't have the budget now. Negotiating with tenders at this stage is a retrograde step as the companies are aware they're in the driver's seat when it comes to the final cost.

Threats to close the Wingham Memorial Pool will be remembered by the community come the next council election!

This seems typical of this council; it can waste millions on the Forster Civic Precinct but cannot afford to run its swimming pools. We have bloated council departments (off limits for expenditure cuts) and apparently a computer system that is sucking up money like a vacuum cleaner.

On face value this appears to be an attack on the people of Wingham and they should let council know how they feel. Perhaps the Wingham pool will be closed before the bridge is built, but it looks like Wingham will miss out again.

DM

NB. At the MidCoast Council Meeting 25 October 2023, following significant public outrage across the entire LGA to Council Staff's recommendations to terminate subsidies and support for a number of community pools in inland locations, the eight Councillors brave enough to attend the meeting, voted unanimously to reject the bulk of the proposals. The Staff recommendations included closure of the Krambach, handing over pools in Wingham, Stroud, Bulahdelah, and Tea Gardens to either smaller operators or community groups. Council will now consult with each individual community that may be impacted, however, given past experience Council's consultation will be structured to achieve their desired objectives, which often are not those of the community. The community needs to remain vigilant as this might be the first of a fifteen round struggle.

Wingham Memorial Pool which has survived several threats from Council to close it, is on the chopping block again.

Seven years ago it was given a death sentence when council announced it had to replace the Cedar Party Bridge which would affect the pool.

It's an old pool supported by the community who were up in arms at losing it. A petition to save it had 3,276 signatures, 92% of the adult voting population of Wingham at the

A TALE OF TWO FORESTS

On September 7, 1936 the last Tasmanian Tiger died in captivity. For the last 30 years or so, we've marked that day with National Threatened Species Day. There are lots of platitudes and photos of politicians hugging Koalas and saying 'never again', but the chances of dozens more species being extinct by 2036 goes up every day.

Far from 'saving species' though 'recovery plans', governments of all sizes continue to make decisions that cut away at the habitat, the living place and conditions that animals need to survive.

I was shocked to read that wild animals now make up only 4% (by weight) of the total mammal biomass on the planet. Humans are 34% and domestic livestock 62%. Of the 4% of wild mammals, 2% are on land and 2% live in the ocean.

Here on the mid-north coast there are really very few wild mammals, and those that are hanging on, don't have a bright future.

Recently, as part of citizen science efforts, I've been part of a team searching for Greater Gliders in Bulga State Forest. Most people have never seen or heard of a Greater Glider. And you're unlikely to spot one by accident. They need old trees, with tree hollows where they can shelter during the day and raise their young. Like much of our native fauna, they are mainly active at night.

Scientists estimate that the Greater Glider population has fallen by a dramatic 80% over the last 20 years. A combina-

tion of logging and bushfire has seen the areas of forest where they can thrive, dramatically reduced. They have gone from common to endangered overnight.

Greater Gliders can glide long distances, up to 100 metres. They feed almost exclusively on gum leaves and they use multiple tree hollows, up to 20, moving from hollow to hollow for reasons only gliders know. Although we can guess that it helps minimise parasites, confuses predators like the Powerful Owl, and that seasons and changing leaf flavours might also be involved.

They have a relatively small home range of around 2 hectares. (An area about the size of the strip of park along the river between Pultney Street and Sailo's.) Two or three Greater Gliders often have overlapping trees and home ranges.

They are about the size of a cat with an extremely fluffy really long tail. You'd think, given that this unique animal is so cute and fluffy that governments might take steps to stop them from going extinct, but you'd be wrong. That is at least until a couple of weeks ago when something happened that may yet save the

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Bulga Greater Glider



Bulga White Greater Glider



Koala and baby

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Greater Glider from the extinction precipice.

A dead Greater Glider was found near logging in Tallaganda State Forest on the South Coast. Tallaganda was one of the few forests on the South Coast that wasn't incinerated in the 2019/20 bushfires.

The Forestry Corporation are meant to not log within 50m of a Greater Glider den tree, about a third of their home range. But if they haven't identified the den tree, guess what? There is no protection. And up until now Forestry haven't been required to look, so they don't. Because it would mean going out at night and being in the forest when the gliders come out of their hollows.

So incredibly in Tallaganda State Forest, the Forestry Corporation had only managed to find one glider den tree, despite the forest being a stronghold for the animal.

In a most unlikely move the Environment Protection Authority, issued a Stop Work Order for 40 days and suggested that Forestry Corporation needed to make an effort and try and find some den trees to give the Tallaganda Greater Gliders a chance of not being wiped out. That Stop Work Order was extended for another 40 days. We're still waiting to see if the EPA stick to their guns or Forestry Corporation bully them back into their box. So far, the EPA and citizen scientists have identified at least 20 den trees.

Meanwhile, the discovery much nearer to home of a thriving Greater Glider population in the least burnt patch of Bulga State Forest throws up the question, will Forestry Corporation be allowed to go in there and wipe out their habitat, or will they have to make some effort to identify the den trees first? Logging is currently listed to start on November 6, so we'll have the answer to that question by the time you are reading this.

Our local citizen science group has found about 6 den trees so far. We've also seen baby gliders in their mother's pouch and young koalas riding on their mother's back. Community activity, getting to know the forest and the animals may just be a lifeline to saving them. But really, shouldn't the fact that this patch of forest is home to a thriving population of Greater Gliders and Koalas be enough to save it from the chop?

KIWARRAK FOREST

And so to another forest in our area, Kiwarrak, just south of Taree. Kiwarrak was really badly burnt in 2019/20. Most of the wildlife was wiped out. Four years later, the tree canopy has grown back on the trees that survived, but the diversity of understorey plants and animals is much reduced. Kiwarrak is a recovering forest.

Koalas who found sanctuary in Tinonee and on some of the private land nearby are in the process of recolonising Kiwarrak. But just as Koalas are moving back into Kiwarrak, Forestry Corporation announces plans to log the section of the forest nearest Tinonee, the area where most of the Koalas have been seen.

Coincidentally, this is also the part of the forest riddled with Mountain Bike Trails. It's one of the most extensive Mountain Bike Trail networks in NSW. The trail network was burnt out in 2019. The State and Federal Governments gave more than \$403,000 for the network to be re-established. How does that work after the bulldozers and logging equipment has pushed into the forest to take out all the largest trees?

Forestry Corporation say they have logged this forest for a 100 years, and should be able to log it for another 100 years. 100 years ago the trees in Kiwarrak were giants. There were gliders, owls, parrots, cockatoos and lots of koalas.

Now there are almost no big trees. The largest ones left you can wrap your arms around. There is no habitat for all the tree hollow dwellers. It's a very silent forest. It's very sad. And yet now the plan is to take out the largest trees, that maybe, just maybe, if left alone, will get big enough and old enough to once again host the diversity of wildlife that a healthy forest supports.

The sort-of good news is that we've just heard that the logging in Kiwarrak has been deferred until March 2024.

Suzie Russell.

(It needs to stop. We need more people near and far to jump up and down and demand less logging, more habitat. Trees, especially old growth ones, are more valuable in situ than chomped for woodchips and being sent overseas. Ed.)



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ARSE OVER ALBO!

The Voice Referendum result has generated multiple opinions, both nationally and internationally. If the methodology of the referendum is closely analysed, it might shed some light as to why Australia voted NO.

As an immigrant, a naturalised Australian and a medical practitioner with a large cohort of First Nations People (FNP) patients, it was enlightening for me to hear that most of my patient cohort were voting NO. The reason given was the lack of detail.

I am certain that if the referendum was only to formally recognise FNP in the Australian constitution, it would have passed. However, the addition of the Voice to Parliament (VTP) in my opinion changed the result. I felt that this exercise was not timed or done well, that there was hope that it would pass purely on trust.

Both political parties "politicised" the entire issue and Albanese it appears, envisaged a legacy outcome for himself had this passed. Perhaps, legislating the VTP as a 3-year trial in my view, made more sense. This would allow the kinks to be ironed out, provide a blueprint as to what works, what does not and provide an opportunity

to re-visit and improve.

The FNP community have again lost as nothing has changed. Whilst many could argue that something had to be done and that is why a YES result was important, the finer aspects of hard endpoints and outcomes are not addressed.

The apology from PM Kevin Rudd to the FNP and the stolen generation was totally appropriate, and I wished that it had happened sooner. It was wonderful to watch and emotional to me as a post-colonisation child of India. However, since the apology, nothing has really changed for the FNP community with respect to the hard endpoints.

Neither political party have done anything useful in terms of addressing the hard end points plaguing the FNP community. They blame each other for this unacceptable result which as we all know, is political fodder for their own survival.

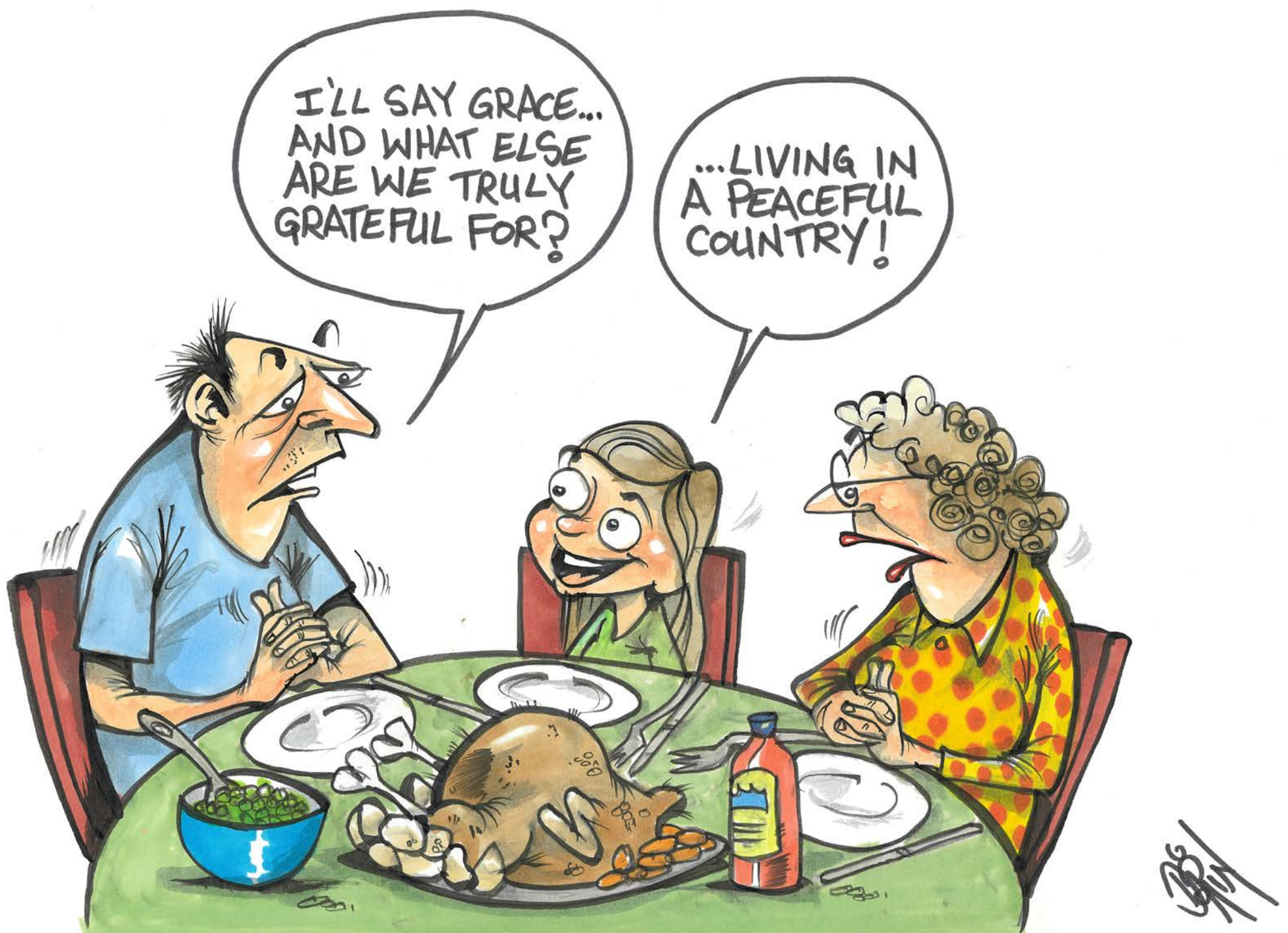
The post-mortem on the VTP election result has begun and the first reason touted is racism.

Whilst this might be the easiest solution to proffer, it might not be the most accurate. I believe the methodology is to be blamed and it would be prudent if all political parties put aside their own interests and focus as a team to address the hard endpoints with the goal to help the FNP communities.

In the words of the Joker, we deserve a better class of criminal!

Seshasayee (Sesh) Narasimhan, MBBS, MRCP (UK), FRACP, FACC

**General & Interventional Cardiologist,
Manning Base Hospital
Conjoint Senior Lecturer, University of Newcastle,
Adjunct Senior Lecturer, University of New England,
Principal, The Heart Centre, Taree.**



ISRAEL-PALESTINE: FOUR SCENARIOS

What is the end game of the current round of Israeli-Palestinian warmongering? Is there a way out of the current spiral of violence?

I remain very pessimistic about the long-term prospects of any reconciliation between Israel and Palestine. Too many people are making too many claims on too little land.

Three of four scenarios I have devised of possible Israel-Palestine relations are all negative.

First, there is the continuation of the current “business as usual” scenario. This is a continuation of the challenges since Israel’s formation back in 1948: times of “peace” interspersed with violence.

The problem with modern urban guerrilla warfare is that it seems to be a war without end. This is very different from, say, World War II, when the European war ended when the Allies reached Berlin and Hitler was dead. Now conflicts just seem to drag on, with dead leaders being replaced by new leaders and the momentum maintained. There is no clear vision of what constitutes “victory”.

Each new round of conflict plants the seeds of the next round. Imagine being a child in Gaza; living through all the current suffering provides an incentive to continue the violence when you grow up – and Gaza has one of the world’s most fertile populations. There are many young people to continue the struggle.

Today’s young Jews will have a similar determination to settle old scores.

Second, the “one Israel” scenario would see the two million Palestinians in Gaza and the three million Palestinians on the West Bank all living within a greater Israel (alongside the 10 million people, 73 per cent of whom are Jewish) all governed from Jerusalem, forming one country.

The long-term threat to the current Jewish majority would come from Palestinian maternity wards.



Palestinians tend to have large families and so eventually a majority of the enlarged population would be Palestinian.

Orthodox Jewish families also tend to have large families. Ironically therefore modern liberal cosmopolitan Jews (who tend not to have large families) will find themselves squeezed between two larger conservative Islamic and Jewish religious factions.

This in turn is part of the new trend in Middle East politics: the return of religion. The founders of modern Israel in 1948 tended to be idealistic socialists or at least some form of left-wing politicians, for whom Judaism was a type of personal identity rather than the religious driving force. Now the current government is partly driven by religious Jewish hardliners.

Israel’s political system reflects all shades of the country’s opinion and so most governments have to be coalitions, incorporating members from small parties as well as the large ones. Given their parlous situation, Israelis have to take their politics seriously. Israel is a nation of 10 million prime ministers.

Similarly, the early post-World War II Arab nationalist parties tended to be socialist, such as Yasser

Arafat’s Fatah party, which became the dominant faction in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

In recent decades, especially since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Islam has become the dominant force in Iranian and Arab political movements. The name “ Hamas” comes from the initials of the Islamic Resistance Movement (formed in 1987). Hamas hates the secular PLO, and it fought a brief war against Fatah in 2007 to gain control over Gaza.

Therefore, the disputes between Israel and Palestine are not only over land but also religious interpretation. When it comes to war, truth is the first casualty and God is the first recruit.

The third scenario is the “two state solution”. This was first proposed in 1937, when the UK controlled Palestine on behalf of the League of Nations as a “mandate”. Jews were fleeing Hitler’s Europe and some sought refuge in Palestine, which gave rise to social tensions with the Arab population. The British idea was to create two separate countries for the two peoples. A pattern was established: Jews accepted the idea but the Arabs rejected it.

After World War II the UK passed the problem over to the new United Nations, which revived the proposal. The idea has been revived at various

times since then but all to no avail.

It is technically still on the table but no party to the conflict is making any serious attempt to revive it. Each time it is revived, there is less land offered to the Palestinians. Hamas is opposed to it entirely.

In the meantime, memories of the 2005 evacuation of the Gaza strip would deter any Israeli politician from creating a two-state solution. In 2005 Israel decided to remove the 8,000 Jewish settlers living in 21 settlements from Gaza, and so pave the way for very limited

Palestinian self-government. It was a brutal military operation with many settlers initially refusing to leave.

The West Bank has about 390,000 Jewish settlers, a much larger number. They will not leave voluntarily. Any hard action against them would split any Israeli government that contained the representative of those settlers.

The final scenario is called “milk and honey”, a phrase I have taken from the Old Testament (such as Exodus 3.8). This is an optimistic scenario whereby Israelis and Palestinians somehow find a way of living together peacefully.

Reconciliation between former bitter enemies can take place. Australia and Japan had a very difficult relationship in World War II but Japan eventually became a major trading partner of Australia, and it is now becoming a military ally to confront the Chinese threat. Similarly, France and Germany had fought each other for centuries – and triggered two World Wars – and now are firm allies. Nothing is impossible.

All four scenarios encourage us to think about the unthinkable, and so reflect on the wider dimensions of the current conflict.

Keith Suter
www.globaldirections.com

MANNING VALLEY U3A MUSICIANS ALIVE!

Manning Valley U3A announces its end of term Concert on Friday 8th December, to be held at the Uniting Church, Taree.

The morning event (10am to 12 noon) will feature the musicians and singers of U3A, with much loved favourites as well as singers and performers brave enough to sing in other languages.

Heather McLaughlin (Vice President) says "At Manning Valley U3A we have been honoured to have excellent leaders for our various groups throughout this year, and the concert will include songs from Germany and Italy, as well as excerpts from the musical "Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat". The Ukulele groups always give a lively performance, with a range of songs and colourful outfits, and we will also have fiddles, recorders and more. I'm looking forward to welcoming all members of the Manning Valley community who are interested in listening to our performance; they may even be encouraged to sing along at some point!"

Recently Manning Valley U3A held its much loved OBE Award lunch (that's "Over Bloody Eighties") at Club Taree, with 29 senior Members in at-

tendance. Heather awarded the Certificates of achievement and said: "We are so proud of our U3A members, who are both active Learners in our many courses, as well as Course Leaders".

Manning Valley U3A is a voluntary organisation providing Learning for Life for Seniors, with next Enrolment Days in late January 2024. Watch this space for details on the courses and information on how to join us.

For more information see website:
www.manningvalley.u3anet.org.au

Contact for enquiries:

Jennie Wright, Publicity
0418 205 871



Heather McLaughlin and John Peters U3A



U3A ukulele group

IS AUSTRALIA THE SELFISH NATION?

As an Australian with First Nations and coloniser blood running through my veins, I've always believed in the promise of a fair and just Australia, one that can celebrate our 65,000 years of history, reconcile our colonial past and build a better future for all. But the Voice referendum has cast a shadow on that vision. It has revealed a darker side of our nation – one driven by selfishness and fear. And one where we allow ourselves to be sucked in by misinformation and social media algorithms.



Gregory Andrews

The Voice Referendum was an opportunity to right historical wrongs, acknowledge the injustices faced by Australia's First Peoples, and to pave the way for genuine Reconciliation. But the campaign and its outcome have caused deep harm.

The statistics are stark and

disheartening: 97% of Australians were given the power to vote on the future of the 3% who are not only our continent's traditional custodians, but also among nation's most disadvantaged peoples. Meant to be a step towards inclusivity, the Referendum was a blunt reminder of the majority's failure to prioritise empathy, fairness, and

a shared commitment to healing past wounds and walking forward together.

Why did the referendum fail? The reasons are multifaceted, but at the core of this failure lies a disturbing sense of self-interest. A large number of Australians voted "No" seemingly because they were more interested in what was in it for them, or what they might lose. This isn't to say that all "No" voters were driven by selfishness, but the overall outcome revealed a disturbing lack of collective empathy.

The "No" campaign was spearheaded by political figures like Peter Dutton and shadowy organisations like the Atlas Group that fed division and misinformation. It employed fear, lies, and social media algorithms to manipulate public opinion. The fact that such tactics succeeded in swaying public opinion is deeply troubling. It suggests that Australians are too lazy to inform themselves and make decisions for themselves. We are a society happy to let social media algorithms tell us what we should think. Australia is a selfish nation which prioritises self-interest.

In the lead-up to the referendum, I, like many Australians, believed we would unite in the pursuit of justice and Reconciliation. We had an opportunity to move forward as a more equitable and harmonious nation. But Australia failed the empathy test.

The outcome is a tragedy for all of us – First Nations and those who are not. It is a statement that the majority of Australians don't care about values of justice, inclusivity, and compassion. We allow selfishness, fear, ignorance and laziness to prevail.

I see the beauty of a multicultural and harmonious Australia. A

nation which embraces, celebrates and listens to the 65,000 years of humanity which has existed here. Our strength lies in our diversity, and this should be celebrated and embraced. But to do so, we must first acknowledge the past and the harm it continues to cause. We must recognise the ongoing disparities faced by First Nations people, from health and education to economic opportunities and racism. We must strive to create a nation where the 3% who have been marginalised for so long are no longer left behind. It is time to put laziness and self-interest aside and work together to build a brighter future for all Australians. One where empathy, understanding, and unity prevail over fear and selfishness.

Gregory Andrews is a D'harawal man from NSW. He worked at SES levels in the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Environment, Climate Change, and Indigenous Affairs. He represented Australia as an Ambassador and High Commissioner in West Africa, and negotiated for Australia in the United Nations Climate Change negotiations. Gregory was Australia's first-appointed Threatened Species Commissioner. He led development and implementation of Australia's first Threatened Species Strategy and first Threatened Species Prospectus. In the NGO sector, he led, grew and reformed a national Indigenous charity . . . Lyrebird Dreaming.

Gregory speaks French and Mandarin. He has an Honours Degree in Economics and a Masters in Foreign Affairs and Trade.

(This article first appeared in Pearls & Irritations.)

TELL ME A STORY

ENCOURAGING WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS IN OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS

Six years ago, two friends dedicated to children's literacy began a project to encourage local writers among students in years three to six. Students were invited to submit a story of about 500 words, and these were reviewed by panels of teachers and writers. A little later, the stories were returned to the schools for students to illustrate and submit their work for review by a panel of artists.

It was hugely successful and generated enormous enthusiasm among the teachers and students in the schools in the region. It became an annual event.

In 2020, I joined the team as one of the reviewers. Being an active publisher, having published over 100 books for myself and other writers, I suggested publishing the stories and illustrations that had been submitted. Some time later, I produced a beautiful book containing 64 stories and 33 illustrations.

The following year, we received the same number of stories but more than double the number of illustrations at 74. Clearly, we had touched something off!

In 2022, we received so many entries that we had to split them into the Manning and Great Lakes regions and publish a book for each. Between the two, we received 107 stories and 139 illustrations! My task as the publisher had grown massively!

This year, it has happened again, 287 stories and 225 illustrations and we had to split off a third book devoted to just two schools, Nabiac and Krumbach Public Schools.

Throughout this wonderful process, we on the team have been continually delighted by the quality of entries, both written and artistic. Clearly, we have no shortage of creative talents in the region.

But the success has generated a major problem – staffing the project. When we receive stories, we strip off the identifying school and student names and issue the stories to panels of reviewers. They work in pairs, each receives ten stories and reviews them according to a

well-defined set of criteria. Then they exchange their stories and repeat the process. The final grading of each story results from the combined reviews. The stories then go back to the schools and students are invited to select a story to illustrate. Similarly, a panel of judges reviews and grades the illustrations and then, with school and name back on the entry, they all go to me, the publisher, to assemble into the books. The covers are standard format, but the front contains a picture done by a student and selected by the judges, one picture for each region.

In August, we had awards days for the two regions, with Nabiac school going with the Great Lakes Region and Krumbach School with the Manning Region. The atmosphere at these events was electric, parents and children showing huge excitement seeing their works in print. It is a wonderfully satisfying experience for those of us who helped create it.

It's a massive amount of work and this year, our reviewers have all had to contend with a far greater workload than in previous years. In 2024, the probability is we'll even more entries.

WE NEED MORE REVIEWERS!

Would you like to be part of this wonderful project next year? You might help set off a young person on a life-changing experience of becoming a writer or artist or enhancing their skills in any field of work.

If you are, or have been a teacher and/or an experienced writer of children's fiction, we really could use your help. Artists who can help on the judging panel of the illustra-

tions would also be invaluable. We are heavy users of Microsoft Word and Excel, so competence in both systems is essential.

If you would like to help, please go to our website

<https://tellmeastory.org.au> and contact us, or email us at tmas@tellmeastory.org.au

We'd love to hear from you.

Michael Davies

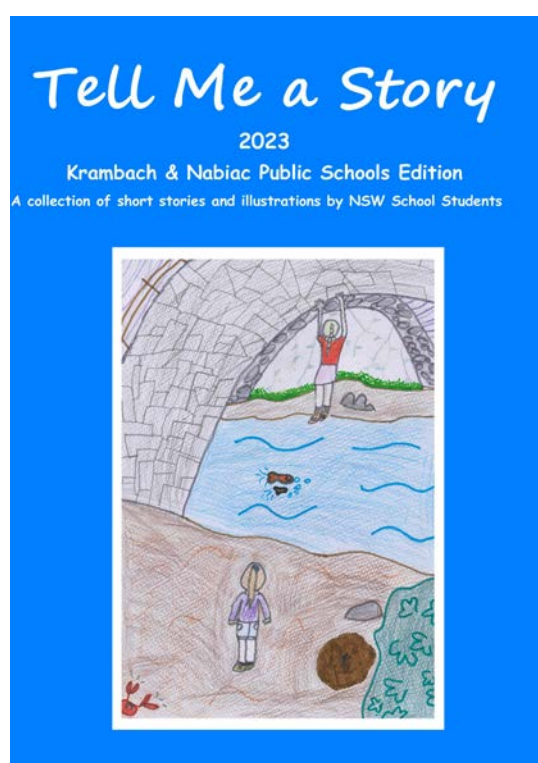
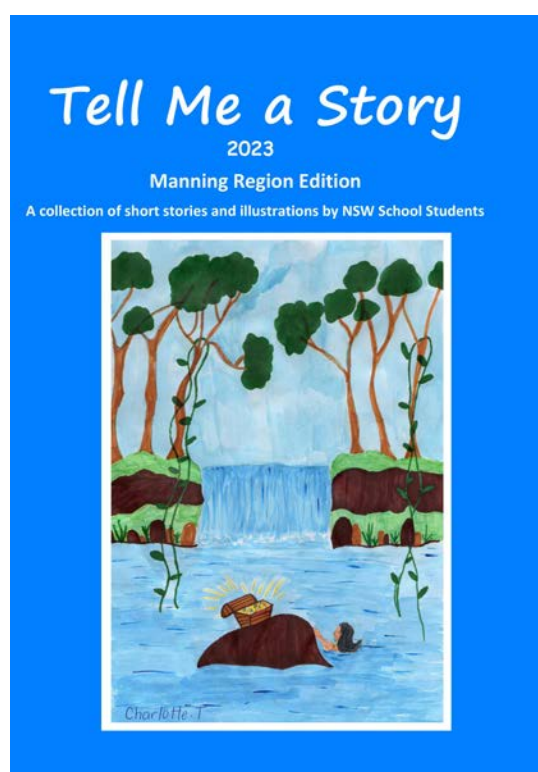
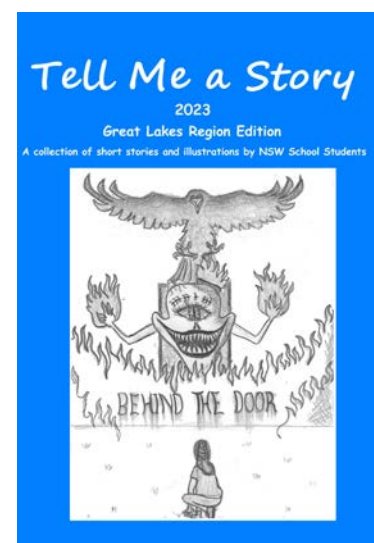
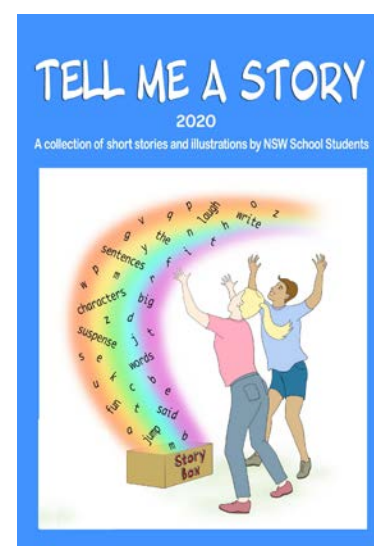
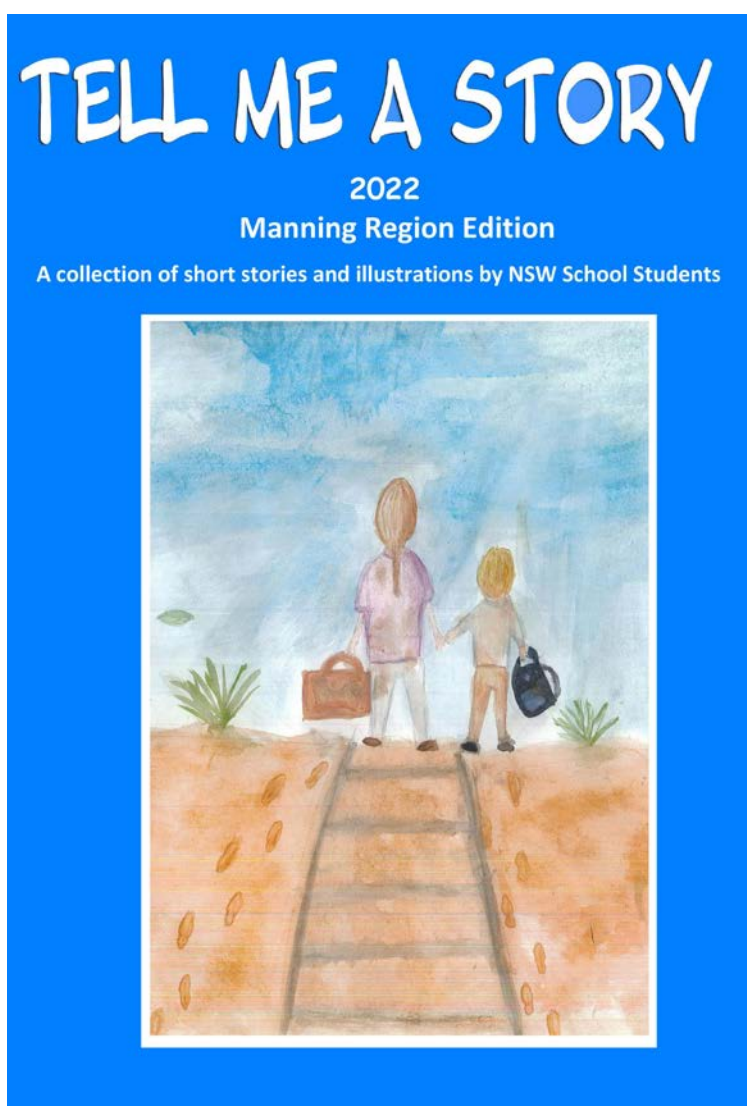
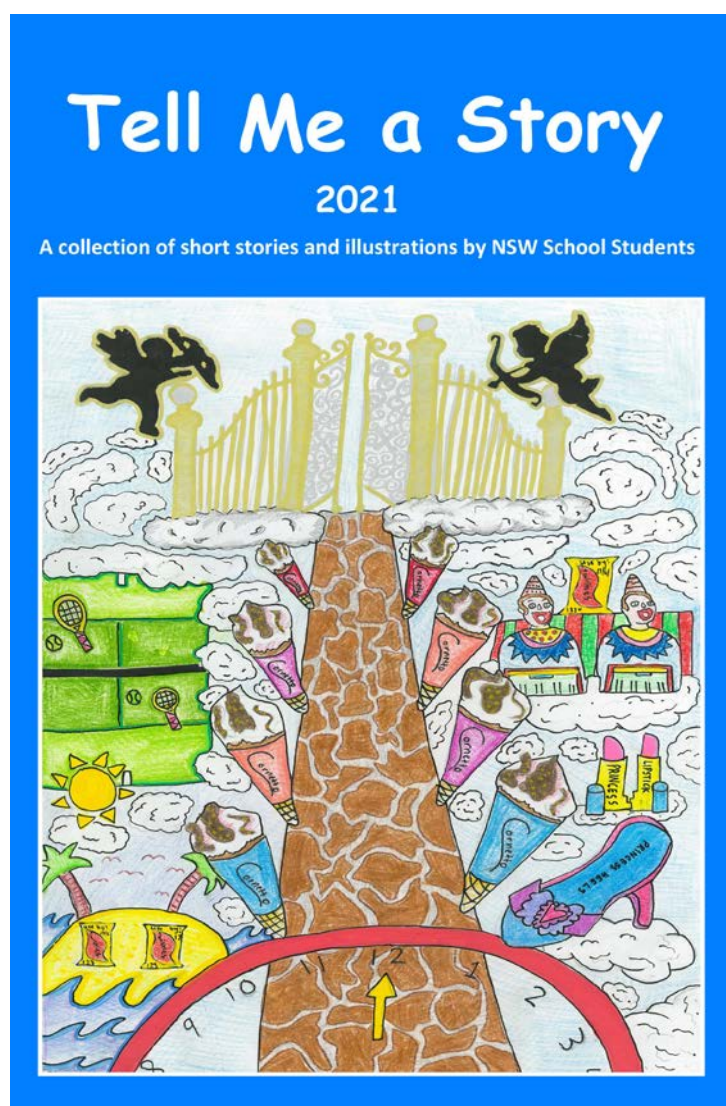
Tell Me a Story

2022

Great Lakes Region Edition

A collection of short stories and illustrations by NSW School Students





The "Tell Me a Story" Annual Competition for Local Schools

Would you like to be part of a wonderful short-story competition for local schools? Would you like to know that you have helped enhance the literary and artistic skills of several hundred young people in our region?

Each year, we invite students in years three through six in a number of schools to submit a short story. Then we invite the students to illustrate a story of their choice.

Each year, the number of entries has increased. In 2023 we had nearly 300 short stories and over 200 illustrations. Most of these are published in a wonderful book that can be purchased by the parents.

Our workload for reviewers is increasing each year and we badly need more for the 2024 competition.

Are you a current or retired teacher or a writer of children's fiction. Are you an artist? Would you like to join this amazing project for 2024.

Please contact us at

tmas@tellmeastory.org.au

or go to our website

<https://tellmeastory.org.au>

and help enhance the literary and artistic skills of our students.

TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND EVERY MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT

This is an open letter which will be circulated to the Australian public and media.

A boriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have observed a week of silence across Australia since the outcome of the Referendum last Saturday 14 October 2023. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags have flown half-mast and we have refrained from media commentary, even as politicians, governments, media commentators and analysts have spent a week exonerating – and indeed, lauding – the nobility of the 60.8 per cent of Australians who voted to reject Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia.

These are the collective insights and views of a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, community members and organisations who supported Yes:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are in shock and are grieving the result. We feel acutely the repudiation of our peoples and the rejection of our efforts to pursue reconciliation in good faith. That people who came to our country in only the last 235 years would reject the recognition of this continent's First Peoples – on our sacred land which we have cared for and nurtured for more than 65,000 years – is so appalling and mean-spirited as to be

utterly unbelievable a week following. It will remain unbelievable and appalling for decades to come.

2. We thank the 5.51 million Australians who voted Yes to recognition. This represents approximately 39.2 per cent of Australian voters on 14 October 2023. At the 2022 Federal Election the Australian Labor Party received support from 32.58 per cent of voters, the Liberal Party 23.89 per cent, the National Party 3.6 per cent and One Nation 4.96 per cent. We thank those Australians who gave Yes more support at this Referendum than they did to any political party.
3. We acknowledge there sounding Yes vote in discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The high levels of support for Yes in our communities exposes the No Campaign's lies, taken up by the media even in the last week of the campaign. The situation of these communities needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.
4. Australia is our country. We accept that the majority of non-Indigenous voting Australians have rejected recognition in the Australian Constitution. We do not for

one moment accept that this country is not ours. Always was. Always will be. It is the legitimacy of the non-Indigenous occupation in this country that requires recognition, not the other way around. Our sovereignty has never been ceded.

5. The Constitution still belongs to those who the founding fathers originally intended it for and remains unchanged in our exclusion. We were asked to be recognised over a decade ago; we sought to be included in a meaningful way and that has been rejected. In refusing our peoples' right to be heard on matters that affect us, Australia chose to make itself less liberal and less democratic. Our right to be heard continues to exist both as a democratic imperative for this nation, and as our inherent right to self-determination. The country can deny the former but not the latter. A 'founding document' without recognition of First Peoples of this country continues the process of colonisation. It is clear no reform of the Constitution that includes our peoples will ever succeed. This is the bitter lesson from 14 October.
6. The support for the referendum collapsed from the

moment Liberal and National Party leaders, Mr Dutton and Mr Littleproud, chose to oppose the Voice to Parliament proposal after more than a decade of bipartisan support. The proposal was tracking 60 per cent support compared to 40 per cent opposition for several years until the National and Liberal parties preferred wanton political damage over support for some of this country's most disadvantaged people. There was little the Yes campaign could do to countervail this.

7. Lies in political advertising and communication were a primary feature of this campaign. We know that the No campaign was funded and resourced by conservative and international interests who have no stake or genuine interest in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We know this funding supported multiple No campaigns that intentionally argued in varying directions to create doubt and fear in both non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities. This included resurrecting scare campaigns seen during the 1990s against land rights,

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but the scale of deliberate disinformation and misinformation was unprecedented, and it proliferated, unchecked, on social media, repeated in mainstream media and unleashed a tsunami of racism against our people. We know that the mainstream media failed our people, favouring 'a false sense of balance' over facts.

8. There has always been racism against First Nations people in Australia. It increased with multiple daily instances during the campaign and was a powerful driver for the No campaign. But this campaign went beyond just racism. 'If you don't know - Vote No' gave expression to ignorance and licensed the abandonment of civic responsibility on the part of many voters who voted No. This shameful victory belongs to the Institute of Public Affairs, the Centre for Independent Studies and mainstream media.
9. Post-referendum commentaries that exculpate those who voted No were expected as the usual kind of post-election approbation of the electorate. The truth is that the majority of Australians have committed a shameful act whether knowingly or not, and there is nothing positive to be interpreted from it. We needed truth to be told to the Australian people.
10. We will maintain the vision of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We will continue to uphold the outcomes of the Uluru Dialogues to which more than 1,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the country contributed – culminating in the Uluru Statement signed by 250 people on 26 May 2017. It is evident that many Australians are unaware of our cultures, our histories, or the racism imbued in the Australian Constitution. That so many Australian people believe there is no race or division on race in the current Australian Constitution speaks to the need for better education on Australian history and better civics education. We have faith that the upswelling of support through this Referendum has ignited a fire for many to walk with us on our journey towards justice. Our truths have been silenced for too long.
11. We want to talk with our people and our supporters about establishing – independent of the Constitution or legislation – an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to take up the cause of justice for our people. Rejection of constitutional recognition will not deter us from speaking up to governments, parliaments and to the Australian people. We have an agenda for justice in pursuit of our First Nations rights that sorely need a Voice – we will continue to follow our law and our ways, as our Elders and Ancestors have done.
12. We will regather in due course and develop a plan for our future direction. While this moment will be etched into Australia's history forever, today we think of our children, and our children's children. Our work continues as it has always done. We will continue to fight to seek justice for our peoples. We are three per cent of the population, and you are 97 per cent.

Opinion

THE VOICE WHICH WALKS

Like the vast majority of fellow Australians I do not belong to any political party. Neither do I belong to a predominant group, within this vast majority, who deeply dislike and distrust politicians.

I am curious that, in the lead in to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice referendum and its post mortem, the lack of political bi-partisanship has been claimed as a significant factor in the failure of the referendum proposal. If this is correct it means that a great mass of people who dislike and distrust politicians voted against the proposal because they needed to be overwhelmingly led by these same politicians. I am amazed by this irony.

Now, as an overseas born person of colour who had to go through all sorts of hoops to become a citizen in the early 1960s when we were in the throes of the White Australia Policy, I am surprised that there are people who claim that our constitution is "colour blind" – a constitution free from racial consideration. These claimants argue that it would be wrong to introduce a racial consideration into the constitution which is how they viewed the Voice proposal.

Anyone, even as young as a high school legal studies student, who reads the constitution would recognise the several racial based provisions that have been in it since its beginning. Of particular relevance in my opinion is section 51 which sets out a range of things that the federal parliament can legislate on and this range includes a paragraph (xxvi) about the "*people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws*". **The rejection of the introduction of a special constitutional provision about Indigenous Australians means that the parliament must continue to rely on a long existing racist constitutional power to make specific laws about them.** I am amazed by this irony.

From another angle, even though I was a YES voter, the sweeping generalisation that those who voted NO are *ipso facto* racist. **Those of us who managed to vote YES, may have been able to hear that many who voted NO did so because they felt the Aboriginal**

and Torres Strait Islander Voice proposal was not strong enough, restricted as it was to an advisory role only. This position could never reasonably be said to be the stuff of anti-indigenous racism.

As a YES voter, I did not vote like this to vindicate the Albanese led Labor Federal Government or to spite the Dutton led Federal Opposition. If there were not many millions like me who simply wished to give an optimistic response to the humble invitation found in the Uluru Statement from the Heart calling for a "*First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution*" the final sentence in it is touching, "*We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future*".

The Australian people have not allowed a First Nations Voice to sit and talk to Parliament. It is very likely that, now, it may well become the Voice which Walks

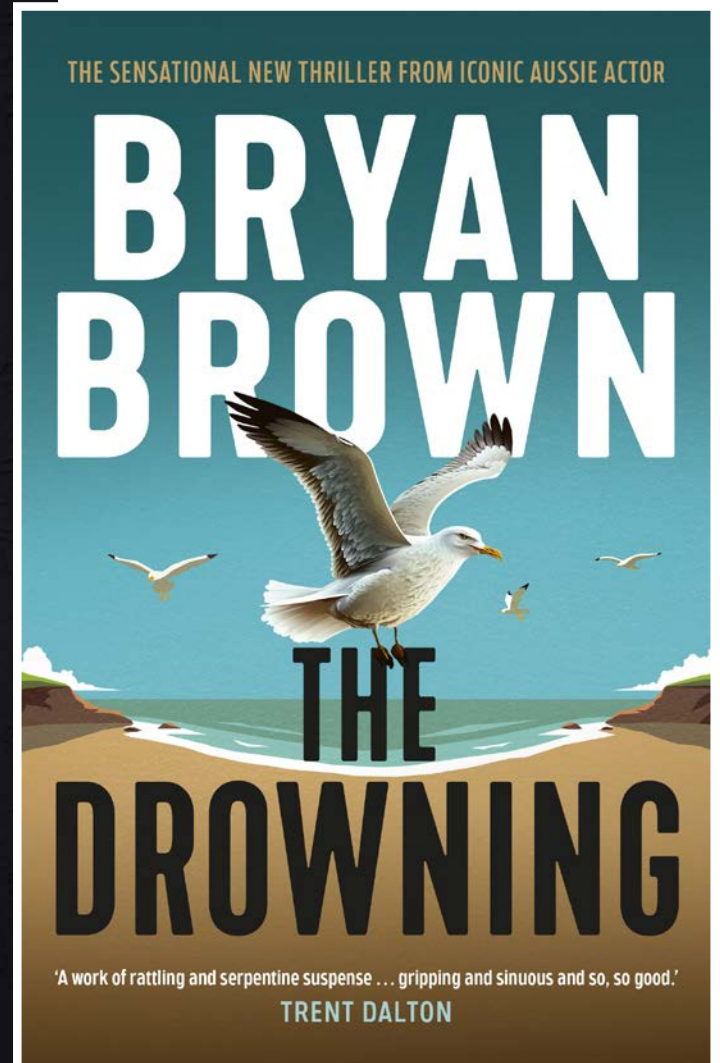
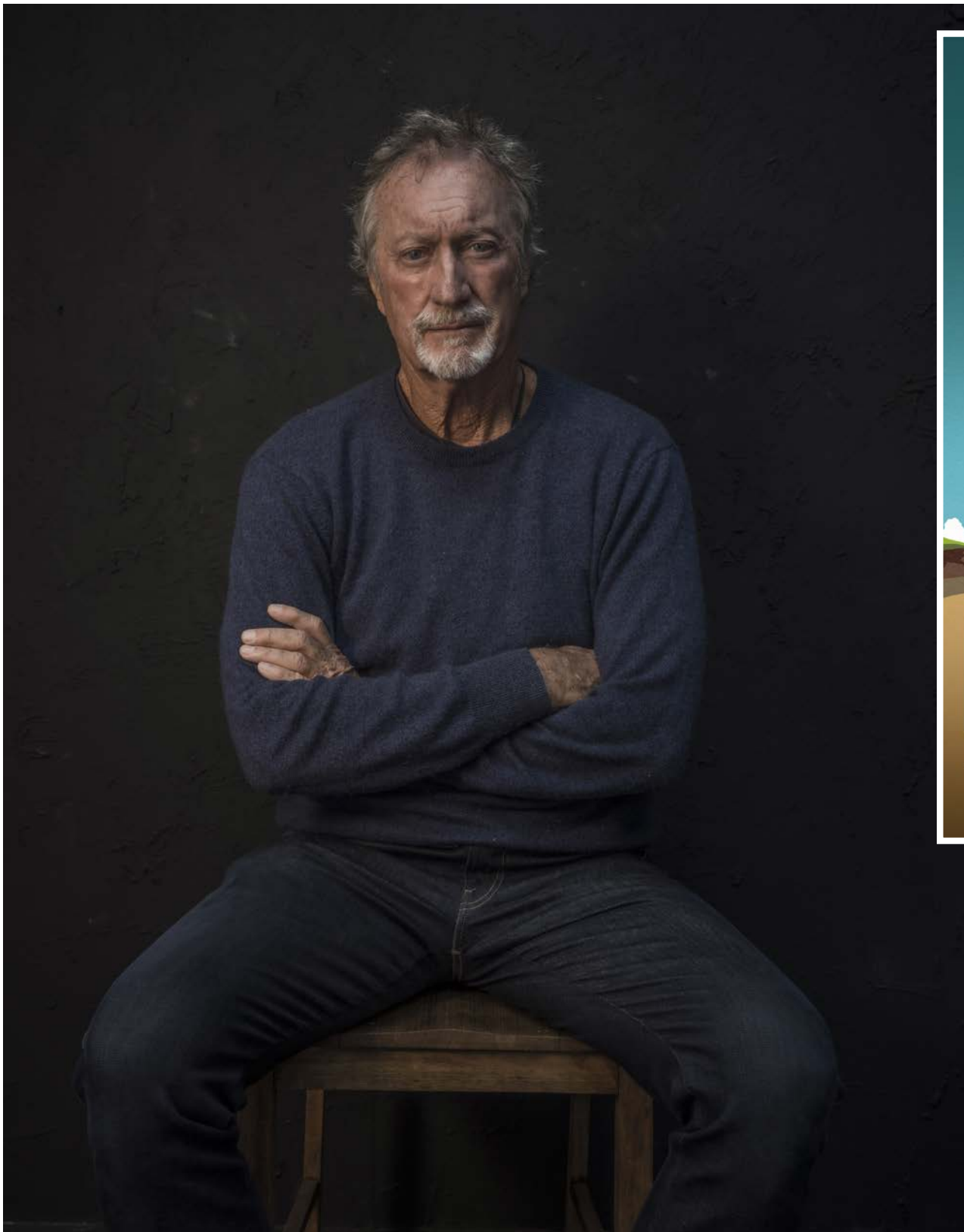
Nawal Maharaj
Harrington, NSW

THE DROWNING



Bryan Brown

Allen&Unwin Rrp \$32.99



If murder mysteries are top of your favourite reading list here's one that will capture you. Just be aware there are a number of slang words you may find offensive.

Actor Bryan Brown couples these in his second novel with one breathy sexual escapade after another. In fact, he sprinkles these explicit romps equally between his characters.

It seems there are as many romps in the back of white vans and behind trees as our author can think up, while bad people are doing very bad things.

Bryan is also no moralist if it helps the story. He writes that the end can justify the means if breaking the law "a little" helps solve what turns out to be a particularly difficult crime to crack.

He expertly weaves us into the lives of his characters, using a minimum of words, for he writes short sentences and Aussie slang that overseas readers might find hard to understand.

But then Bryan has never pretended to be anything other than a "true blue" Aussie with a strong "strine" accent and a droll sense of humour.

a sophisticated clever thinker when it comes to plotting crime.

I worked as a press officer on several of his movies and saw how seriously he takes his work as an actor. It is only when he has thought deeply about his character and knows his lines off by heart, that he reverts to larrikin type and has fun, teasing and joking with his fellow actors and crew.

This same clever thinking has gone into the structure of *The Drowning*. Most readers of murder mysteries I know pride themselves on working out the crime half way through the book. This story will

If you don't know him don't underestimate him and his brief writing style. He tells a good yarn. Underneath his easy-going manner he shows he's

keep you intrigued right to the end.

The novel is deceptively easy, the characters perhaps too many if you try to rush through the book, especially as the writing is not over-burdened with descriptive passages.

Bryan nevertheless has managed to cleverly set the mood and stoke the reader's fears. He then expertly heightens the drama leaving you wondering how on earth the country sergeant will crack this case. He has so few clues except for a niggling feeling, which Bryan calls "a nag," that won't go away.

Bryan piles a number of bad things one on top of the other as life appears to go on undisturbed in this peaceful small northern NSW coastal town beloved by surfers and shy locals.

Murder, drugs, liaisons and lies are all included as the novel winds to a close and suddenly it all makes sense. You find you have been thoroughly entertained by his brisk story telling. He won't disappoint with this slim book.

Sherry Stumm

KILLING FOR COUNTRY A FAMILY STORY



David Marr

Black Inc 2023. RRP \$39.99

In the last 12 months I have reviewed three books which all, in their own way, dealt with aspects of the brutality involved in the way that Europeans took over the land we now call Australia.

When reviewing *Black Lives*, *White Law* by criminal lawyer Russell Marks I had this to say:

"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."

Then earlier this year I wrote about a book by Jon Rhodes titled *Whitefella Way* where I had this to say:

"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.

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*.

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."

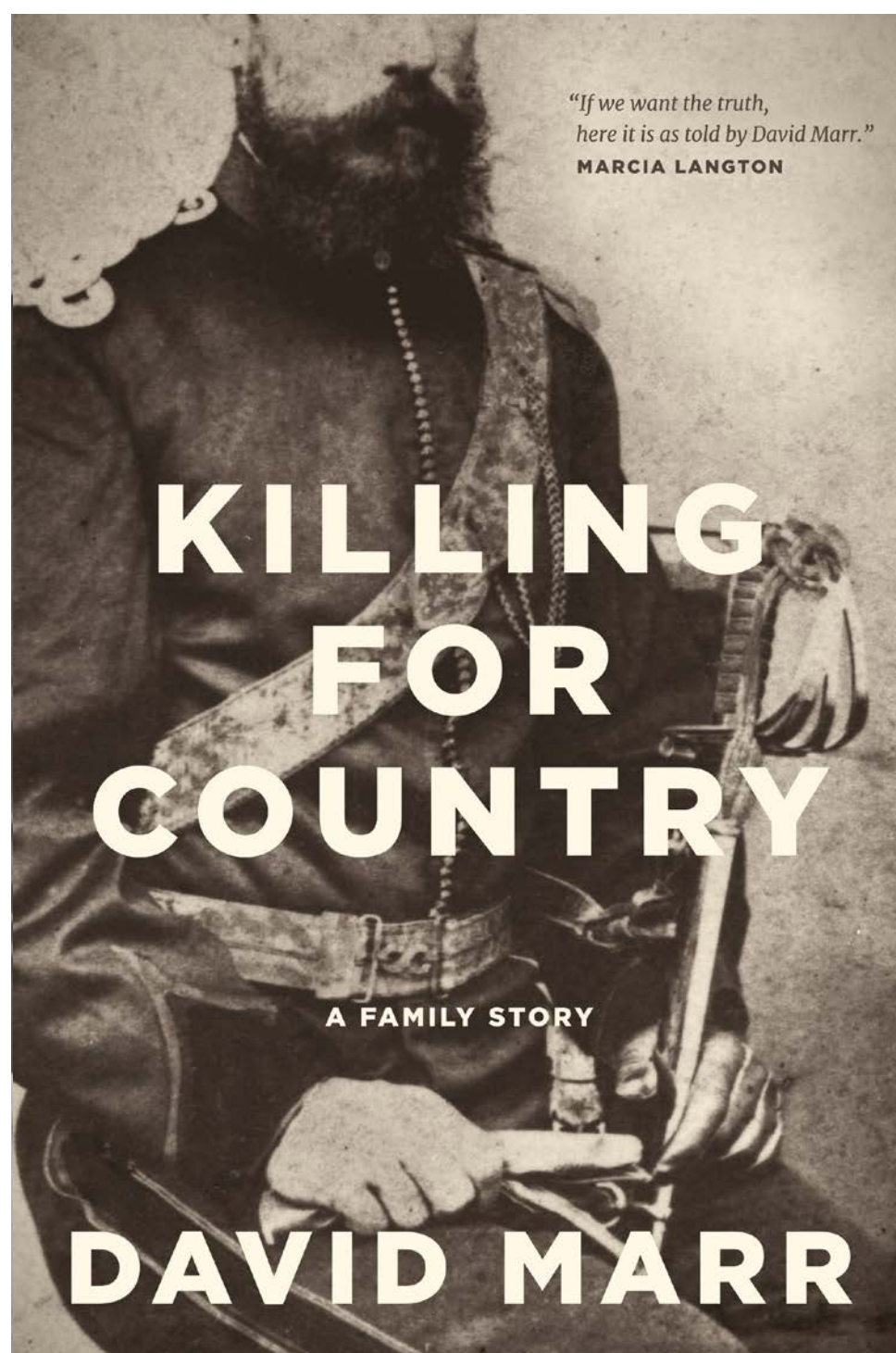
Now that we know the outcome of the referendum, political commentators will no doubt debate at length the reasons for its defeat, but perhaps the outcome might have been otherwise if our community was better educated about the way that Aboriginal land was stolen by the invading Europeans, and the brutality of that land grab.

During the referendum campaign I heard some people suggest, without understanding the irony of what they were saying, that they were concerned that a successful vote might result in their land and houses being taken from them. Such comments, and others, demonstrate an appalling level of ignorance on many levels.

Now that the referendum proposal has been lost it is, in my view, more important than ever that the general community be educated about Aboriginal issues in general, and the way that the nation of Australia was established in particular.

Proper knowledge of the real facts would also help people to better know when they are being misled by absurd suggestions, such as the one by Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, that Aboriginal people did not suffer from colonisation.

Well known journalist and author David Marr's detailed and brilliantly



researched book makes a vitally important contribution to the education of the non-Indigenous community. He has written several books and this book's cover tells us that:

"He has written for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Guardian* and *The Monthly*, and served as editor of *The National Times*, reporter for *Four Corners* and presenter on ABC TV's *Media Watch*."

What makes this book unusual is Marr's family connection to many of the events described in the book. He was understandably shocked to discover that he had ancestors who were members of the Native Police, an organisation responsible for numerous outrages against the Aboriginal population. Those ancestors being; "Sub – Inspector Reginald Uhr, a professional killer of Aborigines," and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

THE ECHIDNA STRATEGY

AUSTRALIA'S SEARCH FOR POWER AND PEACE



Sam Roggeveen

La Trobe University Press 2023 RRP \$32.99

If you thought that this book, with such an intriguing title, was a treatise concerned with protecting Australia's spiny ant-eating, egg laying monstrosities, then you will be disappointed.

It's solely about Australia's foreign policy, and the best way to ensure its security in the face of the meteoric rise of China as a world power challenging the pre-eminence of the United States, particularly in the region of South East Asia.

The marketing blurb accompanying this fascinating book neatly summarises the author's main point when it says this:

"*The Echidna Strategy* overturns the conventional wisdom about Australia's security. Australia will need to defend itself without American help, but this doesn't need to cost more.

The truth, which no Australian political leader is willing to confront, is that America's security is not threatened by China's rise. Once we accept that conclusion, the entire edifice on which our security has been built crumbles, and we need to start afresh."

Over 211 pages Roggeveen presents his well-reasoned argument, and although the book deals with several complex issues, it is "designed to be approachable and understandable to non-expert readers" untutored in the niceties of foreign affairs. In my opinion it achieves that purpose.

Roggeveen is director of the Lowy Institute's International Security Program, and before joining the Lowy Institute he was a senior

analyst with the Office of National Assessments, (now called the Office of National Intelligence). With this background, the author seems well qualified to write about Australia's national security, although I imagine

'Essential reading for anyone interested in our nation's security in an uncertain world, where the enduring supremacy of the United States cannot be assumed or assured.'

MALCOLM TURNBULL

THE ECHIDNA STRATEGY

Australia's Search for Power and Peace



SAM ROGGEVEEN

his views might not be universally accepted by others in the Intelligence community.

Interestingly, Roggeveen is no left-wing radical, telling us that he regards himself as a liberal-conser-

vative, although carefully distancing himself from the Trump-type of conservatism to which we have recently become accustomed, which he says is "a toxic brew of culture wars and ideological obsessions." He adds:

"The conservatism I defend is marked, not by any specific ideological or policy agenda, but merely by a preference for moderation over extremism, tradition over ideology, evolution over revolution, and a deep suspicion of utopianism."

How on earth did Roggeveen come up with the title for his book? In the introduction he says this:

"An echidna is no threat to anything other than ants and termites, so cannot induce fear among larger creatures. But by its sharp quills, it does warn them to keep their distance. It does signal to them that, should they decide to attack, the costs are likely to exceed the benefits.... It is also an Australian original and this book lays out an approach to Australian defence and foreign policy unique to Australia."

The book's introduction introduces the reader to a set of moral and political principles upon which the thesis of the book is grounded.

The first is the belief that "defence spending, on any scale, while necessary, is a tragic waste". Here the author quotes someone with impeccable conservative (*in the traditional sense*) credentials, former General and United States president, Dwight Eisenhower who said:

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

The second principle is that there is a moral imperative in protecting Australia from predation and exploitation by foreign powers, and even that “it would be a moral crime *not* to defend Australia against aggression.”

The third is that “Australia ought to take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of war”. This, the author argues, does not mean that there is an absolute injunction against war, pointing to the recent example of Ukraine, where the unpalatable alternative to war was subjugation.

Chapter 1 asks, and then seeks to answer, this huge, and for Australia, vitally important question:

“Will the United States commit itself to a contest with China for strategic leadership in Asia?”

During his presidency Donald Trump was not known for his diplomacy, and sometimes seemed to show contempt for America’s traditional alliances. But sometimes his utterances were an indication of what was inevitable about the direction of American foreign policy. Even without another Trump presidency the author suggests that “the complete absence of threats to American territory, the weak link between America’s security presence in Asia and its economic security, the absence of an ideological threat to America’s political institutions – will be enough to sap American motivation to defend its leadership in Asia whoever is in office.”

Where will the absence of American dominance in Asia leave Australia, and what should we do about it to protect our security?

In partial answer to this question Roggeveen argues that “Australia’s alliance with the US is slowly drained of credibility”, and that the US will not be committed to defending Australia, which means that Australia will need to become much more self-reliant and look at the best way to defend itself without the direct military help of our big brother, the US.

After analysing the likely future role of the US in relation to any defence of Australia the author then turns his attention to the dramatic economic and military rise of China and what threat this might be to Australia in the years ahead. Two important questions are considered:

- How could China attack Australia? and,
- Why would China want to attack Australia?

In relation to the first question, the book looks at options from such things as cyber-attacks and economic coercion to blockades, bombing and invasion. We read that:

“The overwhelming theme that emerges from this discussion of Chinese military operations against Australia is *distance*: the sheer scale of the operating environment will exercise massive constraints on China should it contemplate military action against Australia. Put simply, distance is Australia’s single biggest defence asset.”

The book then proceeds to look at the steps Australia should take to protect itself, arguing that diplomatic actions are more important than military ones. Not that military action is not needed.

One important diplomatic action would be for Australia to up its aid contribution to the Pacific, reminding us of the scare Australia received when China signed agreements with the Solomon Islands. Another is to ensure good relations with Indonesia.

In recent times Australia has entered into the arrangement with the US and Great Britain known as AUKUS. If this deal goes ahead as planned it will give Australia the capacity to project military power well beyond our immediate region, partly via nuclear submarines. The author is clearly no fan of this arrangement suggesting that:

“It’s a project of vaulting ambition that is out of step with Australian tradition as a military middle power, wildly at odds with our international status and, most importantly, a wasteful expenditure of public money that will make Australia less safe.”

The reader will then quite properly might ask; “If not AUKUS then what?” And this is where Roggeveen explains what he means by the Echidna Strategy. The key principles of this strategy are:

1. Deter but don’t provoke, and
2. Exploit distance.

Roggeveen goes to some length to flesh out the details of these principles and, near the end of the book has this to say:

“The truth – which ought to be comforting, but which discomforts so many who clamour to raise its status with the US – is that defending Australia from the Chinese military is not particularly difficult. Straightforward solutions are there for the taking, but our leaders insist on making it expensive and hard.”

Unfortunately, as in relation to law-and-order, so it seems with defence issues, that our politicians seem to delight in chest beating and appearing to be “tough”. This timely book demonstrates that such attitudes are often counter-productive and sometimes, downright dangerous.

This is a tremendously well written and well-reasoned book which makes a significant contribution to an important debate of vital interest to Australia’s future.

It is highly recommended.

John Watts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

his brother D’arcy.

In this book we are introduced to a number of unpleasant and undesirable characters from the early years following the European invasion.

Early in the book we meet one Richard Jones, a “slippery” merchant who made his fortune from wool and whaling, as well as being involved in politics and a newspaper called the *Gazette*, via which he was able to publicly express his views. His actions were strongly motivated by his strong Christian faith and he presented himself as a man of charity, although for Jones “and the forces of charity in Sydney, care might leap faith lines but not straddle the race divide.”

We are also introduced to Edmund Uhr, Jones’s brother-in-law, and Reg and D’arcy’s father, and a man who worked for Jones in the task of spreading his pastoral holdings on the Liverpool Plains near a spot where, a few years earlier, there had been an unprovoked massacre of Aborigines.

A contemporaneous report of that incident noted that:

“...the whites, as usual, resorting to the use of fire-arms, poured in several destructive volleys, firing on the blacks as they climbed trees for security; and in one instance, as related, ripping open with a knife the bowels of an unfortunate being who had fallen wounded from a tree.”

No-one was ever charged.

Then we are told that:

“At Waterloo Creek on 26 January 1838, Nunn’s troops and Mounted Police drove a large number of Kamilaroi into a swamp and slaughtered at least fifty.”

Then we are reminded of the well-known massacre at Myall Creek, where finally some of the perpetrators were tried and convicted, although we get the idea of white sentiment when a letter published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, from an outraged squatter said this:

“.. the Aborigines of my native country, are the most degenerate, despicable, and brutal race of beings in existence, and stand as it were in scorn “to shame creation” – a scoff and jest upon humanity...they will, and must, become extinct – civilisation destroys them – where labour and industry flourish, *they* die.”

These are just some of the sickening events mentioned in the book – massacres inspired by racism, and the selfish desire to protect the lands they had stolen from the Aboriginal peoples.

As the book progresses the reader is forced to face the reality of European occupation and to then wonder how on earth it was that Jacinta Nampijinpa Price was able to conclude that colonisation was to

the benefit of Aboriginal people.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one is titled “Mr Jones”, and it provides the background and flavour for the rest of the book.

Part 2 is titled “Edmund B. Uhr”.

The first page of Part 3, which is titled “Reg & D’arcy”, sets the scene of what is to come when we read the following 1879 comment from a former Native Mounted Police Officer:

“The native mounted police of Queensland ...carries out its sanguinary will without the intervention of judge, jury or law. Practically there is no appeal from its almighty vengeance.”

Part 3 takes us to incident after incident of the slaughter of innocent Aboriginal people by the Native Mounted Police. The Police themselves generally weren’t able to bring themselves to call it murder or slaughter, instead euphemistically calling it *dispersal*.

D’arcy Uhr was taught his trade as a member of the Native Mounted Police by one Frederick Wheeler, who was said to be “one of the cruellest men who ever served in the force.” On one occasion Wheeler said this “about badly behaved blacks”:

“I don’t think they understand anything except shooting them; at least, that is the case, as far as my experience goes.”

This attitude certainly did not stand in the way of Wheeler’s promotion.

This book is brilliantly researched and loaded with detail, including footnoting, about the relentlessness and brutality of European expansion over Aboriginal land, and 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.”

The Uluru Statement from the Heart called for Voice, Treaty and Truth. It seems that many Australians were readily able to dismiss the call for Voice without a proper appreciation of the violent way that Europeans dispossessed our First Nations People from their land.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart uses the word *Makarrata*. Makarrata is a word in the Yolngu language meaning a coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace.

Let’s hope that there will now be a period of a greater willingness by the broader population of Australia to learn and accept the truth about how this country was established, and hopefully books such as those mentioned in this review can play a role in that process.

I strongly recommend this book. It is particularly timely.

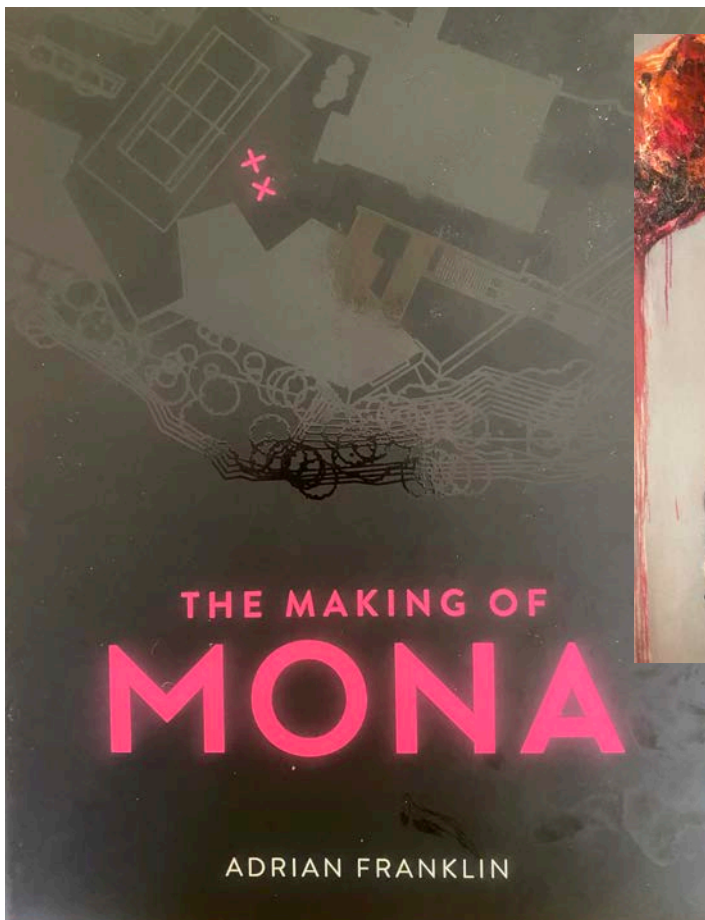
John Watts

Occasionally John Watts stumbles over a book he finds absorbing/interesting/outrageous/and fascinating.
Browsing in the "The Common" coffee shop in Gloucester he found this -

THE MAKING OF MONA



By Adrian Franklin
Published by Viking 2014



Portrait of David Walsh by Geoffrey Dyer 2011 it was a finalist in the 2011 Archibald

built."
"Defecation, urine, the anus, and buttocks all

therefore became symbols and gestures of defiance."

A. In a book by Adrian Franklin titled, *The Making of MONA*, that takes you on a journey which tries to help get your head around how and why the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) was conceived, and then brought into being by a wealthy, autistic, professional gambler by the name of David Walsh and which has become a smashing hit with locals and visitors from around the world.

But don't be misled-this book is not some lightweight book devoted to mindless smut. It is a well-researched and serious work explaining the origins, and the creation of a world class artistic institution devoted to the communicating of mind challenging ideas and concepts to its guests and where, as the reader might gather from the above quotes, little is off-limits.

Franklin trained as an anthropologist in the UK and has held professional positions at the University of Bristol and the University of Oslo and was Professor of Sociology at the University of Tasmania. He has worked extensively in radio and television and is presently Professor: Creative Industries and Cultural Policy at the University of South Australia.

Franklin tells us that these are the

issues that "sat uneasily" in the mind of David Walsh when he contemplated the creation of MONA:

+ What happens when you alter the purpose of a museum?

+What happens when the Dionysian partygoer encounters ritually suggestive objects?

+What happens when you remove wall texts and labels?

+What happens when you change the order of a museum, arranging it for resonance and experience instead of taxonomy?

+What happens when you highlight an object's individuality rather than its class?

+What happens when museums prepare different, playful and ritually changed ways to encounter museum objects?

We are then informed that "MONA's Brand Values are: reason, radicalism, egalitarianism, pedagogy and pleasure. We will be: Iconoclastic, Radical, Controversial, Fun, Brave. We will not be: Conventional, Didactic, Highbrow, Dumb, Serious, Dictated to."

MONA's creator, David Walsh, is quoted in the book as saying:

"But, somehow MONA is imbued with the hubris of a man who was inadvertently taught by his community not to respect boundaries and the humility of a little boy who often walked past the peninsula on which he now resides, but who never ventured in, because he didn't understand that it was OK to look."

This beautifully presented and easy to read book, takes the reader on a step-by-step journey beginning, appropriately enough, with the story of the eccentric genius behind MONA.

Walsh grew up the area where the museum is located and began collecting pennies and stamps from a young age, although his ability to collect was limited by the fact that his family were "relatively poor." His ability to collect more expensive and exotic things expanded significantly after he made a packet of money from gambling.

"Midway through a university degree in mathematics, he was

diverted into making money playing blackjack."

Unlike some who boast about making a pile of money, Walsh "didn't view making money as much of an achievement." We are told that:

"When making money no longer offered an interesting challenge, Walsh stumbled on art, which proved to be something he believes will challenge him for a lifetime."

Walsh's interest in collecting was apparently reignited in his 30's and MONA is certainly not a traditional museum, but more a display of the objects he has collected over the years.

Walsh's idea was to:

"...subvert the very idea of a museum. He wasn't looking for reform, but for a way to oppose and reverse the practice of the conventional museum. But he had barely a notion of how it might be achieved."

It is clear from the book that one of Walsh's real talents is to be able to surround himself with, and to take advice from, talented people to help him bring his, sometimes nebulous, ideas to a practical conclusion.

One chapter explains the way that the museum was designed and constructed underground, and the creative thinking involved. Attention to detail was everything, which is well illustrated by the design of the entrance, which is quite small but contains a distorting mirror. Franklin explains:

"David Walsh likened modern museums to temples and churches, and mentioned that they have 'giant porticos' designed 'to inculcate a sense of inferiority, to prepare you for the instilling of faith.'

Walsh's door, however, is tiny, only just wide enough, and overshadowed by the mirror, which highlights the visitors rather than the building or those who command it. It seems to be saying, 'This is all about you'

This book is no substitute for a visit to MONA, but it might just help anyone intending to visit, or who has already visited, to better understand their experience. I do recommend the book, but I more strongly recommend a visit to MONA for a mind expanding "transformative experience".

John Watts

Q. Where is it that people flock to see and absorb such things as a phallus being carried by six small men, or an art-work titled "The Arse End of the World", or a wall display of vaginas, or a "black Madonna covered in pieces of cut-out pornographic body parts...", or to watch naked dancers perform a "...Dionysian orgy-like contemporary dance work", or to down a beer that's "Not suitable for Bogans"?

A. In an exciting, often bizarre, underground anti-museum called MONA sited beside the river Derwent in a lower socio-economic suburb of Hobart. That's where!

AND,

Q. Where do you find the following quotes?

"Who's put that fucking tennis court on top of my museum?"

"We are all so complicated and then we die. We are a subject one day, with our vanities, our loves, our worries, and then one day, abruptly, we become nothing but an object, an absolutely disgusting pile of shit."

"MONA's subversiveness lies not with the art, but with the fact that it gives the finger to pretensions upon which the contemporary art world is

GROWING BERRIES



It is one of life's simple pleasures to walk about in your garden in the warmer months and notice rich juicy berries ready for picking. For most, the temptation is too great, and they are consumed right there and then.

GROWING STRAWBERRIES



There's nothing better than the sweet flavour of home-grown strawberries! Loved by children and adults alike, it's little wonder this easy-to-grow groundcover is among the most popular food crops in Australian home gardens. With its pretty white or pale pink flowers and familiar red berries which curiously bear their seeds on the outside, strawberries will crop throughout spring and summer with many varieties continuing through autumn.

Give strawberries a sunny position and improve the soil by digging in plenty compost before planting. Good drainage is essential, so build up garden beds if your soil is heavy clay. Strawberries are also ideal for growing in pots, planters or even in hanging baskets on a sunny balcony or courtyard.

Maintain a good layer of mulch over the soil. This will conserve moisture, but it will also keep fruit in good condition by preventing it from touching the ground. Strawberries produce runners which makes them easy to propagate. It is recommended that strawberry plants be removed, thinned and the runners replanted every few years to ensure good crops and avoid overcrowding. Birds love strawberries as much as we do, so protect them with netting or place wire cages over your plants to protect your crop.

GROWING RASPBERRIES



The raspberry plant is a suckering shrub with cane-like stems that can grow up to two metres in height. Plant in a sunny spot as a hedge or in rows as a garden bed divider supported by a trellis or posts. Raspberries grow well in well-drained and rich, well composted soil so before planting. They have shallow roots so protect their roots by applying mulch around, but not touching the base of the plant. Fertilise in spring when flowers appear.

Raspberries take 4 to 6 weeks to fruit. Harvest when they turn their iconic red colour. Prune back heavily tired and old canes after fruiting for a bumper crop the following year and keep stems away from the ground.

GROWING MULBERRIES



Mulberries will be forming on their trees soon. They generally grow as tall as a tree, but you can prune them to remain in a shrub. Dwarf varieties suitable for pots and small gardens are available.

Mulberry trees love a sunny position with lots of room to grow. Plant them in a well-drained, compost enriched, slightly acidic soil. Mulch well around the roots and fertilise early spring. Beware the ripe fruit stains and when the birds have a feed they make a big mess, so plant in a space away from driveways and patios. The mulberry tree produces fruit on new growth, so they perform well if pruned to desired height that is easy for picking. They are fast growers so they will bounce back very quickly. Prune in late autumn after fruiting has finished.

Mulberry trees are deciduous in winter with new leaves appearing in spring. The red fruit develop to their distinctive purple colour quickly in early spring in tropical and sub-tropics regions and more gradually in cooler regions giving these regions an extended harvest period. Harvest mulberries when they are fully ripened on the tree. Mulberries do not ripen after they are picked. They are also liable to spoil so promptly eat, cook with them or freeze them for later use.

GROWING BLUEBERRIES



Due to the height blueberries bushes grow, approx. 2m high or less, they are ideal for sunny spots in small gardens and container planting. Like azaleas, blueberry bushes are members of the Ericaceae family and flourish well in slightly acidic and well-draining soil. If planting into the ground, mix Searles Azalea, Camellia & Gardenia Specialty Mix into the soil. This mix can also be used for planting in pots. Blueberry bushes have shallow roots with fine, fibrous, surface feeding roots, so after planting, add a top layer of mulch over the soil to protect them from extremes of weather.

Depending on where you live in Australia white belled shaped flowers start appearing on the bush in spring. Then a month or two later the flowers wither and the fruit appears. As a general rule, blueberry bushes flower earlier in Queensland and Northern NSW compared to their southern states. Harvest fruit when it turns to a deep dark blue colour and the fruit easily comes off the tree with a light twist with the hand. Blueberry bush will flower at various times during its flowering season, so you should have a healthy supply of berries for many months.

Prune any dead branches and unproductive shoots to encourage fresh new grow. A light tip prune will also be beneficial. Fertilise plant before and during flowering to encourage more fruit.

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ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

A hobby that lasts a lifetime and gives much joy and pleasure. Those memorable finds, the great people you meet, the new places you explore when searching. It is a truly engrossing pastime. Garage sales, Markets, Antique Fairs, Grandmas cupboard, Second Hand Shops, Antique Shops and word of mouth tips, are all great places to start and continue a lifelong enthusiasm for collecting.

We all need to remember to support your local small businesses.

Some are doing it tough in these economic conditions. Our butchers, bakers, greengrocers, newsagents, cafes, restaurants, clothing, shoe shops, trades people and many, many more need us to buy local and keep our town economies vibrant.

An interesting find, of mine, was at the Taree Collectors Club's Antiques and Collectables Fair, many years ago now, where a great old friend of ours, Ian, had brought along a family relic that he thought went back to the 1700s. Ian has just completed his autobiography, "The Bone in the Fishcake" in his 94th year after a quarter century labour of love. He was clearing out some things and was happy to part with this item.

Ian explained that it was the figure of an angel, arm outstretched, hand painted and very uniquely done. Years later I was doing some research and discovered the figure was indeed made in the late 1700s, but the figure wasn't an angel, it was of preacher John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church, arms outstretched in his preaching style. The most interesting part was that it had been done out of a vertebra bone of a horse. These type of religious relics were kept in a special place in the household, keeping watch over those who dwelt there.

It remains a treasured possession in our collection reminding us of the ingenuity of our forefathers and the memory of a good and really interesting friend.



A collection of medical pot lids.

Although started in England unique advertising pot lids with Australian motifs are out there to be found.

It was Felix Edward Pratt (1813-94) who spotted the commercial possibilities of using new printing technology to decorate the lids of containers for popular products such as bear's grease, gentleman's relish, potted shrimp, medical cure-alls and cosmetics, with sophisticated designs. After 1840, F. & R. Pratt of Fenton in Staffordshire, became the leading (but not the only) manufacturer of multicoloured transfer printed pot lids and a huge range of related wares.

Long admired for their technical excellence, for their sheer variety and as a social and historical record of their era, pot lids have a great collecting history and rank among the most desirable everyday items from the Victorian period.

The genius of Felix Edward Pratt was to apply the new technology of printing to pot lids. As a general rule, few lids are marked by the

potter. Together more than 550 different designs and variations have been recorded and serious collectors aim to own a good example of each one.

The subjects printed on many lids gave a clue to their contents (Pegwell Bay for potted shrimps, floral subjects for ladies' cosmetics, bears for bear's grease etc), but others depict subjects as diverse as British and European landmarks, scenes from Shakespearean plays or the Crimean War.

In the main, three sizes of polychrome lids were produced (in approximately 3in, 4in and 5in diameters) with the moulded shape varying only slightly. Variations to the border decoration and the addition of a manufacturer's name can also be important when distinguishing between a common and a rare design.

The same transfer-printed designs that featured on the pot lids were also reproduced on a range of related domestic items, from tea wares to tobacco jars, collectively

known as Prattware.

Pot lids have a collecting history as old as their manufacture (many were mounted in frames to hang on the wall) and as early as 1897, just three years after the death of Felix Edward Pratt, an exhibition of factory productions was held in Blackpool.

Specialist auctions were held as early as 1924 when the input of wealthy industrialists from the Midlands saw pot lids reach collecting fever pitch.

Some of the more available varieties of pot lids can be purchased for under \$100, which represents wonderful decorative value. My

advice to new collectors, or simply

those who wish to purchase some examples, is to choose those that have strong colours, and if they are common varieties, then stay away from examples that have damage or repairs. Lids with original pots can increase the value by 20% or more if the pot has a complimentary decoration like marbling, trade names or gold embellishments. Plain white bases make little difference. See if you can find some Prattware or great Australian based examples.

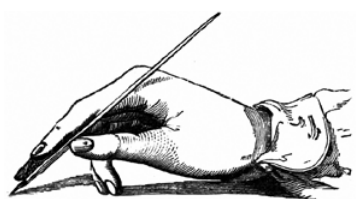
I have opened a retirement shop (Antiques & Old Wares) at 12 Isabella St, Wingham in order to continue a great hobby. Call in and say hello.

I hope that collecting brings you the enjoyment that I have experienced over forty odd years!

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 & stay safe!



YOUR SAY

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

Dear Editor,

How refreshing it was to see a newspaper come out and support the YES campaign in the recent referendum.

Although there is wide disappointment in the failure of The Voice, it has been heartening to see a local campaign for YES which spanned many groups and beyond. There were 'people of goodwill, and good heart' from Labor, the Greens, Knitting Nannas, and many of unaligned public political persuasion, who all came together in an energetic and positive group to promote a YES vote.

The result comes as a great disappointment to me and so many others, and must feel like a kick in the guts to those involved in the Uluru Statement and with much more to lose than I. The Australian people

were asked for a mere crumb, and were told No by so many. However, I maintain hope that the feeling of camaraderie and positive connection by the hardworking members of Manning for YES, and the wider Lyne for YES, may carry forward into the future and in our area of such strong National history.

There may come an actual choice in who represents us. Making our electorates of Lyne and Myall Lakes more marginal will encourage both sides of politics to pay more attention to the Manning area.

Thank you to The Manning Community News for offering an alternative to the popular press and its negative, often misleading, and sometimes nasty reporting of the referendum.

Heather McLaughlin
Taree West.

Dear Editor,

Despair! That is my reaction to the Referendum's outcomes. But this emotion will diminish quickly.

David Unaipon (featured on the front page of your newspaper last issue) once wrote that "*the voice of the wind . . . rides the storm . . . and is everywhere . . . through the colour of the bush, the birds, the flowers, the fish, the streams . . .*"

E.G. Whitlam Prime Minister of Australia in 1973 once claimed "*We are determined that the long record that has marked our treatment of Aboriginal people for two centuries of white civilisation on this continent will be brought to an end.*"

The great film actor David Gulpilil showed us the way we should follow as he was an actor and dancer and crossed the lines in the still divided worlds – One is an intimate world of spiritual connections with the land and universe as a whole and the other a largely materialistic conformation of Western civilisation.

John Ramsland OAM
Newcastle

Emeritus Professor of History and author of "*Custodians of the Soil.*"

T'WAS EVER THUS???

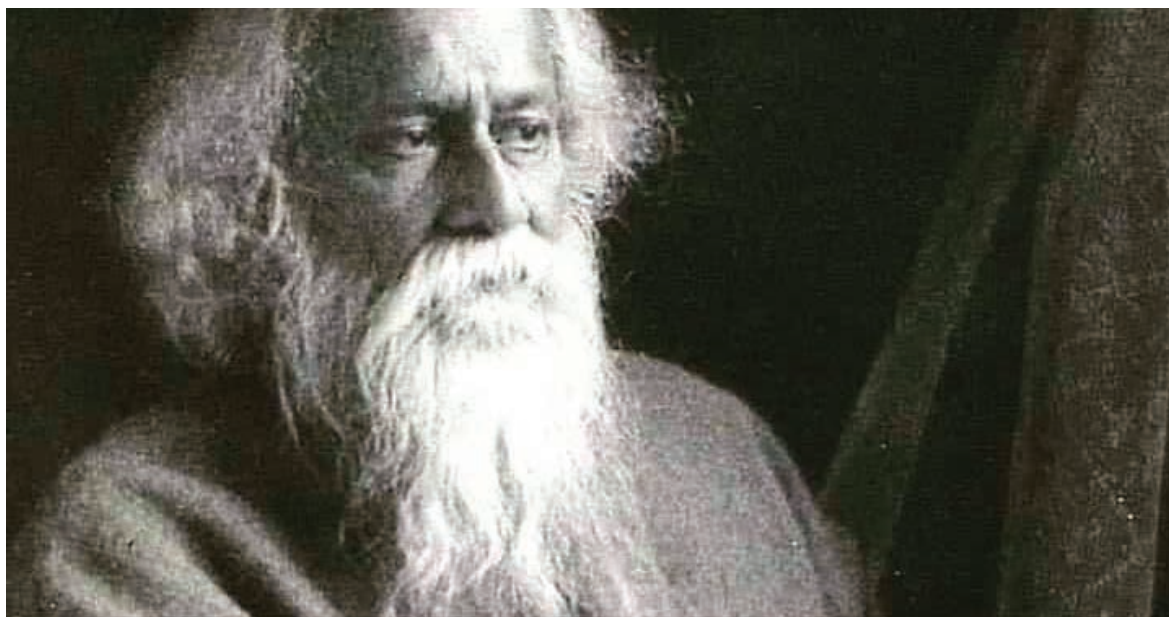
People are constantly complaining that we have no practical men; that we have, for instance, hundreds of politicians and hundreds of generals; that one can find as many business managers of all sorts as one wants nowadays, but that we have no practical men. At least everyone is complaining that there are not any to be found. It is even asserted that there is no efficient personnel on some of our railway lines; it is said that it is quite impossible to get a more or less decent administrative staff for a steamship company. You hear of train collisions or of the collapse of a bridge under a train of a newly opened railway; you read of another train almost hibernating in a snowdrift: it was due to arrive in a few hours and it was snowed up for five days. In one place hundreds of tons of goods are lying rotting for two or three months before they are dispatched, and in another it is reported (though it is hardly credible) that a railway administrator—that is some railway inspector—has administered a punch on the nose to a

merchant's clerk, who had been worrying him about the dispatch of his goods, and indeed, sought to excuse his administrative act on the ground that he had been 'a little short-tempered'. There are, it seems, so many government offices that one's imagination boggles at the mere thought of it; everyone has been in the civil service, everyone is in the civil service, everyone intends to be in the civil service, and this being so, how is it possible that a decent administrative staff cannot be made up of such excellent material to run some steamship company?

The answer sometimes given to this question is very simple—so simple, indeed, that one finds it difficult to believe such an explanation. It is true, we are told, that everyone in our country is, or has been, in the civil service, and that this has been going on, in accordance with the best German model, for the last two hundred years, from grandfather to grandson, but the trouble is that our civil servants themselves are the most impractical men in the world, and things have come to

such a pass that abstraction and lack of practical knowledge were, till quite recently, considered even by the civil servants themselves as the highest virtues and qualifications. However, we did not really mean to discuss civil servants, we intended to talk only about practical men. There can be no doubt that diffidence and complete absence of personal initiative have always been regarded in our country as the chief and best sign of a practical man—and are so regarded still. But if such an opinion can be regarded as an accusation, we have only ourselves to blame. Lack of originality has from time immemorial been regarded throughout the world as the chief characteristic and best recommendation of a sensible, business-like, and practical man, and at least ninety-nine per cent of men (and that's putting it at the lowest) always were of that opinion, and only perhaps one man in a hundred looks and always has looked on it differently.

Dostoevsky *The Idiot* (first published 1 Jan 1868)



"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." - Rabindranath Tagore

Pass this paper to a friend or neighbour before recycling

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If you have a story idea please contact us.

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