

The Manning Community News

MARCH 2024

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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

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WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON AT MIDCOAST ASSIST?

The sudden and devastating announcement from MidCoast Council that they're closing MidCoast Assist (MCA) Disability and Aged Care program has shocked staff, patients and families along with many in the community.

Council gives the reason that MidCoast Assist will not be profitable in the coming years despite having made substantive profits in four of the past five years. MCA workers disputes this.

Other reasons no doubt include the fact a pay claim for underpaid night staff brought to Council for settlement, ended up in the Industrial Relations Commission rather than coming to a reasonable compromise.

We'll never know the actual figure Council had to fork out in 2021/2022 dispute as the settlement is locked in 70 non disclosure agreements. However in a reply to a Question Without Notice from Councillor Epov, the General Manager said the debt was not \$900,000 but \$199,672.55. And no legal fees were incurred. (I'd like the name of that law firm.)

The only financial year which put MCA into debt was 2021/22 where there was an unexplained loss of \$1.693 million.

Council's sudden decision to shut



down MCA was allegedly based on a survey of the viability of MCA done by a consulting firm hired to help

with the "transition".

Their alleged prediction that due to factors

such as "NDIS and aged care reform" the MCA business would be running at a loss by 2030, shocked MCA staff. They argued how anyone could possibly predict what will happen with NDIS?

MCA claim they operated with a profit four out of the last five years -

All MCA participants and clients have a contract with MCA, not with Council. It is up to the individual who they want to sign on with. It is not a business that can be assigned to another provider without each individual agreeing to the transfer.

MCA staff wonder if their service is so unviable why would anyone be interested in taking it over?

Some staff members recall former MCA head, Paul Martin, telling them that MCA made a profit last year. Council maintains they are operating at a loss.

The following table shows the financial position of MCA since

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WHY? WHY? WHY? WHO TRAINS LOCAL ARBORISTS?

If an arborist turns up and tells you that a eucalypt (or indeed any tree) needs removing because it has borers or termites, or tells you that you need to remove mistletoe from a tree to save it, ask yourself if they have a conflict of interest. Do they also receive income from removing trees or mistletoe?



The termites in these once lovely trees were eating a very small section of the dead heartwood in trees which could have lived for centuries. Sadly, ignorance, pecuniary interest and poor environmental education has led to its premature death.

the what could have been start of a home in years to come....

Too many rare, old, healthy, much needed trees are being slaughtered for no good reason. Except perhaps to line pockets of the those companies that apparently cruise around looking for likely suspects or are called to inspect a tree in a neighbourhood.

Rarely does anyone get an authoritative second opinion.

Opinions on trees from the likes of council workers and the electricity people are also fraught. In my koala suburb it's been a fight with tree "trimmers" and the electricity people who "trim" to a bare stump, or, as in my case insist that a fifteen year old decorative stand of clumping bamboo

is now likely to suddenly "run away" like standard bamboo, so dig the lot out. Or that local trees which are not koala feed trees, but ones where koalas have for generations slept in them or just sit with their babies, should be hacked down.

Council should be going hell for leather protecting every established tree we have. Green shade cover from big old trees is a highly desirable way of keeping the temperature down. And as for the deserts of treeless housing estates, don't get me started.

So it was devastating to discover that two beautiful youthful trees in an avenue screening the not very attractive brick block buildings of Wingham High school, had been attacked by some "arborist."

The sad sight of stripped young logs beggars belief. Not a sign of "riddles" but in the centre of the rain-forest "Red Kamala" is the beginning of a "pipe" in the stump. In another 20 years or more it would have become



Like it never happened...now we can see the ugly building so much better

a proper habitat tree with the much desired "hollow" for birds and animals to make a nest.

Borers, termites and mistletoe are part of the biodiversity often found in larger older eucalypts where they can co-exist for centuries. Many of these trees have had mistletoe growing in them for just as long.

These need to be looked at as biodiversity, not pests!

The trees were strapping chaps, not about to fall over on a passersby.

The Headmaster of Wingham High was not aware of the demolition of these trees when contacted. And said he would get back to us as to why how and who was responsible for the decision to bring down the trees.

Still waiting.

It would be tragic if they brought the rest of the trees down so unnecessarily.

DM



The Guildford Tree, an outstanding River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) in the town of Guildford, Victoria. The tree has borers, termites and much other biodiversity, but is healthy and has the potential to live for many more centuries. Unlike their relatives in Wingham NSW. Image: Dean Nicolle.

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2018/19

20218/19 Surplus \$247,000

2019/20 Surplus \$372,000

2020/21 Surplus \$ 223,000

21/22 Deficit \$1.693m

22/23 Surplus \$234,000

23/23 Est. Surplus \$1.2m (at 28 February 2024)

Equally, senior staff at MCA estimate Council will have to fork out at least \$3 million to wind up MCA, pay out existing contractors, administration costs, subscriptions with IT companies etc.

The MCA staff are devastated. One employee stated,

"MCA is the most caring, friendly and close-knit team of people that I have encountered in all my years of community service work.

This is reflected in the feedback from the participants and elderly who use the service.

I and my colleagues (almost without exception) had found their "forever jobs" and would have stayed at MCA come hell or high water.

It has been a great place to work - on the disability side we are paid well under industry award wage and penalty rates yet still chose to work at MCA. Now there is a lot of fear and uncertainty, anxiety among staff and we are getting regular emails from the hierarchy warning us to not approach any other possible employer, threats about making code of conduct breaches."

It seems to the MCA staff that Council wants them to stay on and not have an opinion or a voice until Council decides when they are no longer needed.

That could be a long wait until MCA closes on 30 September or when Council decides. Allegedly redundancies have been offered to longer serving staff but only if they stay until council say so or no doubt signed a non disclosure agreement.

With approximately 130 staff and some who have worked at MCA for ten years or more, staff redundancies are going to be significant.

Surely there will be a glut of workers looking for new jobs, having to live off modest redundancies and their savings while trying to apply for the same job as 30 of their former colleagues at the same time.

Also MCA staff have been told not to attend public sessions held by other Provider companies recruiting in the sector.

In an email to MCA staff, Council's Paul de Szell explained the reasons for the change are:

- Because it is inherently inefficient to run two separate reception areas for one business. We are one business and we provide a range of services (CCP, A&O, SCE, Plan Management and Support Coordination) to our clients and participants.



- The costs of providing services to our clients and participants are continually increasing. By way of example CPI rose 7.3% over the last 12 months.
- When the costs of doing business increase, we have limited options to work with. The levers we have to pull are reducing expenses, scaling back services or increasing fees. Right now we are focused on reducing expenses by realising efficiencies. I see this as being preferable to scaling back services or significantly increasing fees when some of our clients may already been in a position where affordability is an issue.

(On NBN News in an interview with Paul DeSzell the voice over stated . . . "All 130 staff will be transitioned to another provider.")

As well as losing their jobs, the staff at MCA are also deeply concerned about their disability clients. The Day Program group have been together for a long time, and staff say they are more like brothers and sisters, certainly best friends with each other. Staff worry that this breakup of the clients could have a devastating impact on them as well as the Day Program where they go on cruises every year, to Sydney to see musicals, watch NRL games and enjoy group activities.

While patients and families are trying to digest and understand this sudden announcement, the staff are



shattered. Disability care is specific and requires training, patience, kindness and caring, for what is a pretty basic wage scale. MCA operates in a market with multiple other providers who offer ageing or disability services.

QUESTIONS YET TO BE ANSWERED INCLUDE –

Why has this all been done in secret, no transparency - so no accountability by individual Councillors, no public backlash and no public debate.

Has the MidCoast Assist staff been misled / lied to right up to the announcement of closure?

Why were Councillors denied access to MidCoast Assist's Profit and Loss Statements?

Even given the MCA loss in the Financial Year 21/22, the business still remained in surplus to the tune of \$1.4M.

In December last year and again in January this year, Council was

projecting a meagre profit of \$19,852 for MidCoast Assist. But after the decision to close it down on 28 February they projected a surplus of \$1.2 Million for the year. 60 times greater. Huh??

So with that \$1.4 Million in reserve plus a new projection of \$1.2 million surplus for this year, MidCoast Assist would have had \$2.6 million to tackle any future challenges.

How is Council helping MCA clients find/move to new providers?

MCA staff are now wondering what has allegedly gone on with their finances that appeared to have been juggled hither and fro.

MidCoast Council is adamant that the decision to close down MCA was only made during a meeting held on February 7th, but staff say they were contacted by people working in the local disability sector months ago that this closure was being mooted.

In the meantime, angst reigns.
DM

WHY GO NUCLEAR? FOR AUSTRALIA, RENEWABLES ARE CHEAPER AND FASTER!

Gregory Andrews

When my nephew recently asked rhetorically “why wouldn’t nuclear be cheaper?”, I realised that political smoke-screening on nuclear energy is having its desired effect.

So what was my response? The first thing I said was - I’m technology neutral. I’m open to all sources of energy as long as they’re zero-emissions, reliable, safe and low-cost. My second point was, on that basis, Australia doesn’t need nuclear because it’s too expensive and slow in comparison to renewables.

My third point was that the LNP’s spruiking of nuclear isn’t about climate action or decarbonisation. It’s a hand grenade thrown for distraction and delay.

Exploring the case of Spain illuminates why renewables are the clear choice for Australia’s energy future.

In Spain, high renewable energy investment has led to significantly lower electricity prices. Solar and wind generation now account for over 50 per cent of electricity production and have [driven electricity prices down](#) to near €2 per megawatt-hour. That compares to €67 in France which is heavily reliant on nuclear power.

This stark difference highlights the economic, commercial

and social benefits of investing in renewables over nuclear. Especially for Australia, which like Spain, has abundant solar and wind resources.

Australia’s renewable energy resources are immense. [Our solar and wind resources](#) are capable of generating much more electricity than we consume. This potential is not just theoretical; we’ve already been making strides in the roll out of renewables. South Australia, for example, often runs at 100% renewables and the ACT is already at 100%.

AUSTRALIAN ADVANTAGES

Investing in renewables offers several advantages for Australia, especially in the context of the cost of living. Firstly, the cost of generating electricity from renewable sources like wind and solar has plummeted globally, making it the cheapest form of new electricity generation. Solar and wind power can provide low-cost electricity to consumers, contributing to lower energy bills and alleviating cost of living pressures. According to the CSIRO, [nuclear options in Australia would cost between five and ten times more](#).

Secondly, renewable energy projects can be deployed much faster than nuclear, meaning they can start delivering benefits to the grid and to consumers much sooner. Given that the world has already hit

the Paris Agreement 1.5C threshold, rapid deployment capability is crucial. Small Modular Reactors that Peter Dutton talks about have never been built anywhere in the world. They’re still only ideas.

Moreover, the decentralisation potential of renewables, particularly solar, can empower Australian households and businesses to generate their own electricity, further driving down costs and enhancing energy security. This contrasts with the centralised nature of nuclear power, which requires significant infrastructure, security, and upfront investment, translating into higher costs for consumers. The solar panels on the roof of my house mean we don’t pay power companies anything for our electricity. Indeed, they pay us for the surplus electricity we generate and share to the grid.

Environmental and safety considerations also favor renewables over nuclear. Renewable energy projects have much smaller environmental footprints and do not produce hazardous waste, unlike nuclear power, which requires radioactive waste management and brings with it the risk of accidents like those in Chernobyl and Fukushima.

Spain’s experience underscores the economic and environmental viability of scaling up renewables for Australia. The lessons are clear:

investing in solar and wind leads to lower electricity prices, faster decarbonisation, and greater energy independence and security.

AUSTRALIA DOESN’T NEED NUCLEAR

The answer to the nuclear question is a simple one: Australia doesn’t need it. Our abundant renewable energy resources provide much more cost-effective, commercially viable and safer means of meeting our energy needs and addressing the urgent challenge of climate change. Let’s not fall victim to Peter Dutton and the LNP’s tactics of distraction and delay.

(Gregory Andrews is the driving force behind Lyrebird Dreaming. With a background in international relations, climate and environment policy, governance, and cross-cultural communication, Gregory brings together over 30 years of experience - from international postings to community development in remote Indigenous communities. Gregory is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Canberra and a D’harawal man. His key passions are the environment and Indigenous empowerment.)

KIMBARRA LODGE GLOUCESTER – A WASTED RESOURCE

A January 1990 article in *The Gloucester Advocate* reported that the then Gloucester Shire Council had approved the go-ahead for a 20-unit aged care hostel attached to the Gloucester Hospital.

The development had huge support from the local community, and from groups such as Rotary, Apex, Lions, CWA and Red Cross. After it opened, Kimbarra Lodge provided quality aged care for many years until it was closed in 2020, when aged care services in Gloucester were transferred to a new Anglicare run facility known as Mirrabooka.

Kimbarra Lodge has been largely vacant and unused since that time.

The Lodge consists of five separate blocks, all in good condition. Four blocks consist of five separate living units and each unit has an ensuite. Each block has its own kitchenette/dining room/lounge. The fifth block consists of a common dining room, kitchen, lounge, storeroom and disabled bathroom.

Like many other areas, Gloucester has a desperate need for affordable accommodation, particularly for those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.

When it became clear that Kimbarra was going to close, Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group (BWNG) wrote to hospital management as follows:

'As Kimbarra Lodge is a purpose built facility with an extensive history of effort and funds secured from the local community, it is therefore seen as a locally owned community asset.

As a locally based non (sic) for profit organisation that has been working within the Gloucester community, it is therefore seen as a locally owned community asset.

The board of BWNG feel we have the capacity to manage the lodge for a



multitude of purposes for the future.

To retain this community asset under the direction of a local service provider would be greatly beneficial in offering a number of services that are critically needed here.'

Unfortunately, no reply was received.

After Kimbarra was closed, and apparently not being utilised, the then Shadow Health Minister Ryan Park was contacted, who on 14 May 2021 wrote to the then Minister, Brad Hazzard saying:

'...I strongly believe as do many in the community that it (Kimbarra) must be repurposed to address the serious shortage of emergency accommodation as well as possible (sic) address other community needs in the local area.

Ideas being proposed include:

- Respite for NDIS clients and in-home aged care clients
- Palliative care for Home Care package clients
- On country Indigenous palliative care
- Social Housing for people

who don't require extensive, specialised support

- Supported Independent Living for people with a disability that is fit for purpose
- In-home aged care for both the career and people with a disability who may also be experiencing age-related issues.'

After the last NSW State election Ryan Park became the Health Minister and on 7 February 2024, I wrote to Minister Park reminding him of his letter dated 14 May 2021 and asking him to respond to the following questions:

- 1/ What is the lodge being used for presently?
- 2/ Do you, now that you are Minister, intend to take steps to see that the Lodge is repurposed in the way that your letter suggested?
- 3/ If so, when is something going to be done?
- 4/ If not, then please explain why the Lodge cannot be used in the way that your letter urged?

I also wrote to Hunter New

England Health asking similar questions. They responded that any reply would come from the Minister, and after four weeks I finally received a reply from the Minister. He commented that the premises are presently being used as "an accommodation hub for visiting students, nurses and medical staff", but gave no details whatsoever of the extent of such use. How many rooms are being used and how often? This remains a mystery, although if my local intelligence is correct, not many and not often.

He also said:

"I am pleased to confirm that there are no plans to use the site for non-health related purposes."

It seems that the enthusiasm and strong belief that the Minister had when in opposition for using Kimbarra for the community purposes suggested in his letter of 14 May 2021 has simply vanished.

The NSW State Government seems to have recognised that there is a crisis in relation to accommodation and has just released a discussion paper titled *A fairer housing system for NSW* about which they will be seeking public comment.

It's pleasing that the state government has acknowledged that there is a serious problem, but discussion is all well and good - perhaps as an immediate first step they could look closer to home at accommodation under their own control which might be used to help solve the problem - properties such as Kimbarra Lodge, which on any view, is being grossly unutilised.

John Watts

GLOUCESTER CARAVAN PARK - ACTION AT LONG LAST - FINGERS CROSSED

'Barrington Coast' is a marketing brand created, owned and run by Midcoast Council. Its glossy website, designed to bring tourists to the town, has this to say about Gloucester.

'A scenic one-hour drive from the Pacific Ocean coastline brings you to Gloucester via the Bucketts Way. It's one of the state's oldest tourist drives, and for good reasons: short drives around the district take you to dramatic mountain ranges and picturesque valleys and rivers.

Gloucester is a small country town with a remarkable backdrop of the Buccan Buccans (Bucketts Mountains) surrounded by productive farms and high forested mountains. The town sits in its own valley at the junction of three rivers - the Gloucester, Avon and Barrington - in the upper catchment of the Manning River.

Gloucester is the closest town to renowned wilderness destinations in the Barrington Tops parklands, Woko and Copeland Tops.

Gloucester is justifiably proud of its many parks and public areas that

make the most of the scenic location. Greeting you at the southern entrance to town is the golf course which must be the prettiest in the state, you'll be challenged to keep your eyes off the stunning views. In the centre of town is Gloucester District Park that offers an unbeatable range of sporting facilities in its beautiful riverside location: a fully equipped recreation centre for indoor sports, football fields for all codes, basketball, tennis, lawn bowls and even croquet. Plus, the jewel in the crown is the Olympic pool complex that includes a heated hydrotherapy centre.'

The website then gives some details of accommodation options, including a number of sites for those keen on camping or caravanning. Interestingly, one site that is not



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mentioned is the Gloucester Caravan Park, and this omission is probably understandable considering the appalling state of that facility.

Gloucester Caravan Park is owned by the Midcoast Council, but since 2010 it has been managed by an operator under a lease arrangement. That lease expired some time ago, and in recent years the park has become more and more dilapidated and in need of a significant upgrade. It certainly does not measure up to the standard expected by the modern camper and caravanner. A few examples:

- The park's roads, some of which are bitumen and some of which are gravel, show no signs of regular maintenance and are potholed, rough and pose a risk to cars, caravans, bikes and pedestrians.
- The park's amenities blocks are many years behind the times and are basic, to say the least.
- There is no decent camp kitchen, which is a must for any modern caravan park.
- Many of the permanent cabins are run down and unsightly.
- The park office and the entrance area are unattractive and uninviting.
- The park is adjacent to the Gloucester River, but the area between the camp sites and the river is largely overgrown with weeds such as privet and ballon vine. The river is a

completely wasted and unutilised asset.

- At one time the park had a mini put golf course but it has fallen into complete disrepair and is fenced off.

It is understandable that the present operators of the park have been reluctant to spend money on any improvements when they have no long-term lease. From all reports they are friendly and helpful to those choosing to stay, but the park is cer-

tainly not a facility of which Gloucester and the Midcoast Council can be proud.

I asked the Council for comment and received a prompt and helpful response, and thankfully, at long last, it seems that some action is being taken to rectify the situation, although it's unclear why it has taken so long.

The Council agreed that the park is presently in a poor state of repair and in need of a significant upgrade.

I asked the Council what plans, if any, it had for the future operation of the park, and in particular, whether the Council intended to put the future operation of the park out to tender, and if so, when. The reply was as follows:

We are currently calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from prospective proponents to take over the operation of the park, via a lease agreement. Council is seeking to identify respondents who have the vision and capability to make the park a successful part of the local community. The EOI is to gain a more detailed understanding of the market and range of management solutions available and to identify the preferred option for ongoing operation of the park. Council is open to considering different approaches and models for future operation of the Park. The preference is for a long-term agreement. The EOI is currently available on Council's Vendor Panel platform and closes 7 March 2024. From there, submissions will be assessed against the criteria listed in the EOI and a short list of prospective operators will enter a select tender process.'

It is encouraging to see that Council does recognise that there is a significant problem with the park at present and has begun to do something to rectify the situation. Let's hope that it does not end up in the too hard basket, and that there is now speedy action to create a state-of-the-art facility which attracts, rather than repels tourists.

John Watts



IT'S A LOT MORE THAN CHANGING A LIGHT BULB OR KNITTING A TEA COSY

We all know about Men's sheds.
Now we need a lot more Womens' Sheds!

There is a network of approximately 1000 Men's Sheds around Australia supported by government funds; there are only 51 Women's Sheds around the country operating as not for profit collectives. In Wingham, the local "women's shed", known as The Women's Kind

Collective, is hanging on by its fingernails. They need support! Begun in 2022 in the wonderful old NAB bank building on Isabella St, in Wingham, the collective emerged as a result of the adversity the region was experiencing with cost of living, rents etc etc. A generous grant from the State

Government Department of Industry, Services, Energy and Research following bush fires and floods, paved the way for the establishment of a womens shed catering to women and non-binary individuals in need of support, friendship, workshops and counselling. The collective quickly made strides extending its positive impact throughout the local community and to regions in the Manning Valley to

those who were searching to swap their stories, join in group discussions and support each other. Nestled in the heart of Wingham, temporarily housed at the old NAB Bank, the Womens Kind Collective or WKC has become a hub of activity offering a number of services aimed at fostering empowerment and connection. From subsidised workshops to providing a welcoming drop-in space, WKC has become a much-needed facility for women seeking ideas on all sorts of subjects, including how to cope with the high cost of everything and be more self sufficient.

As the current funding cycle draws to a close for WKC, there is a collective determination to ensure that the doors of the Womens Kind Collective remains open.

SERVED AS A CATALYST

Kate Darnell, the coordinator recounts how the collective has served as a catalyst for community support, social change and according to a



Participants enjoyed an Art Class with Amy Saunders

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Eden and Kate Darnell enjoy raising funds and awareness for The Women Kind Collective.





Our popular "Under the Bonnet" class coordinated by Rachel Love



Lisa Hort coordinated a mother and child canvas collaboration.



Artist and Facilitator Ann McDermott holds a SELF CARE BONBON session Dec 2023

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number of success stories she'd been told, transformation of women who may simply have come seeking confidence in getting a job now that their children are attending school.

While the achievements of WKC are commendable in a relatively short space of time, they admit it's disheartening to note the scarcity of similar initiatives across the country.

Despite the challenges, the local WKC remains determined to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all. They also pledge to stay updated on their journey and learn more about the needs of the diverse group of people who have so far sought out their support.

They also want to work with organisations such as The Red Cross, The CWA, View Clubs and other community womens' groups

so as to continue to provide inclusive opportunities for all women, as well as LGBTQI and those who answer to non-binary.

WOMEN NEED HELP

It is not only the headlines that reveal how many women need help, there are women, possibly in your street, who appear to be happily married, living in nice homes in nuclear marriages without grandparents

nearby, who in reality feel isolated, lonely, unfulfilled and depressed.

Perhaps it's even more so in rural and regional parts of Australia without access to local companionship, female friends to confide in, a safe place to relax while learning new skills.

Surely this demonstrates the importance of taking note of the growing demand for womens' sheds?

All the women who volunteer to work at the WKC have either felt disconnected or come seeking connection.

They say they have come on board hoping to build their own confidence and to reach out and make new friends by helping others who have helped them.

WKC will be homeless at the end of April, unless a helping hand by the State and/or the Federal government offers to keep them afloat.

Meanwhile, they are a project of the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services and will carry on their work setting up regular markets in the village square with other small businesses, selling t-shirts, home-made items and second-hand clothes to keep funds rolling in. They hope it will not be long before they can rent another premises and pin up their big colourful sign.

Their final event is the Body-Mind-Soul and will be held on March 23 & 24. Activities starting on Thursday at 2.30pm with special guests at the Womens Kind Collective premises, followed at 7pm by an Empowered Women Movie night. On Friday there is a Morning Breakfast with guest speakers being held at Bent On Food café in Wingham.

There will also be meditation, yoga, and counselling sessions.

If this appeals to you and you have an empty space in your diary go on to Facebook and Instagram @women_kind_collective, or call Kate on 0422652108.

Sherry Stumm

WHAT'S ON & WHERE TO GO

Autumn months in the Manning

RESTAURANT REVIEW.



A typical European city style bar to meet with friends and have a coffee or drink.



A touch of the Mediterranean a romantic outdoors seating area where guests can dine privately under cover.

It's bliss on our streets in autumn without the swarm of visitors, even though we'll miss them. They leave us with a legacy each year -a welcome boost to our local economy and a selection of excellent eateries.

The newest "kid on the block" is **Mezza Eatery** in Wharf St, Forster, a brand -new Middle Eastern restaurant and bar with city opening times; daily from 8am to 9pm serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and drinks.

It warms me that at last there are places like **Mezza**, serving excellent cuisine throughout the day and into the night offering drinks and/or a meal that is interesting enough to explore and share with family and friends.

When I came to live in the Manning Valley 25 years ago, I despaired when everything shut down at 2.30pm. Few places offered dinner, much less foreign cuisine apart from the Chinese and Indian restau-

rants with menus tamed to suit Anglo palates. Most were closed on Mondays and Tuesdays which often disappointed my visitors who expected to dine out.

So restaurants like **Mezza** and several other restaurants in Forster and Taree who are also catering to visitors and locals with extended hours are very popular.

The **Mezza eatery** is like dining in Europe, the bar exudes a welcoming intimacy, the extra tables on the enclosed covered patio are cooled by the ocean breezes and the lighting glows softly. I could have sworn I had stepped into a French or Spanish bar/ bistro in Europe when I discovered it.

Like them, **Mezza** prepares and cooks all its traditional Middle Eastern food fresh every day using various aromatic sauces and flavours.

Of course, there are meals on the menu for those who are timid about trying too many different types of food at once, but for those

of us willing to explore the menu, this is an eating experience you may enjoy.

I tried what is called the 'shared Mezza' menu with friends, ordering small bowls of humus, Baba Ghanoush, roasted chicken pieces slow cooked in Moroccan spices, kalamata olives in za'atar oil, Tabouleh, pickles, herbs and garlic sauce, accompanied by lots of fresh warm pita flatbread.

Next time I called in it was to taste some of their bigger dishes. I ordered grilled halloumi cheese with pecan and honey glaze and oregano, and a dish of prawns with a side sauce of garlic, onions, tomato, coriander and spicy harissa sauce.

At the risk of being dubbed greedy by my friends, I asked for a side dish of Lebanese spicy potatoes dusted with coriander, a helping of fried cauliflower and a small serving of Falafel with fresh parsley, coriander and tahini sauce.

I recommend you take along a companion to help you get through any of these combinations, because you really shouldn't leave without treating yourself to one of the desserts.

I'm definitely coming back to taste all 5 desserts. My first choice however, was Bastani Sonnati, which is home-made Middle Eastern ice cream with rosewater, orange blossom and pistachio. My next visit will include Cafe Najja coffee-soaked dates in Persian syrup, with roasted coconut ice cream.

Equally delicious sounding is the Havuc Dilim Baklava, and the Kanefe, a Turkish sweet cheese pastry in attar rose syrup sprinkled with dried rose petals and pistachio nuts.

Heavenly sounding and tasty, all that's needed is the swaying hips of a belly dancer and I'll swear I've been transported to Istanbul in Turkey!

RR. (Restaurant reviewer.)

CELEBRATING WOMEN

On the 8th March thirty three women from Gloucester and surrounds gathered at the Avon Valley Inn for a special lunch to recognise International Women's Day (IWD).

The lunch, organised by the Gloucester Environment Group, was so successful it will be an annual event. It was inspiring to see so many women of different ages, and from diverse backgrounds, coming together to recognise the struggle for equality, but also to highlight the positive aspects of being a woman.

The speaker, Di Montague commenced by outlining the challenges faced by women around the world and the need for us to acknowledge, and be united, in addressing gender equality. Personal experiences were drawn from the group. Many of the women spoke of past years having to leave work when they married or got pregnant. The limited number of job opportunities open to women and the lack of any financial assistance for single parents.

Some people might question why we need to have an International Women's Day. It's simple. Because, even though we have come a long way with women's rights around the world, we have a long way to go. In Australia one woman a week is killed due to domestic violence. Unequal pay, barriers to equal superannuation and the rising numbers of homeless women and children are some of the issues

we need to address so all women have equal opportunities.

IWD is an opportunity to acknowledge and stand with women in solidarity.

Not wanting the day to be only the negative aspects, the second half of the presentation focused on the positives. As women we are vital to the cohesiveness, strength and resilience of our communities. The group was then invited to think of a woman they admire or look up to. There were stories of aunts, sisters, mothers, friends and interestingly very few famous women. There was even a story of a chance encounter with a nun on a plane. The teller was impressed by her fortitude and a life of giving to others.

The day was enhanced by the tasty lunch and friendly, professional staff of the Avon Valley Inn ... all women.

We ended with the reading of positive quotes, collected and mounted on beautiful book marks created by Janine Philips . . . *'Each time a woman*



stands up for herself she stands up for all women.' Maya Angelou.

The atmosphere on leaving was one of warmth and camaraderie. Thank you to the GEG events committee led by Sue Watts and all the women who shared this special day with us.



Dianne Montague
Gloucester Environment Group

Waterbird

RESTAURANT & BAR

Manning Point Marina

Established in 2007

Phone or text

0428 592 163



Waterfront Dining & Take-Away



The Waterbird Restaurant & Bar tucked away in quiet Manning Point is a unique eatery with spectacular views over the Manning River. It's been a well known secret spot for many years.

It's a treat to relax on the deck sipping your drink as the river flows under your feet and the resident pelicans give you haughty hints. Flat-head and brim sometimes break the surface of the water a stone's throw in front of you. And if it is your lucky day chances are you'll even see a pod of dolphins lazily swimming past as you tuck into fresh mouth-watering seafood. How good is that?

(See our restaurant review in the next issue.)

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE BETWEEN ORGANIC, NATURAL AND SYNTHETIC SKIN CARE?

Beauty consumers tend to want immediate results from their skin care but at the same time there is an increasing preference for natural and organic ingredients. How do they stack up?

ORGANIC PRODUCTS

The definition of an organic product is one which contains all living or once living organisms including petrochemical products. To be certified organic, an ingredient must be completely natural, free from the use of any synthetic pesticides or fertilisers and free from any synthetic processing. The product must be certified by an organisation like Ecocert or Cosmos which comes at a substantial cost to the manufacturer and their logo would appear on the product. Costs rise as every ingredient has to be tested for the manufacturer.

These products generally are more expensive, and the other drawback is that they are potentially far more irritating to the skin than synthetic counterparts. Some of the most irritating ingredients in skin care are natural ingredients, most commonly, essential oils. Some can increase the sensitivity to sunlight, cause skin irritations, and what works effectively for one person can be highly reactive to another.

Lemon Oil for example must be used in concentrations of less than 0.05% and must contain a warning that it may increase the sensitivity to sunlight (Therapeutic Goods Administration).

Natural or Organic does not mean safe. All skin care ingredients are considered safe when used within regulatory limits – Synthetic, Natural or Organic. This is not to say that you can't find a fantastic organic product on the market because you

can but from a formulator's perspective, the performance characteristics, and sensory profiles and overall ingredient choices are significantly reduced. What's this mean..is it not worthwhile doing or it adds to their costs??)

For some consumers organic products are quite simply worth the extra cost.

NATURAL PRODUCTS

Natural products are derived from a natural source and have only minimal physical changes to the raw materials. They have not gone through the same strict and costly requirements imposed on organic skin care ingredients. When most consumers think of a natural product, they may not understand that natural products may be classified as synthetic.

Take aloe vera extract for example; the starting point is natural but there is the chance that the ingredients have gone through a synthetic process. If an ingredient has a synthetic component at any stage of its manufacture, it is no longer considered natural.

Extracts are usually produced by obtaining plant materials and soaking them in a solvent. This process, depending on the material, could last for months. The solvent that is used could be water, alcohol or even an oil of which may not or may not be natural. Quite often formulators will add a preservative to extend the shelf life of a material which again is quite often synthetic. What starts out as a natural product, moves to an unnatural product with synthetic processing. It can be eye opening

to see some companies marketing their products as natural and good for the environment, but yet there are synthetic components in their manufacture.

ESSENTIAL OILS

Most consumers expect that essential oils are natural. However, there are some manufacturers that add preservatives to extend the shelf life of the essential oils, which can be synthetic. You can usually spot these by the products as the oils will have a use by date. When purchasing essential oils please check for the date and the ingredients. It should have just one ingredient.

NATURE IDENTICAL

Some ingredients like amino acids and some vitamins start from a completely synthetic source and yet are promoted as natural but are completely synthetic. However these can have far less impurities than their natural counterparts. The only way to ascertain whether the ingredients are completely natural is to ask the raw material supplier for a certificate of analysis (CoFA) and flow chart. (Which most consumers wouldn't know, care or do!)

How do you tell if products that use Bees Wax (Cera Alba) are natural or not? Most of the time manufacturers use synthetic options as they have far less impurities than their natural counterparts and are also potentially far cheaper to purchase. An impurity in a formulation could decrease the shelf life of the product or reduce the stability of the formulation. This may cause the product to separate, have off notes,

or even change colour. Either way, no consumer would accept a product with these symptoms.

PETROCHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Petrol based products derived from crude oil are completely natural and go through natural processing. However they are classed as synthetic as they are derived from non-renewable sources.

SYNTHETIC PRODUCTS

Ingredients in skin care are strictly controlled and although the regulations change from one part of the world to another, any ingredients that are used within the regulations are considered safe whether natural or not.

Synthetic components in skin care may be used as some ingredients are not sustainable so chemical companies make a synthetic version of the ingredient which chemically is the same but does not decimate the natural supply source.

When researching the impacts of organic versus synthetic ingredients, the discussion is not about whether synthetic ingredients are safer than organic, because by definition they are when used within regulatory limits. The real question is, do I have to make a compromise in the performance of a product in purchasing a natural or organic product?

To spot a synthetic ingredient look for the letters (ETH) in the ingredients, which are listed on the back of the product. The ingredients must be listed in descending order from the most used to the least

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down to an input of 1%. This will give you a basic understanding of how much of an ingredient is in a formulation.

NATURAL VERSES SYNTHETIC

When a company decides to release a product, it is governed by the company's philosophy, budget and the desired performance characteristics. They usually define their target demographic that they are aiming to attract and have done significant research prior to even starting to formulate the product. This brief research is handed to a Cosmetic Chemist to make the samples according to the brief. If a company asks me to produce the best possible moisturiser I can, I will be using all the ingredients available and would definitely include a harmonious balance of synthetic and natural ingredients completely focusing on the performance characteristics of the ingredient to satisfy the brief. If the company wants an organic moisturizer, then my ingredient selection choices are reduced by about 80% making it far more difficult to formulate the best possible moisturizer. It is a tradeoff between functionality and the company's philosophy and no doubt profit!

ETHOXYLATION – PEG'S

Ethoxylation is a manufacturing process that makes a starting material more water loving. These ingredients can assist with foaming products, making a product milder on the skin. These products easily wash away with water which is a characteristic that desirable in a shampoo or a face wash. An ingredient that is more oil loving will tend to remain on the skin, potentially creating a residue or an occlusive layer. This is beneficial for moisturizing the skin and in the reduction of Trans Epidermal Water Loss (TEWL). **The scale goes from 1-20. The higher the number the more water loving the ingredient is, the lower the more oil loving. The lower the HLB factor, the more it will reduce the foaming component of my formula and the more likely it will leave a residue on the skin.**

The only way to have confidence as a consumer that a product is completely organic is to look for the ECOCERT, COSMOS or certified Organic logo. For a company to have this logo on their bottle, they have made a significant investment to ensure every ingredient and process is certified. When I come across a great product, I am eager to find out the ingredients so I can determine how they created the sensory profile. But when I come across an organic product that I love, I know the difficulty of its creation so respect for both the company and the formulator. Something few consumers may know, but everyone knows what they like!

Jason Tyler

www.oceanna.com.au

THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVOLUTION

Humankind has embarked on a journey to an unknown destination – and it is doing so with minimal public debate.

“Artificial intelligence” is the intelligence of machines, as distinct from the intelligence of humans or other animals. In other words, the computer has an ability to perform tasks commonly associated with human beings.

This is the first time in history humans have invented a technology they don't fully understand. AI learns by itself and it is impossible to follow its more advanced thought processes. It starts with human programming but then accelerates beyond what humans can follow.

AI is already all around us. With “customer engagement” a website may contain a chatbot to which questions can be posed to get more information. With “creation” AI writes stories, such as describing a sporting event, or composes a piece of music. With “concision” AI scans a vast array of data to identify issues, such as scanning hospital patient records to predict which patients will go on to develop particular additional health issues. AI can data-mine, for example, the material on Instagram to identify people who may develop mental health issues.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is now being developed, whereby billions of appliances contain sensors to make them “smart”, such a wristwatch that can monitor a person's health. The IoT is the common transmission core to enable appliances to communicate directly with each other, rather than reporting to humans.

For example, the refrigerator will notice a person is running short of milk; it will tell the (driv-

erless) car to stop by an outlet to buy a bottle; the “driver”, who is watching a movie, will notice the car is on a slight detour to buy milk.

Many of these changes are just creeping up on us. For example, AI is already being used to determine who can get a bank loan, or which candidates are being selected for appointments in industry.

And yet there is minimal public debate. In 2024 four billion people will be taking part in elections and yet AI is hardly mentioned in any of the election campaigns. Politicians don't know what to do about it and hope that voters won't ask any embarrassing questions.

For example, what are the implications for employment? The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated that 40 per cent of the workforce could be impacted by AI. Mass unemployment could lead to global unrest.

What are the implications for privacy? Google, for example, knows more about you than you do by tracking all your searches. It can build a good profile of a person of a person by noting all the websites they visit.

Similarly, shops are collecting data on customers. When a person goes shopping, the store is shopping for their data. The customer is tracked as they move through the store looking at items, their purchases are noted, and their credit card and telephone (which is also a tracking device) are telling the store a lot about the customer. Loyalty programmes are also a good way for stores to track customer behaviour and demographics (such

as their level of wealth).

Data collection companies are getting bigger and are vulnerable to hacking. There is a tendency to blame customers for being sloppy with passwords, and yet the real problem is too much data being held by those companies for too long a period. Old customer records should be deleted. Companies should be challenged about why did they collect the data in the first place and why has it been retained?

The larger issue is that behind closed doors there are various discussions on IT security. Those discussions should be brought out into the public.

There should be more public debate on how AI is reshaping society. For example, given the threat of widespread of unemployment should there be a universal basic income paid to everyone aged 18 and over to compensate them for possibly never finding job? How do we run a society in which the 40-hour week is not the norm and that people have plenty of spare time on their hands?

What about vacations? A vacation is a time away from work. But if a person isn't working, can they really have a vacation? Isn't their entire life a vacation? Will people die early of boredom? Where will people find meaning in their lives?

There are some profound questions to be discussed.

Dr Keith Suter

www.globaldirections.com.au

THIS IS LIZ HAYES, A MEMOIR



Liz Hayes
Harper Collins
Rrp \$16.99

Television personality Liz Hayes, formerly Beth Ryan, born into a dairy farming family on Oxley Island, Taree, is a woman at the top of her game. You know her as a Channel 9 TV personality.

This remarkable woman has risen through the ranks working as a reporter for two of Australia's competitive commercial television stations starting with Network Ten and still reigns at the Nine Network with her new-ish investigative program **Under Investigation with Liz Hayes**.

In her memoir she writes of her many experiences travelling from one corner of the earth to another, working collaboratively with her crew.

Liz reigned at 9's "Sixty Minutes" for decades. Her classy quiet manner skewered subjects into revealing more than they ever intended, and this biography takes an in-depth behind the scenes of how many now famed and infamous, stories broke.

She records her life in a straight forward way without embellishment, summarising that when an opportunity was offered she always said yes due to her sense of adventure and thirst to keep learning.

In her memoir she writes of her many experiences as a journalist travelling from one corner of the earth to another, working collaboratively with her crew.

Liz makes it seem so simple, a steady rise to the top. She learnt on the job, made mistakes and made sure she didn't repeat them. There were nerves yes, but in time she overcame them.

Liz writes of her rural beginnings and muses on how much has changed, but adds "I still love being barefoot and tying my hair back and my wardrobe is making way for more comfortable clothing; whoever invented stretch pants should be knighted," she says.

As her life became more hectic, she craved the simplicity of her country life at home and feels sad that none of her three marriages managed to survive the demands of her career. "The country was always my safe place being with my family, my real world."

She also writes of the trauma of her father's possibly unnecessary premature death. Liz remains a staunch fighter to seek support for better medical facilities not just on the midnorth NSW coast but in most

regional areas which are generally poorly served depending on the political association and support locally.

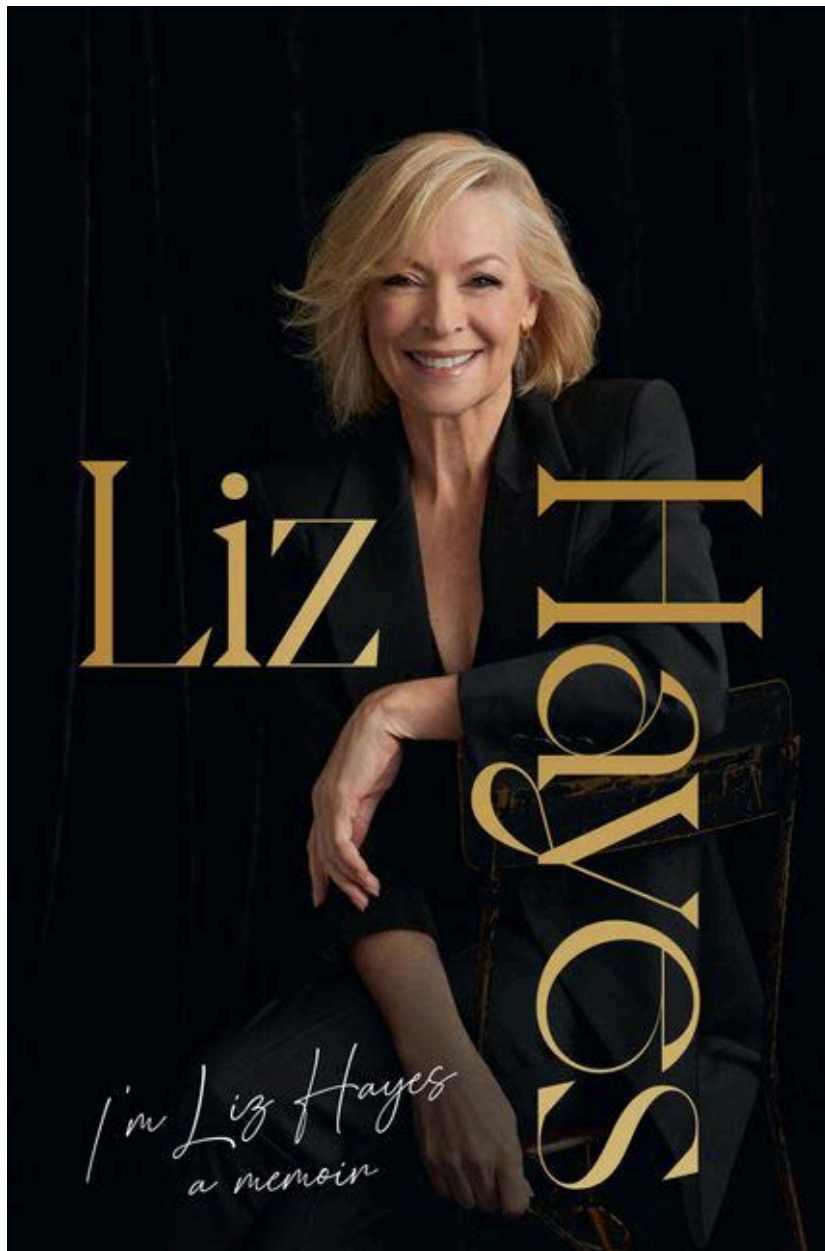
"When Dad died, I was struck to my core," says Liz. "The regional hospitals where he had been treated admitted that serious errors had occurred. . . . Although they said there would be changes to address mistakes like these, the reality was they were never going to be addressed unless some home truths about healthcare in rural, regional and remote areas were brought into the light."

Liz joined forces with Janelle Wells, an ABC court reporter who also said her father had died following surgery in a regional hospital that hadn't ended well. "We were two daughters who happened to be journalists and our dads deserved better," says Liz.

Using her job with 60 Minutes, Liz put to air her story "The Greatest Loss" in September 2020, a year after her father died and she says the response was overwhelming. Within the week the NSW Government announced that it would establish an inquiry into the State's rural, regional and remote health and hospital services. "I am determined to continue to use my profile to improve standards of healthcare in regional, rural and remote Australia," she says. Sadly, we locals can attest it's a slow process.

Her book is an enjoyable ride down memory lane, a record of extraordinary events, of meeting world leaders, of being witness to some of history's most memorable incidents. I loved the way Liz intermingled these with her accounts of coming back to Taree and spending time with her beloved parents and her four brothers.

Liz always thought that by the time she was 40 she would be out of a job. It didn't occur and she is now working well past that number. "I am a senior inhabiting a young person's industry, although ironically a lot of my viewers are also seniors," she writes.



"Today I watch others and see that younger me over and over again. Perhaps a different attitude and expectation, but the same dreams, the same mistakes." She admits in her memoir; "I've come to know me. I am a better person for my many decades on television, though plenty will beg to differ."

She is quick to point out that she has always had a strong bond with television. "We were born the same year. We have grown up together. My life constantly looks back at me from a screen."

Liz knows she's climbed some extraordinary mountains, seen some amazing places and met some fantastic people. "That would not have happened had I not simply had a go. Given it a shot, had a crack, found some courage, not been flattened by failure but just kept going."

Let's also be frank, the visual medium of TV likes good looking women and Liz is still attractive!

She now has a partner, Ben Crane, a sound recordist, who worked at 60 Minutes before she joined. She says

he is a perfect fit for a 60 Minutes team, smart, confident, easy going, entertaining and full of cheek. "I love his laughter and his great stories, also we share the same values," she writes.

The media had a feeding frenzy when they learned Liz and Ben had become an item saying she'd led him astray from his magazine-editor girlfriend. "Only Andrew Denton treated me well on his program simply wishing us both 'a soft landing.' After more gossipy turbulence, we touched down smoothly," says Liz and she and Ben now have the opportunity to cover stories together around the world.

Reading her words, I felt a warmth toward her as a person, even though I don't know her except through the TV screen. I am

impressed by her humility as she recounts the number of difficult locations and high-profile news jobs she'd covered, the programs she's co-hermed such as the Channel 9 Today show for years, followed by a long stint with the 60 Minutes team as a star reporter. And now at the helm of her new investigation show on Nine.

The fact she has done all this as a reporter and presenter for over 40 years and is able to write about it without leaving her readers with the feeling she's big-noting herself, is a huge achievement when our national impulse is to tear down tall poppies. Channel Nine obviously recognises and respects her as a woman and as a journalist. A rare compliment.

She is a unique TV journalist in a tough industry that is famous for discarding women of a certain age. Let us hope there are many more such examples gracing our screens long into the future.

Sherry Stumm.

I feel like stuffed chicken breast is making a comeback. This is a very contemporary take on a more traditional chicken Kyiv. I have stuffed the chicken with my roasted garlic herb butter, lots of cheese and slices of ham. The chicken has been coated with Mum's famous breadcrumbs, shallow-fried in olive oil and then baked to perfection. Take a moment to enjoy the butter oozing out when you cut into this one.

Roasted garlic herb butter-stuffed chicken

4 large chicken breast fillets
(1 kg in total)
pinch of sea salt flakes
pinch of freshly ground black pepper
4 slices of shaved ham
4 × 25–30 g slices of cold Roasted
Garlic Herb Butter (see page 18)
70 g mozzarella, grated
150 g (1 cup) plain flour, plus extra
for dusting
3 eggs
2 garlic cloves, crushed
300 g (3 cups) Mum's Famous
Breadcrumbs (see page 116)
700 ml light olive oil, for deep-frying

Make a cut through the middle of each chicken breast lengthways, ensuring you don't cut all the way through so as to keep the chicken breast intact. Spread the chicken breast open and place it between two pieces of plastic wrap. Using the smooth side of a mallet, pound the chicken to 2–3 cm thick, making sure you do not make any holes in the chicken. Set aside and repeat with the remaining chicken breasts.

Line a work surface, such as a chopping board, with plastic wrap. Place the chicken breasts on the board and season with salt and pepper. Layer each breast with a slice of ham and a slice of the roasted garlic herb butter, then sprinkle with one-quarter of the mozzarella. Dust the edges of each chicken breast with flour as this will help it stick together, then roll each chicken breast up tightly. Now roll the chicken in plastic wrap, twisting the ends of the plastic wrap so the chicken is tightly enclosed. Place on a clean plate and pop in the fridge for 2 hours.

In a wide shallow bowl, whisk together the eggs and garlic and set aside. Preparing this early allows the garlic to release its flavour into the eggs.

In a separate wide shallow bowl, whisk together the flour, salt and pepper, then set up your dredging station. Begin with the flour, followed by the egg wash, followed by a wide shallow bowl with the breadcrumbs, and finish with a large clean plate or tray to place the crumbed chicken on.

Remove the plastic wrap from the chicken. Coat all sides of one piece of chicken in the flour, followed by the egg wash and finally the breadcrumbs – apply pressure with your hands to ensure the breadcrumbs stick. Place the crumbed chicken on a clean plate or tray and repeat with the remaining chicken. Place in the fridge for 30 minutes to allow the breadcrumbs to set.

Preheat the oven to 180°C conventional (160°C fan-forced).

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan. Check if the oil is hot enough by placing an upright wooden skewer in the pan and seeing if bubbles form around it. Reduce the heat to medium-low and fry the chicken for 1–2 minutes on each side, until golden and crispy. Spoon the hot oil over the chicken while the underside is cooking. Transfer to a wire rack over a baking tray and bake for 15–17 minutes, until the internal temperature of the chicken is 65°C.

Serve immediately.

SERVES 4



MY FATHER AND OTHER ANIMALS (HOW I TOOK ON THE FAMILY FARM)



Sam Vincent

Published by Black Inc 2022

RRP \$34.99

Publishers have a habit of attempting to guide a reader's attitude to a book even before they read page 1. This is done by ensuring that the first thing that is read are a couple of pages of 'praise' for the book.

My Father etc is no different where we are provided with no fewer than thirteen glowing comments about how good this book is, particularly suggestions that it was humorous. Comments such as:

'A witty memoir...'

'At once a rollicking comic memoir and thoughtful meditation on family farming.'

'...witty, lyrical and delightfully honest.'

'By turns affecting, hilarious and utterly surprising...'

With so many comments about wit and humour I expected to be rolling around on the carpet as I

turned from one page to the next, but at most there was an occasional chuckle.

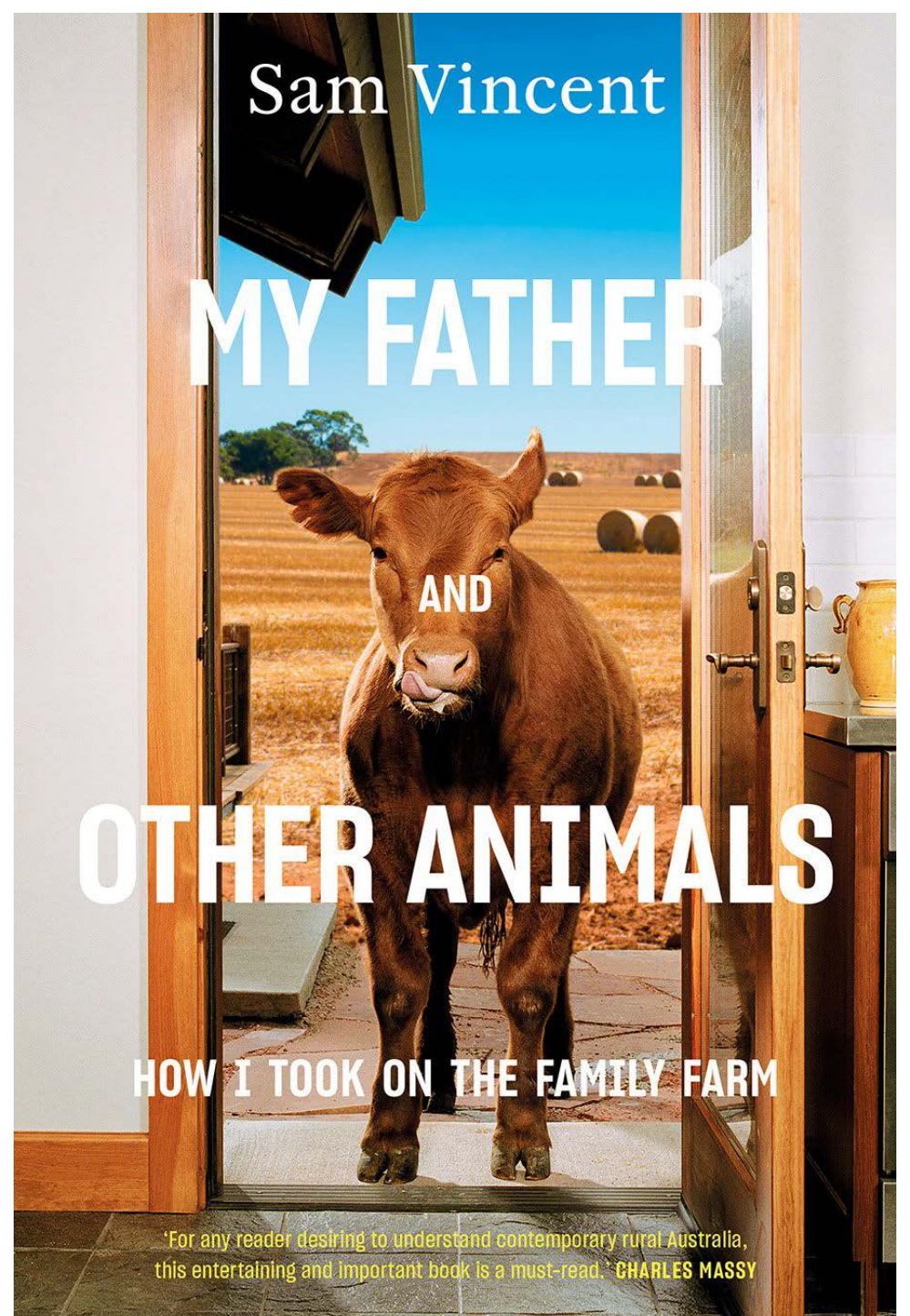
The book cover tells us that: 'Sam Vincent's writing has appeared in *The Monthly*, *The Saturday Paper*, *Griffith Review* and *The Best Australian Essays*. His first book, *Blood and Guts*, was longlisted for the Walkley Book Award and in 2019 he won the Walkley Award for longform feature writing. He runs a cattle and fig farm in the Yass Valley, NSW, and supplies fruit to some of the best restaurants in the Canberra region.'

The book is divided into four parts titled, 'Farmhand', 'Orchardist', 'Grazier', and 'Settler.'

In 1983, a year before the author was born, his parents bought 200 acres of overgrazed farmland just to the north Canberra. At the time it was essentially a hobby farm because his father then was working as an economist. The farm size was later increased as surrounding land was purchased.

From the outset his parents seemed determined to farm within the environment and not against it. The prologue tells us:

'At Gollion, Mum and Dad subscribed to *Grass Roots* (the



CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

THE CALLING



Dianne Rodger
Bloomsbury Academic.
RRP \$24.99

If you happen to know what such things as posse tracks, battle raps and beat boxes are, or if you are familiar with “Dumb Enough” or “The Nose-bleed Section”, or if you don’t give a blank stare when someone says that they are MCing or DJing, then you are very unlikely to be a baby boomer.

Many readers might have no idea that Suffa, Pressure and Debris comprise a Hip-Hop group out of Adelaide known as the Hilltop Hoods.

If I ever thought about Hip-Hop, which was infrequently, then I’d quickly dismiss it as, in Rodger’s own words, ...“an example of a foreign cultural form usurping local culture – an emblem of the dire impacts of globalization.” Not even real music.

I’m not sure how it was that I picked up and decided to read this quite short (102 pages) book by university lecturer Dianne Rodger, but I’m glad that I did. For me, it was a fascinating excursion into a music form and sub-culture about which I knew nothing.

Before attempting this review, I embarked on a steep learning curve. I spent time chatting to my son Hamish, who studied music at university, about things Hip-Hop, and on shocked my Spotify App by playing artists such as Codfish, Stay Human, The Wire and of course, the Hilltop Hoods. I learned that there are many different streams of Hip-Hop, some of which I quite enjoyed.

I also had an obviously much outdated image of an anthropologist as being some older white male in a pith helmet and sweaty shirt, notebook in hand, living in some remote part of the Amazon or the highlands of New Guinea. Apparently not any more.

The Calling book cover tells us that: “Dianne Rodger is a Hip-Hop fan and lecturer in anthropology at the University of Adelaide, Australia. Her research and teaching spans fields including youth culture, digital media, and health – with a sustained focus

on Hip-Hop culture in Australia.”

The start of chapter 1 says this:

“In October 2003, Adelaide Hip-Hop group the Hilltop Hoods launched their album *The Calling* (2003) to a riotous reception at Planet Nightclub.”

We are told that by 2006 the album had reached platinum status with over 70,000 sales, and that “... the success of the album had significant ramifications for both the Hilltop Hoods and other underground Hip-Hop artists in Australia”. Apparently in the Australian Hip-Hop scene BC and AC now connote “before *The Calling*” and “after *The Calling*.”

Dumb Enough and The Nose-bleed Section are two of the tracks from that album and the names allocated to them by the parents of Suffa, Pressure and Debris, are Matthew Lambert, Daniel Smith and Barry Francis respectively. Names that clearly just wouldn’t cut it in the world of Hip-Hop.

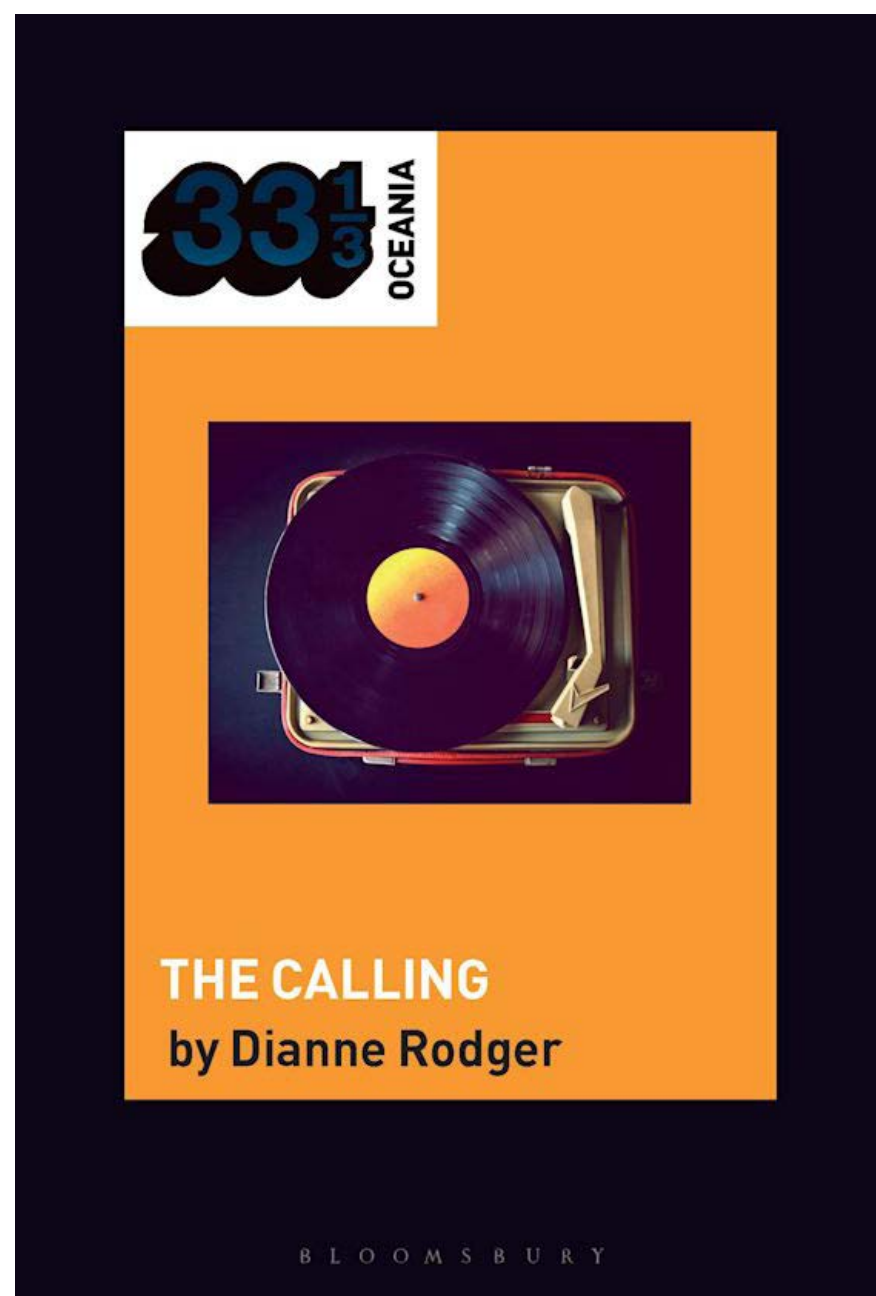
Suffa and Pressure are both MC’s, whilst Debris is a DJ. We are familiar with the term MC, or Master of Ceremonies, as being an embarrassing tipsy uncle who makes bad-taste jokes at a wedding, but in Hip-Hop “it is a term used to refer to someone who raps, or delivers rhymes, over a beat or instrumental track. The MC is often the primary vocalist in a hip-hop song and is responsible for delivering the verses and chorus of the song.”

And DJ? If you are over a certain age you’ll probably think of Ward “Pally” Austin or Mike Walsh as being Disc Jockeys (DJ’s), but the hip-hop DJ takes it to another level by “making record spinning into an art form called turntabalism.”

Rodger introduces us to Hip-Hop aficionados with names such as DJ Sanchez, MC Reason, the Cross Bred Mongrels, Torcha, Funkoars, DJ Reflux and many more.

It is amazing how much information Rodger is able to squeeze into this little book.

Chapter 2 tells us that Hip-Hop had



its origins in “post-industrial New York City in the 1970’s, a period when South Bronx neighbourhoods were being destroyed by a series of brutal ‘urban renewal policies’...” and where “...young African American, Jamaican, Puerto Rican and other Caribbean people created Hip-Hop as an alternative site of ‘Identity formation and social status whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished...”

We learn that Hip-Hop has four elements being: “MCing, DJing, Graffiti Writing and Breaking.”

Rodger then discusses the way that Hip-Hop arrived in Australia, the controversy about the use of Aussie accents, and the issue of cultural appropriation. There was:

“...a problematic issue for many people because of the ‘inherent tensions involved in adapting decidedly Black cultural forms to a white-dominated society”

The author goes into some detail about the background of the three members of the Hilltop Hoods and their early music leading up to the huge popularity of *The Calling*, and noting that by 2022 they had released ten full-length albums.

Chapter 5 features accounts of Hilltop Hoods live performances from the early 2000’s suggesting that “...the Hoods’s dedication to rehearsing and honing their live shows was a recurring theme that was linked to their ongoing success.”

The author explains that over the

years Hip-Hop fans have themselves hotly debated about what genuine Hip-Hop was and how commercial it should become. We read that:

“...as the Hoods became more commercially successful, they found themselves at the centre of debates about whether or not that had ‘sold out’ and were no longer following the ‘Hip-Hop rules.’”

We are also told about how in the early years its artists and fans were often stereotyped or mocked or attacked.

Chapter 7 explains about posse tracks, battle raps and beat box.

As I read the book I wondered if Rodger would shy away from the darker sides of Hip-Hop such as violence, aggressiveness, misogyny, sexism and racism. She does not, and talks about the way that the form sometimes seemed to attract “people that lean towards white pride and white power thing...”

This is a fascinating book demonstrating how one band, the Hilltop Hoods, have had such a huge impact on the development of Hip-Hop in Australia. It’s well worth a read, particularly by those who know nothing about Hip-Hop, but also by those who have an underlying dislike of the art form. After reading the book I certainly ended up with a much more favourable view of this form of music.

Give it a go.

John Watts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

self-sufficiency bible of the 1980s), grew vegetables, kept chickens and established orchards. Over the years my parents became less conventional in their methods. Confounding the old-school graziers around them, they brewed compost tea to fertilise their pastures organically, restored their section of a creek to the 'chain of ponds' it would have resembled before land clearing turned it into a drain...

The narrative begins when the millennial author, then living as a struggling writer in the inner-city, receives a call from his mother telling him that his father has stuck his hand in a woodchipper, but 'not to worry – it wasn't like that scene from *Fargo* or anything'. This call results in a chain of events leading to Vincent's ever-increasing involvement in the farming activities.

When he first returned to the farm Vincent took on the role of the rather incompetent farmhand, strictly under the firm direction

and guidance of his father, and one of the strong underlying themes of the book is the often-complex relationship between father and son, and their changing roles where eventually the son takes over the farm and begins to implement his own ideas, although clearly building on what had already been achieved by the father.

The other underlying theme is an analysis of the environmental impact of the way that agriculture has been practised in Australia since Europeans first started farming and the need for change.

Chapter one introduces us to the important difference between sustainable agriculture and regenerative agriculture where we are told:

'Regenerative agriculture aims to build the natural capital of the farm *and* take a dividend. It works from the premise that nature is complex, self-organising and self-repairing – but that in most of the world's ecosystems, it has been badly damaged and that human intervention is needed.'

After spending some time in the role of farmhand Vincent's mother suggested that it was time for him to start a farming project of his own, and after considering the various options, he fixes on the idea of establishing a fig orchard. Fifty pages of the book are devoted to this issue and the reader is provided with a huge amount of technical detail relating to fig growing which not every reader is likely to find too interesting.

The section titled 'Grazier' begins when the author enrolls in a TAFE grazing course which was based upon 'holistic management' principles, and in this section, there is an interesting discussion about the important environmental issues arising from farming practices in general, and industrialised cattle production in particular, telling us that "It's not the cow, it's the how."

Vincent does not shy away from the issue about the way that the land on which he was now living and working had been stolen from its original inhabitants,

and the steps that he took to have part of the farm declared as an 'Aboriginal Place', after having the area assessed by an archaeologist. He explains that there are very few private properties in NSW with such a declaration because the owners fear of losing control. He also suggests that such fears are unfounded.

In the end, as with most farming families where there is more than one child, the Vincents have to make the difficult decision about the issue of succession, and the book explains how this family made its decision whereby the author, and his then pregnant partner, took over the running of the farm when his parents moved to the coast.

This is an informative glimpse into several important issues facing rural Australia and those seeking to make a living from farming. It's a book which many readers should find interesting and informative.

John Watts



TAXI TRANSPORT SUBSIDY SCHEME (TTSS)



Did you know the NSW Government offers subsidised taxi fares for eligible people?

Eligible people are:



- a permanent resident of AUS
- normally reside in NSW
- be over school age
- have a severe or permanent disability in any of these categories:
 - ambulatory, mobility or functional
 - visual impairment
 - epilepsy
 - intellectual disability (cognitive impairment)
 - speech and / or hearing



Half price taxi transport!

The TTSS scheme is not means tested for eligible people!



Your doctor will help

Application forms will need to be completed by your doctor and the form is to be sent to Transport for NSW.

Call our office for an application form:

6555 3031

- Maximum subsidy is \$60.00 per taxi fare



(I discovered random "taxis" when I rang for a taxi from The Mayo Hospital and an unmarked car arrived; no efpos machine, squeezed me into the front seat and only accepted a "guesstimate" fare in cash Ed)

The world is watching our Facebook fight!



An open letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

Dear Prime Minister,

Your first response to Facebook brazenly announcing they'll stop paying for our news that they use to make a fortune from was...perfect!

"That's not the Australian way," you said.

Exactly.

Australians hate bullies. Australians fight for a fair go. And this battle is not just a fight for a fair go here - the whole world is watching.

Meta, the trillion dollar tech giant that owns Facebook has built an empire out of content they don't own. They don't produce anything. They 'share' the great work of others and keep the cash.

The Australian government was the first in the world to call out this scandal, and in 2021 the News Media Bargaining Code forced them to finally pay for news content.

But not anymore.

Meta is betting that if they bully the Australian government, they win the world.

PM, this is a fight for the future of news and democracy. This is fight against fake news and a fight for a fair go for all journalists who hold the powerful to account, all around the world.

Let's make sure Australia shows Facebook what a fair go is.

The world is watching.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Schreyer".

Andrew Schreyer
President
Country Press Australia

WHY AUTUMN IS THE BEST TIME FOR PLANTING



You may hear other gardeners talking about autumn being the best time for planting, but why is that the case?

Autumn – particularly mid-autumn – is a good time to plant for lots of reasons, but all are to do with creating a stress-free environment for the new plant to flourish and experience less transplant shock.

1: THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE.

As summer moves into autumn, the weather starts to cool, but the soil is still warm from all that summer heat - making it attractive for root growth. Ideally, the plant can grow its roots into the soil, anchoring itself and moving beyond the planting hole to seek water and nutrients.

In autumn, daylight hours are shorter, so plants experience less stress even if the day does get warm. In many areas, autumn also means more reliable rain, which again means less stress for a new planting.

Autumn is also a nicer time for the gardener to be out in the garden doing heavy work such as digging and soil preparation!

2: PLANT AVAILABILITY

In autumn there is generally a lot of good quality plant stock available from nurseries, including shrubs, trees and seasonal annuals and vegetables.

Give all new plantings the extra assistance of a seaweed tonic, such as Seasol, which also helps to en-



courage strong root development and increases tolerance to both hot and cold conditions.

3: BEAT WINTER DORMANCY

If you plant in autumn, you are giving your plant time to establish before winter. When winter does arrive, the new plant will slow or stop its growth. If the winter is cold and frost occurs it may be necessary to protect the new plant especially if it is not frost tolerant. If winter is very dry, it will be necessary to keep watering the new planting.

Come late winter and early spring when the days get warmer and longer and the soil too begins to warm up, new growth will occur both above and below the ground, signalling the need for fertiliser

and increased watering. An autumn-planted shrub or tree should grow rapidly using those strong new roots it established before winter.

Sure, many of these good planting conditions also exist in spring, but later in the year with summer on the horizon we are moving rapidly towards hotter conditions and longer days - making it more stressful for a new plant. Spring is still a good time to plant, but the plant will need more attention such as extra shade, shelter and water.

TOP PLANT CHOICES

So, join the autumn colour parade by selecting and planting a deciduous tree, shrub or vine over the months ahead. While many of these plants are sold while they are

dormant as bare-rooted stock, potted specimens complete with autumn foliage are in stock at garden centres during autumn.

Autumn colour is best in cool, mountain and inland climates and lasts longest after good summer rain. However even in warm and coastal gardens there are plants that can be relied on for a good autumn show including ash (especially claret and golden ash), Chinese tallow, Crepe Myrtle, Japanese maples, ornamental pears and persimmon. Ornamental grapevines also put on a striking autumn display and make an impact when they are trained over a pergola.

Even wisterias put on a show of golden leaves and become an attractive feature during autumn.

Complete the picture with autumn-flowering shrubs and perennials including sasanqua camellia, roses and salvia.

And of course, if you're looking to plant a veg garden the list is endless: broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, peas, beetroot, silverbeet, spinach, broad beans, shallots, leek, onions, lettuce, radish, carrots, Asian greens... and so many more! So, time to get those seeds in, or get some seedlings from our old-fashioned nursery.

Happy gardening!

Wingham Nursery & Florist
02 65534 570



ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collect for enjoyment, collect for knowledge, collect for the potential of future windfalls, collect to share and most of all collect because it is a wonderful hobby that lasts a lifetime. The friends you make and the journey that you take are priceless.



A flat iron stove and a wide variety of collectable irons.

Students are taught lessons every day, facts and knowledge, but if they can be encouraged to learn by generating their own curiosity in order to find out more, they will continue with their own learning process for their lifetime. The tools to learn outweigh pure facts. It works with collecting. A person's desire to learn more about their items often makes them an expert in that field.

Some places to visit are Wingham's wonderful Regional museum (it is one of the very best in the districts of NSW), Cundletown's museum and Tinonee's museum. Isadoras Antiques and Clancy's Emporium in Taree. Delinquent Funk and Antiques and Old Wares in Isabella St in Wingham. These are great places for ideas, buys and reminiscing.

Keep Saturday morning, **11th May free**. The Local Collectors Club are organising a Collectors Market Day in the alley way called McCullagh's Way right next to the newsagents in Isabella St, Wingham. 8am to 1pm. It should be a fun morning. More information and advertising to come. Information – 0427 880 546.

From ancient times to the present day, the ironing process has undergone a fascinating transformation, reflecting the ever-changing needs and desires of society. No one can say exactly when people started to press cloth smooth, but we know the Chinese were using hot metal for ironing before anyone else. Pans filled with hot coals were pressed over stretched cloth more than a thousand years ago.

Ironing may seem like a modern invention, but its roots go back to ancient civilisations. The concept of smoothing out wrinkles on fabric dates back thousands of years. The Greeks and Romans had their methods of ironing, using smooth stones heated over a fire. These early forms of ironing were labour intensive and time-consuming, but they laid the foundation for the practice we know today.

In ancient Egypt ironing was considered a highly skilled profession. Clothes were carefully ironed to achieve a smooth and wrinkle-free appearance. The Egyptians even used starch to stiffen fabrics, creating a crisp and structured look.

In medieval Europe, ironing was often done by professional laundresses who travelled from house to house. They used irons heated on a stove to iron clothes, ensuring that high-end clothes were always spotless and well-groomed.

Over time, ironing techniques and tools continued to evolve. In the Middle Ages, for example, metal pans filled with hot coals were replaced by flat metal irons that were heated in a stove. These irons were heavy and required constant heating, multiple irons were used so a replacement for a cooling iron was always available,

making the ironing process even more involved.

In the 19th century, advances in manufacturing and engineering led to the invention of the first electric iron. This revolutionary device made ironing faster and more efficient, changing the way we care for our clothes forever. Since then, ironing has become an integral part of household chores, and special ironing boards and steam irons have made it easier and more accessible for everyone.

Collecting irons is a wonderful area of interest with endless variety. There have been many types of iron throughout history from stones, flat irons, charcoal filled irons, fuel irons (using kerosene, paraffin, whale oil, petrol....) plus many varieties of early electric irons (from the early 1900s). Some collectors collect the stands that hot irons were rested on, trivets.

Don't forget to visit and support our local antique haunts. Antique shops, charity shops, markets, garage sale and word of mouth. By checking in regularly, to your

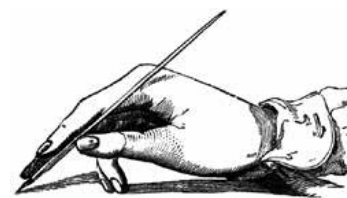
favourites, you get some interesting buys as the interesting things that come up for sale don't last. They are snaffled up quickly. Don't miss out on a good buy!

I recommend collecting to all. Find the area of collecting that suits you or take the plunge and collect a wide variety of unique and interesting treasures. It is always fun, you are always learning and it is something that can be enjoyed for the rest of your life.

If you have family treasures you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals and/or sales. I love looking at old and interesting items. Ring Rex – 0427 880 546.

Find and share a treasure.

Online form for advice on progressing complaints about councils



YOUR SAY

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

Dear Editor

I have recently discovered 'The Manning Community News' paper during a family visit to a small coffee shop located in Wallabi Point. Fantastic!!

I am in my mid twenties and I am now working as a Solicitor in Sydney, NSW. However, I grew up in Taree and now spend a lot of time visiting my family who are now based in Old Bar.

On my recent visit I have taken issue with the variety of environmental contradictions within the local area.

My close friends and family members (excluding some) have all purchased either hybrid cars and/or complete battery powered cars. I am not against this idea, even though I am guilty of watching the V8 powered Bathurst 1000 on TV.

Plastic has been banned to protect our beaches, oceans and sea life. Battery cars have been encouraged in NSW to protect the environment by reducing air pollution.

Forget all of the above - Lets all go and drive our diesel powered, noisy and extremely dirty looking oversized 4x4 vehicles on NSW beaches. Clean energy is encouraged. But, for some reason driving these filthy vehicles on our beaches is allowed, particularly in Old Bar, Wallabi Point, Harrington and other areas on the Mid North Coast.

I am not entirely against this form of driving. My issue is that I have to pay for a paper bag, whilst it remains allowed and uncontentious to drive cars on a beach. I am baffled.

Kind regards,
Thomas A H Williams



Tell us about your council-related feedback or concerns

Concerns or feedback about a council should be directed to different organisations depending on the issue. In most situations you should raise your concerns directly with Council as they are independently elected bodies.

Use this online form to lodge your council-related feedback with the Office of Local Government, or find out who to contact to help with your enquiry.

Privacy collection notice

Your information will be handled by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the department) in accordance with the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#) (PPIP Act). Any personal information you provide in completing this form will only be used to inform the processing of your complaint feedback. The provision of information is voluntary. We will store and protect any information you provide in accordance with our requirements under the PPIP Act. We will not use or disclose the information for any other purpose, unless required or authorised to do so. You may access and correct any of the information you choose to provide.

This privacy collection notice applies to the information you are providing in completing this form. If you would like to know more about how the department meets its obligations in

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Online form for advice on progressing complaints about councils

3/3/2024, 12:23 am

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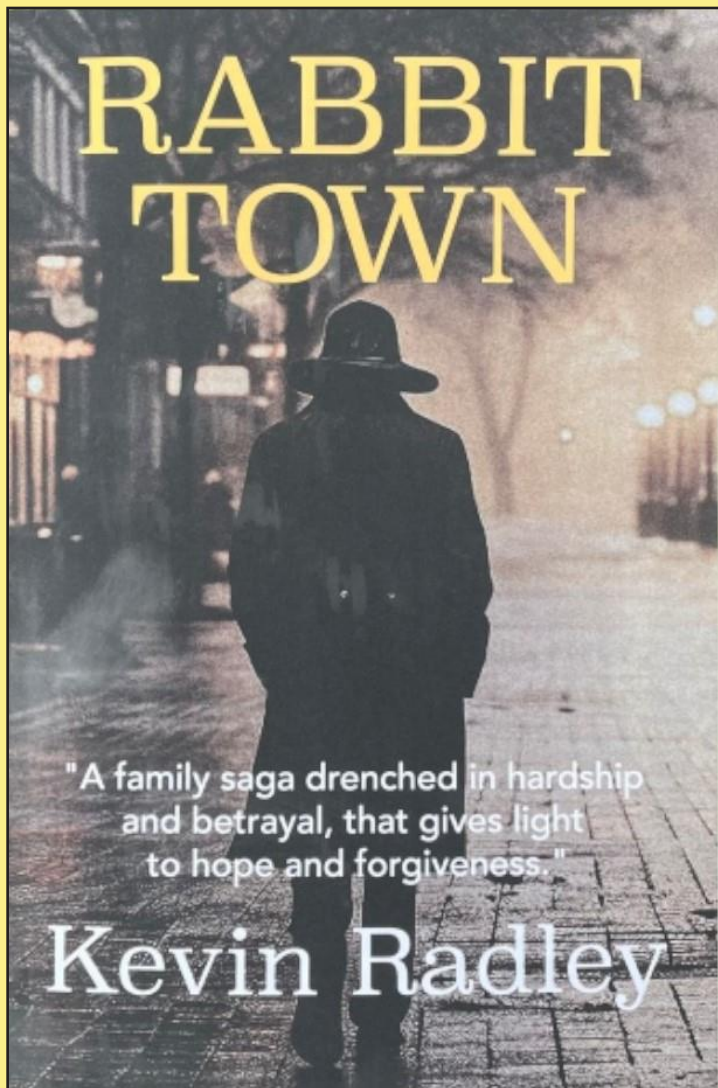
You may also contact the department on 02 9860 1440, at privacy@dpie.nsw.gov.au or at 4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street Parramatta.

NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

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Sydney, 1932, and it's tough going. A family secret is buried, where it remains hidden through years of war and social upheaval.

But then the truth is revealed...



Sydney, 1932, and it's tough going. A family secret is buried, where it remains hidden through years of war and social upheaval.

But then the truth is revealed...

"Genuine characters who found a place in my heart. A true page-turner."

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

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You may have noticed that MidCoast Council advertise heavily with all local media... except the most read newspaper in the area – this one! According to a recent survey by the MidCoast Council The Manning Community News is the Number 1 most read newspaper in the electorate!
Email editor@manningcommunitynews.com for rates.

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

Publisher and Editor DI MORRISSEY

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