

The Manning Community News

APRIL 2022

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

This paper is being published as a community service to provide readers with factual and independent coverage of news, people and events in our district.
If you have a story idea please contact us. PO Box 62, Tinonee, 2430 editor@manningcommunitynews.com



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Pass
this paper to
a friend or
neighbour
before
recycling

WAR IS A DYING BUSINESS PAGE 14

IF THEY CAN... WE CAN????

MANNING BASE HOSPITAL SAGA CONTINUES

Manning Base Hospital is at a crucial point in its life. Do we put it down or resuscitate?

Of course we need a major efficient fully functioning hospital for our area and Manning Base has served us well in the past. But in recent years it's been struggling and is now on virtual life support. The cause we're told, is that it's lifeblood has been drained once we were taken under the umbrella of Hunter New England Health. It's been starved of funds, staff and facilities, having to kowtow to HNEH.

It is now a live or die scenario. And other hospitals feel the same.

Local New England MP Adam Marshall wants the New England Health District Chief Executive, Mr

Michael Di Rienzo, to be sacked if he does not properly staff and fund the region's hospitals and to stop "cannibalising" them.

The motion will also call for a "comprehensive" investigation into splitting the mammoth Hunter New England Health District into two separate entities.

"It's a reflection of what the communities across our region want to see, and the nurses and other staff that work within our hospitals," Mr Marshall said in an ABC interview. "The whole push is about saying to the CEO we want our hospitals fully staffed and fully resourced again, and if you're not willing to do that, do the right thing by our communities, and go, and we'll put someone in your place who will do that."

Surely New England's situation could not be worse than that of The Manning Base Hospital which has suffered from years of frustration of having to kowtow to HNEH. The situation has not been helped by lacklustre efforts from our Federal Member, Dr David Gillespie, and State Member Stephen Bromhead, who has stepped down from his post for health reasons. However National Member and Rural and Regional Health Minister Bronnie Taylor has released a rather aggressive press statement backing Mr Bromhead's idea of a fully fledged hospital in Forster.

A hospital spokesman for MBH dismisses this idea and says it's not mentioned in the new Clinical Services Plan just released which is

the bible for the hospital for the next decade.

I asked what the costs would be for a new hospital at Forster and was told "How do you cost a mirage?"

Despite what local developers and council may wish, we are not going to be inundated with new families rushing to live in our electorate. The expected newcomers will mostly be over age 65 – a category who use the hospital the most. And many retirees are not lavish spenders or going to start a business.

A more practical plan being suggested is to come to an arrangement with Manning Base and HealtheCare who own the private Mayo Hospital in Taree as well as the Forster Pri-

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IT'S TIME for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.
UluruStatement.org

WHY I VOTE INDIE

The big possum glared back at me in the yellow nightlight, its claws sliding and scritchng on the bin's metallic lid. "What are you doing here?" its glittering eye seemed to demand.



I asked myself the same. The answer felt feeble. Standing for election, that's what I'm doing. Don't be bloody silly, was the obvious reply. I don't see other candidates schlepping A-frames around at midnight.

The possum had a point. It was late, almost midnight, and raining. Possums aside, the park was deserted. After two weeks of pre-polling we were heading in, for the umpteenth evening, to collect our election posters and A-frames, heft them back across the wet grass and into the car before toting them all out again at dawn.

It was two days before the big one. Election Day. Then, instead of three pre-poll booths to furnish and 'man', there'd be seventeen. My heart sank at the prospect. The few hundred corflutes and thousands of flyers we'd managed to print and schlep around each morning and evening were woefully inadequate. But as we considered the massive logistical effort that 17 booths implied a part of me was glad there weren't more.

True, we had help. More than sixty wonderful, energetic and impassioned volunteers had signed up in the three short weeks of our campaign. They came from all over Sydney and, between them, had letterboxed some 50,000 leaflets. They'd buttonholed commuters at early morning train stations and handed out thousands of How-to-Votes.

But to do similar justice to seventeen booths – festooning them at

dawn, or before, with the plethora of propaganda that is apparently required and ensuring a sizeable troop in coloured t-shirts is on hand throughout the day, in one-to-three-hour shifts – that's huge.

In this, the Greens and other minor parties were even less well equipped than us but the majors, Liberal and Labor, came prepared. Come election eve hundreds of volunteers – some of whom confessed to being paid a daily rate – were out there in a massive show of force. Aggressively they grabbed all the best spots, wallpapering every school fence and church wall with continuous rolls

of election guff and guarding their handiwork all night.

It reminded me I'd vowed, after my term as a City Council Independent in the 90s, not to stand for election ever again. The moment that changed my mind, and then my life, came mid-last year.

It was deepest lockdown. We were looking for a house but the property market was at its maddening zenith. Heading west after yet another inscrutable inner-city auction, we'd lobbed into Strathfield. We were sipping bubble tea on a Flemington street-corner when I was recognised by some Labor women handing out How-to-Votes. "Oh!" they exclaimed. "If you're moving here you must join the party and stand for us in [the Federal seat of] Reid."

It happened that we did move there and I, although mildly reluctant, joined the party. I say reluctant because, eager as I am to eject our dreadful city-destroying neo-Liberal governments, joining clubs isn't really what I do, especially in politics. I don't trust the whip system, which I regard as coercive. Even less do I trust the dodgy backroom deals that underpin it.

BEING AN INDEPENDENT

I'm instinctively Independent. I like that Independents get to prioritise principle over loyalty, voting according to their own beliefs and their constituents' wishes, rather than a raft of covert demands from donors, factions, parties and branch-

es. I like that this makes every vote a conscience vote. That, in my view, is how politics should be done.

My daughter, recognising this, greeted my proposal to join Labor with a quip: "You do know, Mummy. You can only sell your soul once." So perhaps there was a kind of karma involved when my brief ALP adventure became a major life disaster.

Not being preselected, at any of the three levels - local, state or federal - was the least of it. When a local lingo sent a nasty four-page letter I was summarily sacked from my 30-year role as a columnist without so much as a chance to rebut the nastiness.

And yet, with that catastrophe came a new freedom. Suddenly, I was free to stand (as I wouldn't have been as a columnist) in my natural guise as an Independent. I decided to have a go.

Why, exactly? It seems to me that people are genuinely fed up with politics as a system of rusted-on loyalties, the arrogance this breeds in our politicians and the idea of public life as a secret exchange of private favours.

I think voters are beginning to see that these murky cultural habits have enduring real-world manifestations: unfair funding regimes, absurd climate inaction and the ongoing death-by-development of the planet and the places we call home.

Of course, you expect elections to bring out the whatever-it-takes in people. This is bad enough. The elbows-out self-aggrandisement required to win elections is almost the opposite of the leadership qualities we so desperately need. But what I didn't expect was just how dramatically the tables are tilted against Independents. As one political junkie told me: "It's all geared to advantage first the major parties, then the minor parties, then independents." How right he was.

FUNDRAISING

First, there's fundraising. Parties have higher caps than Independents. Where an Indie has a \$3,100 cap on individual donations, the cap for parties is more than twice that, at \$6,700. This only exacerbates a situation where, as Simon Holmes à Court told the Press Club recently, an Independent can, as Zali Steggall did, raise a million campaign dollars and still be outspent by the parties 2:1. In my case, more like 7:1. We spent around \$35K while each major party, I'm told, came in just under the total expendi-

ture cap of \$250K.

Then there's the campaign period. An Independent cannot spend or raise money until they nominate for election - and can't do that before the election writ is issued. In our case, a by-election, the writ came out just three weeks before election day. By then the major parties, being permanently registered, had already been campaigning a full two weeks, effectively doubling their campaign period.

Then there's preferencing. All preference whisperers, shonky and otherwise, agree that you cannot win without a preference deal. As an Indie, you're pretty much obliged to deal with the minor parties (since otherwise you're just helping yourself lose) - but the minute you do a deal, you're badmouthed by everyone who presumes the deal to be an endorsement and already suspects Independents are really party affiliates in disguise.

Add to that the huge built-in benefit of having a party machine to do your PR, accounting, truck-hire, transport, volunteers, social media, databases and so on and you'll see it's extremely hard for an Independent to muster any sort of competition, especially in a by-election.

In the upper house, State or Federal, where the cool heads of Independents should be most at home, it's harder still. There, an Independent doesn't even get their name above the line on the ballot paper but must achieve the near-impossible feat of persuading constituents to tick a numbered box.

This is a travesty, since Independents are precisely the voices we need. Consider the sixteen Indies currently supported by Holmes à Court's Climate 200 for the federal election. Labor cannot end coalmining because of the unions; the Coalition, which will not because of their allegiance to Big Money. Indies are the only ones who can vote honestly and reliably in favour of a future for our grandchildren.

So here's my pleading. If you have any chance at all, this election, buck the whip-system. Exercise your conscience and vote Indie. I'm pretty sure my big beady-eyed bin-possum would agree.

Elizabeth Farrelly is a columnist and author. Her most recent book is 'Killing Sydney; the fight for a city's soul.'

BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION FAILS ON THE MID-COAST

The MidCoast Council recently published and called for public comment on its draft Rural Strategy. The document noted that 90% of the Council area was rural and went on to say that:

"The MidCoast area is rich in its natural diversity, with unique landforms and landscape areas of State, National and International significance.

Council has made a commitment to the ongoing management and protection of these physical environments..."

It said further:

"Protection of the natural environment has been identified as one of the five core values in the MidCoast Community Strategic Plan."

What the draft strategy fails to explain is that the Council has very limited power to protect the natural environment in rural areas and that to date it has failed to fully utilise the powers that it does have.

STOP TREE FELLING

Probably the biggest threat to the environment facing the Planet is the clearing of trees and other native vegetation for agriculture and urban development. This is having a devastating impact on biodiversity and climate change and Australia is one of the worst offenders.

Interestingly, Councils such as the MidCoast do have a role in controlling development and that starts with land use zoning. And land zoning has a relationship with land clearing.

The regulation of land clearing on land zoned as rural is a state government responsibility and the present laws are appallingly weak, if not useless.

Until 2017 rural land clearing was regulated by the Native Vegetation Act which prevented broadscale land clearing, but under pressure from certain political interests that leg-

islation was repealed and replaced by a complicated and confusing set of guidelines that has permitted an explosion of land clearing.

The NSW Government's own figures show that in 2019 alone over 134,000 acres of woody vegetation was cleared. In 2018 the figure was over 150,000 acres and there is no sign of any slowing. The Government's data also demonstrates that there was a 60% increase in land clearing after the laws were weakened.

ILLEGAL LAND CLEARING MASSIVE

In late 2021 I asked the NSW Government for details about how many complaints of illegal land clearing it had received since the new laws came into effect and how many prosecutions there had been for illegal clearing. The results were astounding. They had received over 2000 complaints but during the same period there was just one prosecution. So, not only are the regulations weak, but the State Government seems to have no appetite to enforce them.

Recently, near Gloucester, many trees on a farm were killed by herbicide spraying. A complaint was dismissed for "lack of evidence." When I asked whether the site had been inspected, I was told that the Department did not have the resources to carry out such an inspection.

In 2020 the NSW Government quietly released a report by its own Natural Resources Commission (NRC) into the state of the native vegetation protection laws. The report was a damning indictment of those laws. In April 2020 the NSW Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) had this to say about the report:

"The level of clearing highlighted by the NRC report confirms the need for a wholesale rewriting of land clearing laws in NSW to put the emphasis back on conserving landscapes and building resilience."

The EDO also noted that key elements of the Government's laws were missing, including a complete

regulatory map which is needed to underpin the whole system. Two years since the EDO made those comments the mapping is still not completed.

In August 2020 Rachel Walmsley from the EDO commented:

"Under this law, the balance has tipped significantly against ecologically sustainable development, with a return to broadscale land clearing in NSW. In addition to the detrimental impacts of land clearing on soils, salinity and climate, the permitted destruction of habitat has increased so much that now even our iconic koalas are threatened with extinction."

The native vegetation protection laws are so full of complexities, exceptions and loopholes that one public servant, whose job it is to enforce the laws, commented to me:

"All the Department can really do is receive complaints about tree clearing and do nothing about the complaints."

So, the NSW Government is doing precious little to ensure the protection of native vegetation in rural zones and MidCoast Council has no control when it comes to preventing land clearing in such areas.

The MidCoast Council made good progress recently when it adopted a Climate Change Strategy, a Greening Strategy, a Biodiversity Framework and a Vegetation Management Policy. All these can be viewed on the Council website. All contain admirable objectives and recognise the crucial role of trees and vegetation.

The Climate Change Strategy states that it:

"Recognises the importance of protecting biodiversity from the risks of climate change and the value of trees and wetlands in sequestering carbon."

From the Biodiversity Framework, we read:

"We understand, value, protect and enhance the biodiversity and natural heritage of the MidCoast region for the environmental, cultural and economic well-being of our community."

The Greening Strategy states:

"The aim of the MidCoast Greening Strategy is to manage and enhance the quality and extent of vegetation across our diverse landscapes – or put simply, to retain and plant trees today for our enjoyment, and to create a positive legacy for future generations."

"As part of developing the first Greening Strategy for the MidCoast, we identified the need for targeted vegetation management in areas across the region that contribute:

- significant ecological values, either through maintaining important habitat or corridors linking habitats enabling fauna movement or
- landscape character and amenity... some locations are renowned for their 'leafy' character, while others provide a vegetated landscape on entry into our towns and villages."

However, none of the above Strategies or Frameworks will achieve their noble objectives if there is inadequate control over tree and vegetation clearing. As we have seen, there is little such control on rural land where the responsibility lies with a State Government that seems to have no wish to prevent tree and vegetation destruction of rural zoned land.

The Council does however, retain limited control of land clearing in some areas which most of us would consider rural land, but which is not zoned rural, and that is some land which is zoned as Environmental³.

In July 2021 MCC Council introduced certain restrictions and controls on tree and vegetation clearing when it adopted its Vegetation Management Policy. This is an important Policy because many of the objectives contained in the Climate Change Strategy, the Biodiversity Framework and the Greening Strategy will not be achieved without the controls imposed by the Vegetation Management Policy. Unfortunately, the Policy only really

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BI-RURAL!

Jane Caro

I was only half-joking when I said to my husband – after he expressed an interest in buying a cattle property – that my family had been urban since the 12th century.

Nevertheless, I believe that people should follow their dreams and Ralph has always helped me to follow mine, so it seemed only fair to help him do the same. So, we put an offer in on a derelict cattle farm in a beautiful but remote spot in the Upper Hunter. When the offer was accepted, I reminded myself that we could always sell it.

That was almost a quarter of a century ago and, although we do not live at the farm full-time (except during COVID lockdowns) we have never looked back. I love being bi-urban, or should that be bi-rural?

Over the years we have become increasingly part of our small local community. We are supporters of the local Volunteer Fire Brigade and regular customers for local egg producers, builders, fence-repairers, mechanics, dam excavators, cleaners, cattle haulers and jacks-of-all-trades.

Owning a business in a remote area we are also very aware of the problems that face many who live in regional Australia. Communications used to be the biggest problem, with Telstra landlines routinely felled by trees or swamped by floods. Now, thanks to satellite wifi and Elon Musk, our internet at the farm is faster and more reliable than in Sydney.

The biggest issue in our neck of the woods is the roads and reliable access to our properties, especially as climate change ramps up and the already high rainfall (we're on the edge of a temperate rainforest) tips into torrential territory. We must cross 4 causeways to reach our front gate or take the long way round through the forest. Recently, after the unprecedented floods, one causeway was swept away, and the



Jane Caro

forest road was blocked by a landslip so there was no way in or out.

But even when the heavens are not opening, our local roads are diabolical. Some of the pot holes are big enough for entire families to set up house in. Alright, I am exaggerating, but only a bit. They have certainly ruined many a suspension. To get to our end of the valley, you must drive over 11ks of dirt road, shuddering and shaking as you try to avoid the holes, corrugations and ruts. Not to mention the exponential increase in traffic that has followed COVID and the desire of people to get out of the house and into the outdoors – aka our nearby forest. The road is struggling to cope, and a young woman was tragically killed last year when her car left the road and went into the river.

Access to health services is a big issue and I spend every summer dreading snakebite as I watch my young grandchildren lark about in the paddock. No one is allowed

to leave the veranda without boots on, no matter how hot it is. We have had to call the ambulance a few times but usually for holiday makers who have had car accidents or – particularly this summer – near drownings in the flood-swollen river. The poor roads slow our local (absolutely bloody wonderful) paramedics who must come from Dungog, an hour away. The emergency helicopter takes about as long and we are always aware that when the weather turns foul, it may be busy elsewhere.

During the bushfires of 2019, the Mount Royal fire came within 9ks and the local fire brigade fought it bravely with no communications at all. To remedy this, a communications tower has been erected at Mount Alyn. Us locals live in hope Telstra will buy some space.

Living in such a beautiful area has many rewards and it is – as our children describe it – our family's happy place. But it is hard to run a cattle stud when access is so dodgy. Many of our neighbours run tourism businesses and that's worse. Our neighbours have 4 small children and have had to make the dash for hospital (2 hours away) with a very sick toddler, braving flooded causeways.

As a Senate candidate for NSW, seeing what my neighbours struggle with daily, I reckon the main issues for many rural dwellers is the state of our roads, reliable communications and more available health services. And improving those, if you ask me, relies on us finally electing a government that is willing to do its job.

Walkley award-winning feminist, media personality and education campaigner Jane Caro AM has announced her campaign for the Senate as a candidate for Reason Australia
www.janecaro4reason.com.au

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does part of the job because many areas are still left with no protection from wanton tree and vegetation destruction. A case in point is the land around the township of Gloucester where I live.

Gloucester is flanked on two sides by beautiful rocky outcrops known as the Bucketts to the west and the Mograni to the east. Both have a special meaning to indigenous Australians and are important for their biodiversity. Koalas are regularly sighted in and around the Bucketts and both areas are well covered in native vegetation. Both contribute "significant ecological values" and "landscape character and amenity." However, neither area is protected by the Council's Vegetation Management Policy. There are other Environmental areas within the MidCoast Council area that also remain unprotected.

Strangely, to the south of the township of Gloucester there is land zoned as Large Lot Residential where there are beautiful stands of old growth trees which are also unprotected from destruction. Yet, similarly zoned land to the north is covered by the Vegetation Management Policy.

For MidCoast Council to achieve the objectives it has set for itself with the Climate Change Strategy, the Biodiversity Framework, the Greening Strategy, and the draft Rural Strategy it must:

- Strongly lobby the NSW Government to get it to "restore the balance to NSW native vegetation laws to ensure healthy, productive and resilient landscapes for generations to come."⁴
- and
- Expand significantly the areas protected by its own Vegetation Management Policy to cover all land zoned Environmental over which it has control and all other land where there is remnant native vegetation, particularly old growth trees.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *'The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas'*. John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group which has, with the help of MidCoast Council, been planting thousands of native trees and shrubs in and around Gloucester as part of its Rivercare and Koalaways programs.

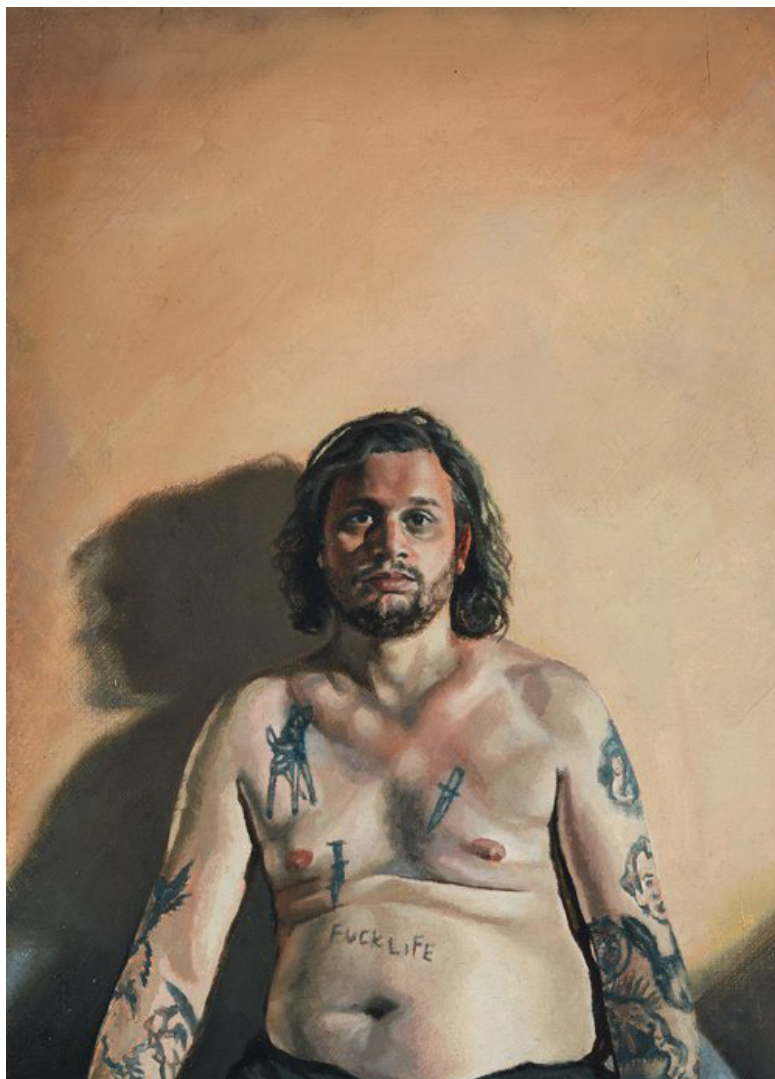
(While developers seem to hold sway I am not holding my breath! A case of do as I say not do as I do?? Ed.)

THE ARCHIBALD PRIZE IS COMING HERE

Australia's oldest and most loved portraiture prize, The Archibald Prize, is coming to Manning Regional Art Gallery from July 8 to 21 August 2022.



Kerry O'Brien by James Powditch



Ben by Shannon McCulloch



Kate Cebrano by Kathrin Longhurst

Room Prize of *Kate* (Cebrano) by Kathrin Longhurst

Other works to look out for are *Ben* by Shannon McCulloch, *Apprentice-Self Portrait with Papa K (aka I do see colour)* by Mathew Lynn and the portrait of *Kerry O'Brien* by James Powditch. Like many of the Archibald paintings, these are records of some elements of contemporary Australian history. They reflect back to us, some of the events in our times.

Judged by the trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW, the prize is awarded annually to the best portrait, 'preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in arts, letters, science or politics, painted by any artist resident in Australasia'. The winner receives \$100 000, courtesy of ANZ Bank. The Packing Room Prize is valued at \$3000, and the ANZ People's Choice award is valued at \$5000.

The Archibald Prize was established in 1921 following a bequest from JF Archibald (1856-1919). Archibald was a former Art Gallery of NSW trustee and founder of *The Bulletin* magazine. The aim of the bequest is to "foster portraiture, support artists and perpetuate the memory of great Australians."

Keep up with the exhibition program at the Manning Regional Gallery at mrag.midcoast.nsw.gov.au
Sue Mitchell

the state.

Out of the 938 paintings entered in the 2021 competition, 52 have been selected as finalists and were hung in the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney. After the Sydney exhibition the finalists are carefully crated and toured to only 6 galleries in NSW and Victoria.

The finalists include the 2021 winner by Peter Wegner *Portrait of Guy Warren at 100*, the winner of the People's Choice by Julia Cissarone titled *The Sea Within* and the Packing

It is a great privilege for a Regional Gallery to be able to show this exhibition, and galleries vie with each other for the limited opportunity. The Manning

Gallery has been favoured over many other galleries in NSW. It is expected that visitors, including schools and tourists will come from all over the northern part of

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

vate Hospital. They have operating theatres and facilities barely being used while MBH are running at over capacity.

So Forster Private Hospital and the Mayo should be integrated as a backup and emergency Hospital affiliated under the wing of MBH. And in the meantime, Manning Base receives the funds and plans to go full steam ahead as a properly

funded, fully fitted out and staffed regional hospital.

The Parliamentary Commission Enquiry into Regional Health, particularly submissions concerning Manning Base Hospital, were shocking and tragic. Yet nothing has happened.

So how many deaths, how many exhausted staff at every level, and staff resigning due to lack of funding and amenities for doctors, locums, specialists, nurses, cleaners and wardsmen etc does it take to im-

prove the situation at Manning Base Hospital after years and years?

COVID BEEN THE CRUNCH

Why don't we stand up and follow in the steps of frustrated and furious New England Hospital and representatives, and tell the Kingdom of Newcastle New England Health that we are moving on too. Not to New England (been there done that) which has a mountain and bad roads between us for starters.

Surely it makes more sense for

us to be affiliated (as we once were) with Port Macquarie and Mid North Coast Hospitals. (Coffs Harbour etc.)

Let's hope that in the coming election, others step in to fix our hospital. In the meantime the loyal hospital staff from top to bottom, stagger on doing their best against the odds.

Stay tuned, there is a lot more to this sorry story which will soon enough be made public.

DM.

THE HONEYMOON IS OVER!

After 100 days of the newly elected MidCoast Council, it's time to review their performance.

Since amalgamation the costs to operate the Council have been significantly increasing but not matched by any real improvements, nor productivity, and the range of Council's services are diminishing while staff and costs and consultants increase. Try calling Council on a basic issue or applying for a Development Application or a simple enquiry!

What is of very real concern will be how the newly elected Council frames the 10 year Community Strategic Plan, the 4 year Delivery Program, the 21/22 Operational Plan and the Budget which are all to go on public exhibition soon. And whether, for the first time Council will integrate the Budget with the Operational Plan to provide genuine transparency and accountability – or will it be more of the confusing and meaningless un-related facts and figures designed to discourage public interest.

Plans and future documents soon to be released will demonstrate if the elected Council has made any impact on critical issues or if they have just kowtowed and surrendered to the Administrations demands.

COUNCIL'S PRODUCTIVITY?

The community was told that once Council moved to the Masters Warehouse services would be better; as staff morale would be higher, and through the centralisation of staff productivity would increase.

Information leaking from current staff indicates that morale is at an all-time low. There are record numbers of staff, including middle management executives who have taken 'stress' leave and the staff culture is no better than back in 2017. It sounds a miserable place to work.

MASTERS WAREHOUSE RELOCATION.

Costs of this gross error include - all the loans, the sacrifice of valuable assets flogged off all too cheaply, the hidden costs allocated to other budgets; the loss of several years in productivity and distraction from core business.

FAILURE TO MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE.

The recent rain events spanning from January have clearly exposed and demonstrated Council's inability to adequately maintain our roads and bridges - our key infrastructure. Council has key structural problems with not only its financial position, but with its infrastructure backlog which, if left unattended much longer, could lead to

disastrous and tragic consequences.

NEW COUNCIL

The challenge for the newly elected Councillors will be whether they are prepared to, or whether they actually have the capacity to wrest control of the Council from the Administration, which thus far has not demonstrated that its priorities actually match up to the expectations of the community.

The next Council Budget will be a very telling signal.

NO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

Council has deferred and not appointed Councillors to an Economic Development Committee, raising concerns from some business owners that Council may be moving away from providing meaningful local economic development support.

Council also failed to establish a Sport and Recreation Committee and a Tourism Committee both highly integral and relevant to the local economy.

GLOUCESTER RESERVOIR IN TROUBLE.

Council's original budget for the project was \$8.6 million when it was approved for design in May 2020. The cost then blew out to a staggering '*final preconstruction estimate of \$21 Million*' in March 2021 when the tender was awarded.

Recently it has been reported that the base of the reservoir has cracked and subcontractors working on the site have apparently left the project site.

LEARN FROM OTHER COUNCILS

Cr. Bell successfully steered through a motion that the community would like to see both the Open and Public Forums held as part of the formal Council Meeting process rather than at some other time. Her motion called on the General Manager to present Councillors a range of options canvassed from the practices of other Councils.

FORSTER CIVIC PRECINCT STILL STALLED?

After all the delays, promises and the controversy the hapless Forster Civic Precinct project appeared to be travelling on course but it seems that Council may not be able to use the building until March 2023. Delays.

PROMISED CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM?

MidCoast Council's 2021/22 Bud-

get promised a total of \$100,512,860.00 in Capital Works this consisted of:

General Fund Works: \$63,427,860 (\$50 million for roads)

Water Fund: \$24,160,000

Sewer Fund: \$12,925,000

Given Council's recent progress reports on the capital works and its Quarterly Budget Review Statements it appears patently clear that Council will not complete all these works on schedule as promised to the community. Will they continue to re-vote uncompleted projects into the subsequent year (2022/23)? as has happened over the past four years where on average \$40 million in projects were not completed and re-voted to the next year.

It is also unlikely that this year's component of the \$100 Million Roads Program, which is already behind schedule by two years will be completed.

BUDGET CUTS

The state of our roads, multiplying potholes, unsafe bridges, even council vehicles left unregistered, the maintenance of Council's infrastructure must be addressed by our new Councillors and the community needs to be informed.

RATE PEG HIKE

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has set the rate peg for 2022-23 at **0.7%** for councils with zero and below population growth. The rate peg is the maximum percentage amount by which a council can increase its income from rates.

So MidCoast Council is now eligible to apply an increase of 0.9% to the 2022/23 rates, commencing from 1 July. Ouch!

SWIMMING POOL REVIEW

At the 23 February Council Meeting Cr Peter Epov managed to get a motion passed to bring forward a Report to Council which reviews and examines the management and operations of all public and community swimming pools within the MidCoast Council Local Government Area.

The Report should also review the current contract with the YMCA and examine other options for the management of all our public swimming pools including Council directly managing our community and public pools.

Council is to assess costs of a solar roof heating system which could potentially extend the operating period for 50 metre Olympic outdoor swimming at the Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre.

Council is also required to examine

opportunities of collecting storing and rain water which could be collected from the roof of the grandstand and other buildings at the Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre.

The proposed review is to engage with users of the Council's pool facilities, including the Taree Torpedoes, to gain an insight into public views and concerns which could assist in future management options and growth plans for all Councils pools.

(Send an email to the General Manager if you have an opinion.)

COUNCIL FINANCES

Following the Public Exhibition of MidCoast Council's Audited Financial Statement 2020/21, Council published two very competent submissions from residents who expressed concern over the state of Council's finances. Other residents claimed that the damning Central Coast Council Enquiry Report mirrors many issues at our Council. So perhaps Councillors should be engaging a suitable independent financial organisation to review Councils Budgeting Processes, Financial Statements, IT Expenditure and Long Term Financial Planning.

TAREE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

In February the Federal Member for Lyne, Dr David Gillespie, announced on ABC radio that the Council would be receiving \$5.5m for the former Taree Council Chambers on Pulteney Street, Taree. What was not clear was whether this was a lease or a purchase.

It has now been established that the building will be leased to the TUC for a period of 25 years for the sum of \$5 million dollars. The other \$500,000 will be allocated to certain renovations. This is based on Council's recent Report that Council's Administration lodged a joint application with the TUC on 6 October for grant funding through the Federal Government Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program for the \$5.5 Million.

It appears that the grant application was submitted without the former elected Council's endorsement nor consent. We can find no Council Reports on record around that time recording Council's authorisation for any such arrangement.

This is a commitment of a very valuable community asset being stitched up for 25 years.

Most ratepayers whinge about Council starting with the massive salary paid to our GM. However we can't help asking – are we getting value for our money?

DOING GOOD AND DOING GREAT...

It's KIDS GIVING BACK

No lockdowns for local charity: kids keep giving back all through the pandemic and continuing wherever there is need!

Kids Giving Back is a Sydney based charity founded almost ten years ago with a mission to Create the Next Generation of Generosity.

While based in Sydney, it runs volunteering and service programs for schools and groups around NSW, and recently hosted a group of local students from MidCoast Christian College.

The mission of Kids Giving Back is accomplished by empowering and enabling kids to give back to their community and then embrace this value of helping others throughout their lifetime.

Recent years through the pandemic certainly tested our mission; would kids, locked down and masked up, still come forward to help others when helping was even harder? We found the answer to be a resounding YES!

Never have we been more convinced that our future is in good hands than during the last few years, and as we look ahead to 2022. The pandemic, while difficult for so many on multiple levels, did not stop our younger generations from wanting to step forward and give back to those in need – in fact, it fuelled their determination even more!

Perhaps because they were at home and became motivated to want to do something outside of their houses and themselves, or perhaps because our globally aware kids became more conscious about how Covid and Climate Change has affected everyone, especially those already experiencing vulnerability, food insecurity and homelessness.

So it's inspiring, hopeful and heart-warming.

Over 3600 volunteers joined Kids Giving Back in just the last year and met the challenges faced by our most vulnerable with spirit, kindness and determination. Kids zoomed

into bingo and conversation with isolated aged care residents, groups of home-learning students organised online fundraisers to sponsor meals for the homeless, and our littlest helpers hand-made dog and cat toys for sheltered animals lonely from missing human visits. And when we weren't all locked down, kids of all ages joined together and cooked ... and cooked, and cooked! Kids and families made 31,795 meals, 2,243 care packs and school supply bags and provided 35 charities with much needed resources, not just in Sydney but as far as the Northern Territory!

With all this phenomenal giving back by kids and families last year, we are even more inspired to give back bigger in 2022 – and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



Kids meet the needs of others



The organisation that makes it easy for kids to learn to give back.

SMALL USED TO BE BEAUTIFUL

Remember that precious little book from 1973, E.F. Schumacher's 'Small is Beautiful'? Its subtitle elucidates: 'A study of economics, as if people mattered.'

When I was studying Environmental Science in 1981, it was my favourite of all the prescribed reading. Upon release, one review in particular seemed to capture the zeitgeist: *'The basic message ... is that man is pulling the earth and himself out of equilibrium by applying only one true test to everything he does: money, profit and therefore, giant operations'*. Schumacher's antidote to this affliction was an arrangement of 'Intermediate Technologies' based on small systems, communal ownership and regional workplaces that used local labour and resources.

In the 70s and 80s, there was huge excitement about the 'back to the land' movement. Way back then, people began experimenting with technology such as photovoltaics, solar hot water systems, and small-scale hydro and wind generators. Of course, there were hiccups because the industry was in its infancy, but many of us stuck with it. We had

large veggie gardens and orchards, and modest, passively-designed homes, often owner-built of locally sourced or recycled materials. 'Self-sufficiency' was the catchcry.

While today's media loves glamorising 'tree changers', the stark reality is that Australia is a nation of sprawling suburbs of small blocks, with 'McMansions' occupying most of the ground between paling fences. Big and ugly, but why not, when multiple property ownership offers so much wealth in our over-heated housing market? Houses cover formerly productive land, with insufficient room to grow more than a few token herbs in pots. Most of our 'fresh' food arrives from hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away by truck or plane. Local market gardens and community gardens are largely a thing of the past. (It is only a few modern cooperatives, such as Goolawah Land Sharing Cooperative that offer a practical, affordable alternative.)

Since the 70s, our world has morphed into 'big is beautiful'. Astoundingly, the world population

has doubled. Species are increasingly threatened - including our own. Multinationals and transnationals not only dominate the world economy, but more chillingly, our politics and governance. Many democracies are now plutocracies (government by the wealthy), with large corporations and their lobbyists more powerful than elected governments. In Australia, these are overwhelmingly fossil fuel companies.

Australia's pathetic response to climate change illustrates the problem with 'big'. The vested interests of donors to the two major parties undermine the urgency we need to genuinely act. Even when a scheme is announced, it is often for a BIG project. For instance, even though research shows we have enough reservoirs for small-scale pumped hydro storage, our government has opted for the grandeur of Snowy Hydro 2.

What about incentivising the covering of more roofs with solar panels, or facilitating community power-sharing systems? No, our government prefers big projects run

by big corporations, with a handful of very powerful lobbyists dictating our response to the climate crisis.

Modern forestry practice is another glaring example of 'big is ugly'. Only a few decades ago, forestry technology favoured individual tree selection. Locally, this supported multiple small mills and a large workforce. Enter the monster machines now used in industrial-scale logging, and gone is the small miller. Gone, too, are well-managed forests, now replaced by a moonscape of clear-felled desolation.

Schumacher's groundbreaking text has been largely forgotten, as has any memory of the simpler lifestyles of a few decades ago. In the scramble to get ahead in an increasingly unequal world, we have forgotten that having more and 'bigger' doesn't guarantee contentment. But Schumacher's message is even more crucial today, if we are to pull ourselves out of the big, ugly, existential crisis that unlimited economic growth has created.

Tom Ferrier
www.getgreener.com



GRAND CONCERT



**Manning Homeless Action Group's
Bed Inn Bus Campaign**

The Taree and Manning Areas need a Sleepbus for Homeless People.

2.30 pm Saturday 7th May 2022

Manning Uniting Church, Albert Street, Taree.

Admission \$10 per person – Children under 16 free. Tickets at the door.

Featuring

Club Taree Community Concert Band; Wingsong; Possum Scratchers; Claire Wright; Spatt; The Papas' Trio;

Manning Valley Quintet; 4Js an'a T.

Enquiries to Terry Stanton, 02 6553 1360.

tez_stanton@hotmail.com



DOING GOOD AND DOING GREAT...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

so far 2022 is proving it needs help from everyone who can help – and kids can definitely help! So how can you be part of the giving back movement on the Mid North Coast? Join our school programs! Already we have had kids packing care packs and clothing boxes for people affected by the floods.

Kids Giving Back brings its volunteer programs to schools, where kids in every year from 4-12 can learn about vulnerability, empathy and volunteerism and then engage in a direct service project that will benefit a community in need, near or far.

TAREE KIDS

In the past month MidCoast College in Taree did just that. Their students cooked meals and packed hundreds of breakfast boxes and snack packs for people experiencing need. Afterwards, the impact on the students was profound.

Kids Giving Back is a triple impact organisation: teaching kids kindness and service through action, while directly feeding and helping our vulnerable and ultimately creating social cohesion and empathy showing generations how doing good feels good and creates a better world.

"Kids Giving Back provided an excellent opportunity for the students to look outside themselves and to the needs of others less fortunate than them. They relished in the opportunity to apply a personal touch to food and hygiene packs that would be distributed to those in need in Sydney. For many students this was a real highlight for the trip, as it reinforced the truth that 'it is better to give than receive'. Young people live in a world that is surrounded by consumerism and glorified individualism, which as adults we all know are empty pursuits. I saw this experience as perspective changing for the young people of MidCoast Christian College and we plan to return again!" – James Dawson, MidCoast Christian College.

Reflections from MidCoast Christian College students from Kids Giving Back include:

Kids Giving Back was an eye opening experience. Through Jaz sharing her personal story about being homeless and how she had overcome it, it showed how hard it can be especially when trying to find a job and a place to stay. I loved being able to help out by making hygiene packs for people who are less fortunate than us and knowing that it would put a smile on their face

was a good feeling. Lachlan R

Kids Giving Back was a great experience, and very eye opening. I didn't expect it to be as impactful as it was, and it was very beneficial. Sometimes if bad things happen to me it feels like the world is going to end, metaphorically speaking. Typically, my life is always great, so to hear those stories of people who are, or had been, living a life that's the complete opposite to mine, it sunk in that I am very fortunate, and that I should stop and think about these people whenever life is "hard". Overall, it was a fantastic experience! Bailey C.

Joining and participating in Kids Giving Back, had to be one of my favourite places that we visited on the year 12 camp. I loved the super friendly atmosphere as soon as we were in the door. I loved the idea of a simple 'breakfast pack' or a small essential pack, that benefits the homeless people in so many ways. I also loved the hand written messages and thoughtful notes drawn onto the bags, which I am sure would have brightened anyone's day!

During this time, I also really valued the story of the lady leading our school group... she truly opened my eyes to the many difficulties someone can face, but how an individual can overcome and move forward with their life and contribute in amazing opportunities like 'Kids Giving Back'. Indianna D.

Thank you to Jasmine and the team at Kids Giving Back for this eye-opening and sentimental experience. The truthfulness and meaningfulness that was expressed by Jasmine as she shared her experience was most inspiring to me. But also the way in which my year group contributed as a team to support those in need. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Kids Giving Back, especially when it came to making up the 'snack attack' snack cups. Thanks again for the experience. Noah H.

So get involved – if you'd like to see this opportunity in your school for students to give back, while learning how to meet needs in a practical, compassionate and resourceful way, we can come to you! So come be part of the movement across the region, to help our community and others who need us to give back to them – our kids showed us not even a pandemic can stop them! Visit our website to learn more about our amazing volunteers and to join us, walk with us, grow with us and give with us. www.kidsgivingback.org

Gabrielle Morrissey Hansen
CEO, Kids Giving Back

I'M JUST A LOCAL BUT. . .

As I sit here typing, rain is pouring down once again ... heavy, threatening, drenching, flooding rain. Our beautiful town of Gloucester experienced similar rain only one year ago, resulting in a "one in a 100-year flood".

Families lost everything, houses flooded, business flooded, roads damaged, animals displaced and drowned. The same is now happening up and down the east coast.

Before that we had experienced the worst drought in history and Gloucester ran out of water! Water had to be trucked into our beautiful town because our rivers had run dry. If that was not enough, the area then suffered though some of the worst bushfires in history. People died, families were again displaced, animals with nowhere to run were burnt to a cinder. The effects are ongoing, hearts are still breaking, our planet is crying out for help!

So, as I write this my mind is focusing very much on climate change. This is not a normal weather pattern, in my opinion we are in the midst of a climate disaster, and we need to act now. The science cannot be denied.

As a grandmother my greatest concern is that our grandchildren and their children will have a safe, healthy planet to live on. A planet where native flora and fauna exist without the threat of becoming extinct.

MidCoast Council has declared a climate emergency and has developed fine sounding biodiversity, greening and other strategies and plans, and yet destruction of habitat vegetation vital to achieve these noble objectives is continuing unabated. Recently the Council approved a major housing development near Tea Gardens in a known koala area, and apparently more are on the cards.

The Council appeared to be prepared to allow a subdivision in an important koala area near Barrington with no proper environmental study.

It took community objections to draw this to the Council's attention. Such inappropriate developments continue to be approved and are completely at odds with the need to deal seriously with climate change and biodiversity loss.

In Gloucester the beautiful Bucketts Range is the home to threatened koalas and other native animals, and yet the trees and vegetation of the Bucketts and other similar areas are completely unprotected by Council's Vegetation Management Plan. I recently heard that the Council has no intention of even commencing the work needed for a Bucketts Conservation Action Plan until 2023/2024, despite the fact that koalas are facing extinction.

Urban areas without trees are known to be much hotter than areas with lots of tree canopy, and the Council talks about greening urban areas. However, in the 10 years that I have lived in Gloucester there has been no sign of any street tree planting. Council recently reconstructed a major road into the town and in doing so created a bare concrete and bitumen wasteland. Not one tree was planted.

When the Council undertakes any project or approves a development the primary focus should be on its biodiversity and climate change impact. The environmental impact should not be just one factor – the environment should trump all others.

There are many other issues I could talk about, but if climate change is not dealt with there will be no other issues to worry about.

Sue Watts.
Gloucester.

WRITING YOUR HISTORY!

David Longfield

“How did I end up having dinner with a Mafia Boss in New York? Well, that’s a great story, but where do I start?”

The ‘Where do I start?’ is the first hurdle you face when writing your life story. Soon after that comes, ‘How am I going with this?’ followed by, ‘What else would you like to know?’

I have been running a publishing business for 20 years, and questions like these were why I set out to create a simple way to help people record their life stories. The result was our guided life story writing program, Biografica.

First, a tip that may seem obvious, but it’s important and may mean you overcome years of procrastination:

If you are writing your life story, you don’t have to write a 300-page autobiography in perfect prose! You don’t need to be hailed as the next great Australian writer. It’s getting the stories and anecdotes from your life down in your own words, in whatever way you wish, that’s important.

Your family and friends want to read about where you grew up, your childhood adventures, the holidays you went on, and the hobbies you’ve dabbled in. These snippets of life are such an important part of your family. Your children and grandchildren will love to hear exotic tales from a different time – perhaps a different place if you or your parents migrated to Australia.

Now to the question of ‘Where to begin?’

You will undoubtedly have a story you love retelling or a topic you are passionate about. So when you begin writing your story, warm up with one of your favourites. If you love remembering events from your travels and holidays, start with one of those.

From there, you can move on to another topic you love, and in no time, you’ll find that your mind is teeming with memories of the people, places, and experiences from your life.

When creating Biografica, we had exactly this scenario in mind.

That’s why our questions guide you through your life using a collection of questions that help you recall key moments. You answer them in any order, with as many words as you wish.

We’ve grouped the questions into seven topics: Your Parents & Family, Growing Up, Education, Relationships, Children, Professional Life, and Home & Community. The questions under each topic, ranging from the straightforward to the more thoughtful, help you logically work through your memories. We ask questions such as:

- When you were young, what did you do on family holidays?
- Describe the interests you have pursued during your life.
- Tell us about the people that mean the most to you.
- What is your most satisfying professional achievement?

Finally, the questions of ‘Where am I going with this story?’ and ‘What else would you like to know?’

To overcome both dilemmas, Biografica includes thought starters and writing ideas. For example, if you are writing about memories of your childhood house, we suggest telling us: What the atmosphere of the house was? Describe the neighbourhood or surrounding areas. Was it an old house or a newly built one? Single or two-storey and built of brick, stone, or timber? Describe the garden. Describe your bedroom or your favourite room.

It’s like having your personal interviewer and guide who knows what to ask, so you don’t have to pull ideas out of the air. You’ll find it a satisfying exercise. And your family will appreciate treasure your special memories.

David Longfield is the creator of Biografica.life, the guided life story writing program.

www.Biografica.life



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COMMUNITIES: Unremarkable But Essential

It was an unremarkable, but pleasant Saturday afternoon in an otherwise unremarkable regional Australian town. Two teams were contesting the Grand Final of the district cricket competition.

My team, the Mucklesford boys, all grown men, some of whom would be candidates for score-keeper or umpire anywhere else, had made the Grand Final for the first time in living memory. They had won the toss and elected to bat, making 153 for 8 in the allotted time of the first session.

Their rivals had held the trophy for years and the run-chase was being held down by accurate bowling and agile fielding. But, finally, to no avail. The Grand Finalist pushed on, to creep past Mucklesford's score just before the end of play. But the real victory was Mucklesford's: they had made the Grand Final and held the long-time champions to a nail-biting finish.

Community sporting competitions are one true sign of the health of a community bonding men, women, children and families. Another is the support institutions like the Country Women's Association or the volunteer fire brigades and the SES. Bank branches might close but when the sporting grounds are shuttered, and the social institutions wither, a community is dying.

There are many things that hold communities together, among them are common values and trust. Happily, we are outgrowing birth origins as a prerequisite for membership of a community though occasionally we hear the lament 'I've lived here for 30 years but still don't feel like a local'. The fault frequently lies with the individual, who has not made the necessary concessions, extended trust, to embrace and be

embraced by a community.

Trust is a commodity that is in short and dwindling supply today. Our leaders have done little to support public trust. In March, the survey company Roy Morgan, updated its tracking report, *Australia's Most Trusted and Distrusted Politicians and Brands* with data gleaned from more than 60,000 respondents. Alarming Prime Minister Scott Morrison, has the dubious honour of being the nation's least trustworthy politician, but more concern is that also governments, more broadly, are seen as distrustful.

Morrison is reaping the harvest of the actions of his predecessors. Remember Tony Abbott's election-eve pledge: "No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to ABC or SBS". And there was Julia Gillard's promise never to implement a carbon tax and Kevin Rudd's appointment of climate change as "the great moral challenge of our generation". But they were all building on John Howard's memorable redefinition of political undertakings as 'core and non-core', and his 1995 undertaking on the introduction of a GST: "Never ever. It's dead. It was killed by voters at the last election." By 1999, under a Howard government, Australia had a GST.

Technology and social media, too, has had an impact on trust. When we see that we have common values with another, by the experience of their words and actions, trust starts at a higher threshold and can grow further. Optimists are more trusting than pessimists, the young more trusting than the old.

But recognising common values is increasingly difficult. Social media platforms are choking people with information, relevant or irrelevant to their needs, of dubious authenticity or utility. You cannot believe all, so it is easy to believe nothing, trust nothing. So, perversely, the damage to trust and the ability to form communities has been done by social media. I say perversely because social media has also enabled the formation of virtual communities of people isolated by distance or disability, or uncommon interests.

And, if the anti-vaccination campaigns are just about vaccination, rather than platforms for anti-government agitators, aided by useful idiots, trust in science and medicine is falling too.

Established religions are also suffering from this trust deficit, if declining church attendances is anything to go by. On the other hand, the rise of religious ecumenism has meant that the distrust, sometimes hostility, between Catholics and Protestants that coloured my youth has largely disappeared.

Even apparently neutral technologies undermine trust, something as simple as a swipe card. In my early 20s, I worked at a university TV studio in a junior role. I had keys to the front door, my (shared) office, the studios and the darkrooms. I was trusted not to abuse the privilege that access gave, and was aware of the responsibility. I didn't abuse it, though I did sleep in my room a few times, when I missed the last train from the city.

With swipe cards one's movements are monitored, access

hours restricted, comings and goings listed, and all can be withheld at a whim or by a malfunction. Swipe cards have removed that official grant of trust that a key implied, though the responsibility remains.

Also in March, Kate Bowler, consumer data advocate at CHOICE, said Airbnb may be using an algorithm to assess clients' 'trustworthiness'. The patented algorithm is claimed to assess people's personality traits, such as narcissism or conscientiousness, along with behavioural traits, such as use of drugs or alcohol or involvement in civil litigation and other behaviour, and combine them to create a holistic score. Airbnb admits as much in its privacy policy, so how many other platforms are using similar technologies?

Trust is necessary for the life of a community no matter how large or small, be it a local cricket club or a nation. Our leaders must lead the way, that is their number one KPI, but leaders are part of our social structure at all levels. It is at least as important that local leadership is worthy of the task; mayors, local councillors, right down to shopkeepers and parents. Good leadership is a whole of community effort, something that cannot be achieved on-line. In a real way, communities have to re-take the streets and public spaces to build trust that, in turn, builds communities.

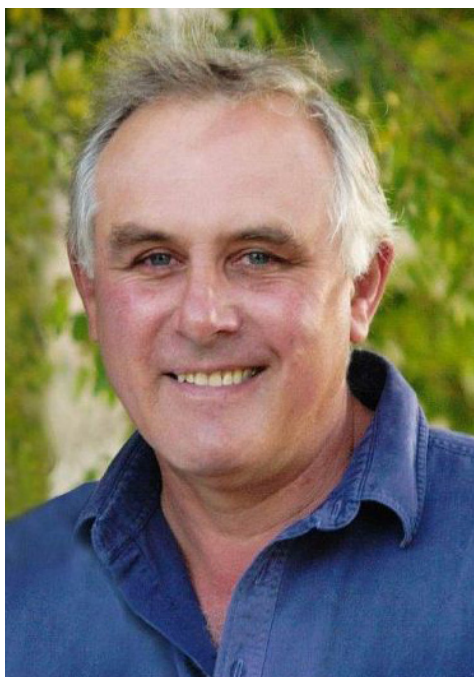
Turn off the technology, use it only for what it's good for, not turn to it as substitute for life among others.

Vincent O'Donnell
Media Analyst and Researcher

The Rot Began with John Howard

Bruce Haigh

The Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison does not have qualities of leadership. He is unable to act in a crisis, he fades in the face of fire and flood, he demonstrates poor judgement and when challenged he bullies.



The Royal Commission into Natural Disaster was handed down sixteen months ago. Of 80 recommendations Morrison has adopted 14.

It has become apparent that his Prime Ministership is not about seeking best outcomes for the Australian people but rather for himself. He not only ignores climate change, he mocks it. He supports the fossil fuel industry.

Morrison is about smoke and mirrors, rather than substance and delivery. Australia has gone from being a respected member of the international community to a country reviled and ridiculed. His embarrassing performance at COP26 being but one example. He has trashed a very positive Australian reputation which took decades to build. He has angered those who helped create it.

But it began before Morrison. It began with John Howard undermining Australian belief in their ability to care and be seen to care with his untruths, constructed for base political gain, of children overboard, re-enforced with another untruth, that of weapons of mass destruction. He sent Australian troops to Iraq, without consulting the Australian Parliament, to support the US which had also lied about weapons of mass destruction. He ludicrously invoked the Anzus treaty in order to justify his offering of Australian troops for service in Iraq to the dullard President George W Bush.

Howard set the tone for what has followed over the last twenty plus years.

He has been a significant influence on the LNP, helping determine the type of person running for parliamentary office. Abbott and Morrison being examples of unsatisfactory candidates who received the backing of Howard and who went onto become reactionary and destructive Prime Ministers. All three have ensured that Australia has lost twenty-six years in addressing climate change.

Climate change is the most significant failure of the LNP, indeed of both major parties in Australia. The former Chief of the Defence Force, retired Admiral Chris Barrie has said the forthcoming federal election is the most important in his lifetime. He advocates for a comprehensive nationwide climate and security risk assessment, with an integrated plan for the allocation of resources, taking into account climate change related food shocks and the security consequences that would result from such disruptions. He has also criticised Dutton for putting a muzzle on defence personnel speaking about climate change.

Let me unpack the other major un-addressed or badly handled issues facing Australia.

Racism is the scourge of the LNP. Policies toward Indigenous Australians are paternalistic, certainly racist and in the case of Abbott, a weird missionary noblesse oblige. There is no hint of empowerment let alone respect in any of the government programs and interaction.

Howard set the standard for the treatment of refugees over the past twenty years with his, 'we will decide who comes here and when'. He locked up men, women and children in what amounted to concentration camps, he turned back refugee boats, in contravention of international and Australian law. Many of the refugees resulted from his joint incursion with the US into Iraq and Afghanistan. He evinced no understanding or empathy with the factors, horror and fear which leads a person to leave home and seek refuge. His policies and attitudes were shared by Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison (and Dutton). Rudd and Gillard warehoused refugees on Manus Island and Nauru. The policy has been driven by racism, immaturity and fear. Refugees currently remain in detention for no other reason

than to feed the prejudice of Dutton and Morrison. Labor fearing the wedge has done little to protest. Illustrative is the difference in approach taken by Morrison to Ukrainian refugees, which he says are 'at the top of the pile', compared to Afghan refugees who are quite clearly very low on the government's priority for resettlement. Compare the government's reaction to the subjugation of Ukrainians compared to Palestinians which Morrison has endorsed with his agreement to move the Australian Embassy to Jerusalem.

Aside from climate change, water – the lack of it, is the single biggest problem facing Australia. That might sound paradoxical in view of the recent catastrophic floods on the eastern seaboard. Shortage of water is closely linked to climate change. Little is being done on a national level to secure and nurture this scarce resource. Australia's largest waterway, the Murray/Darling is collapsing through the greed of irrigators backed by wilfully poor regulation. There have been allegations of corruption overseen by state and federal politicians. Due to the poor reporting of local and national media these allegations have only been touched on; they have not been properly investigated. The media, particularly local media, are scared off by bullying from the major irrigators. Australia is a profligate user of this scarce resource. Australia exports cheap water in the form of cotton, wine and almonds. The profit that ensues is not directed toward better practice or conservation. The clownish and self-indulgent leader of the Notional Farmers Party, Barnaby Joyce, advocates dams, but it's illustrative of his lack of imagination along with others. The answer is better, careful and more thoughtful water use. Mining does not fit any of those categories. Just as people have been encouraged to install solar panels they should, through Commonwealth subsidies, be encouraged to collect potable water in home tanks.

Not one major item of defence expenditure purchased over the past twenty years is either fit for purpose or appropriate to Australia's defence needs. Partly this is due to lack of proper process, lack of scrutiny and an inability to decide strategic imperatives. Australia does not need heavy tanks. The

F35 bought off the plan is fraught with faults. The European fleet of helicopters has been scrapped to be replaced with the US Black Hawk. The Adelaide was laid up in Tonga on a mercy mission with engine water filters apparently not designed to cope with volcanic ash. Believe that if you will. The problem did not bedevil Chinese naval competitors who were in and out of Tonga before parts for the Adelaide arrived.

Responding to US pressure Morrison scrapped the French submarine deal, which had Macron pick him in one, calling him a liar. *I don't think he is a liar; I know he is.* The Americans want to be in charge of their future war against the Chinese, so they gave the French the flick. Australia has been solemnly promised new US submarines in twenty years or so. The Australian media swallowed it, anchor and chain. All this was done under a new defence arrangement known as AUKUS – Australia, United Kingdom and the United States. Why the UK is in on the arrangement is unclear but colonial deprivation seems as good a reason as any.

AUKUS is a smoke screen, along with the non-existent submarine marine deal, for a greater US defence presence in Australia, particularly the north from where they aim to confront the Chinese, if not take them on, thereby rendering Alice Springs (Pine Gap) and Darwin targets. Following the Russian attack on the Ukraine Morrison seeks a Khaki election. Advising the government on this matter is the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), funded by American arms manufacturers, the US and Australian governments. With support from Morrison and Dutton it has usurped the advice from Defence and Foreign Affairs without noticeable improvement.

ASPI is currently seeking a new head. Controversy surrounds the appointment with Dutton seeking a captain's pick. The board of ASPI have other proposals. The Labor Party shadow minister for defence, Brendan O'Connor has weighed in saying no decision should be made before the election indicating that Labor intends to keep the right wing 'think tank', an organisation that, on its advice and associations, should be disbanded.

Preparation for meeting the effects of

climate change is woeful. We are hard pressed and ill equipped to meet the vicious and rapidly increasing manifestations of climate change. Australia requires a stand-alone and dedicated full time Climate Change Response Force, (CCRF), air transportable at short notice. Using the ADF for such undertakings is a waste of manpower. Climate change is with us, it must be faced, addressed and dealt with. Morrison is not capable.

Allan Behm in his new book, 'No Enemies, No Friends', Upswell Publishing, 2022, pp 203/4, says, "The Australian government currently shows no interest in preventing war between China and the United States over the status of Taiwan. This is the result of a combination of complacency, national introspection and self-absorption, lethargy, a lack of national self-confidence, a lack of national ambition, and deep anxiety and insecurity. We are paralysed... We have no plan and we have no vision."

Successive LNP governments have marginalised neighbouring Pacific Island States. Respectful dialogue has not occurred. These states want Australia to take action on climate change. Abbott, Turnbull, Morrison and ASPI ignored them, only showing interest when China did. Such behaviour is counter-productive and will be difficult for Morrison to overcome. Hopefully Albanese will be seen as more receptive and be able to reactivate old relationships.

The LNP has treated the region with equal disdain. The Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong felt constrained to deliver a polite lecture to Morrison on the desirability of working with China. It went over Morrison's head, as you would expect. China's impact on the region is considerable and growing. Clothing factories in Vietnam, fast rail link in Laos, soon to be extended into Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. China's Belt and Road initiative will impact, if it has not already done so, all south east Asian countries including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Indonesia and to varying degrees tie them to China. Morrison has turned his back on the initiative and also on accessing Chinese funds. Racking up debt at the rate he is, mainly in unproductive expenditure, Australia will need to access those funds probably sooner than later. In ten years, the Australian debt has gone from \$190 billion to \$950 billion. It would be an understatement to say that Morrison lacks vision and administrative competence.

Morrison no longer has a working relationship with China. His Wuhan pandemic remarks were seen as arrogant and crude, designed to take a rise out of Xi Jinping. Morrison is seen as having been primed by Trump. It is believed that Xi has no inclination to improve the relationship for as long as Morrison remains Prime Minister. As if to make matters worse, like dogs at the postman's heels, Morrison and a number of his ministers have jumped into China for not condemning Putin's bloody invasion of the Ukraine. Shrill and with moral certitude they evince no understanding of the difficult position China finds itself in, which is no doubt very concerned and looking for ways to get Putin to negotiate a withdrawal. Face needs to be saved on all sides, not least their own.

Anthony Albanese got sucked into 'me too' on China and the Ukraine. There was no need. Instead he might have urged China to use its good offices with Russia to try and bring about a cease fire and a negotiated set-

tlement. Albanese has also swallowed AUKUS with only a hasty shadow cabinet discussion and no consideration by rank-and-file Labor Party members. AUKUS is a big deal, it has the capacity to substantially undermine Australian sovereignty. Monitoring of Australia's northern sea and air space by the US will likely morph into reporting requirements and then control as the US ramps up its anti-China posture.

What is of concern in a functioning democracy is the felt need by Labor to adopt a low profile, agreeing with the government on security and defence issues and cautiously drip-feeding uncontroversial policies to the media. Justifiable criticism of Morrison over his response to fire, flood, climate change, refugees, women, aged care, secondary education, universities, health and Medicare has been muted.

Murdoch has much to answer for in biased, partisan reporting of all matters relating to the Labor Party. The ABC, under funding pressure from bullying Morrison and Ministers Fifield and Fletcher has sought to appease and, in the process, has lost sight of its charter.

There is no doubt that these instruments are biased against Labor, but that is the challenge that democracy is faced with from time to time. Ask black South African's living under the oppression of apartheid how they managed a voice in the face of a hostile white press. Albanese and the Labor Party appear to believe that democracy in Australia can be repaired if they get back into office. They act as if the game can still be played under existing rules. They agree that there should be an ICAC. I suspect they have no idea of the extent of corruption in Australia. I don't see any real urgency or concern on the part of Labor at the rapid pace of climate change and the considerable upheaval this heralds; rather it is business more or less as usual.

I get no sense of crises from either major party at the decaying structures of our society which the LNP from Howard to Morrison have aided and abetted, underpinned by corruption (sports rorts), contracts without tenders to mates, an unhealthy relationship with the fossil fuel industry and a willingness to ignore the law. But it is deeper. They are amoral users of people, exploiters of the poor and disadvantaged illustrated through Robodebt and NDIS. There is no sense that Morrison and his party know the difference between right and wrong.

Morrison and members of his front bench are a disgrace, the likes of which have not been seen in post Federation Australian politics. Many people are angry at being used, with a lack of nurturing for many things held precious, from the environment, to their children, parents, teachers, health and aged care workers. They hate the lack of respect for women, refugees, Indigenous Australians and immigrants, for artists, musicians, creative endeavour and innovation. They hate the selfishness, crassness, lack of courage and vision of Morrison and his LNP and they do wonder why Albanese and his Labor Party are not angrier and more passionate about the collapse of what used to be the structural and ethical norms of our society.

Bruce Haigh is a political commentator and retired diplomat.

(This article first appeared in Pearls and Irritations.)

Real Kultcha

The Galahs are in Pakistan at the moment and while they had a chance to win the second Test, the declaration came too late.

I guess we have to admit that as Aussies, we like to win. The problem is though if, as a captain, you try too hard to win and then lose, we'll rip you to pieces! Cummins is new at the captain's job and probably a bit gun shy so he decided to play it safe. He delayed a declaration to the point that Pakistan had no chance of winning and our chances were only slightly better. But a draw was fine because that's better than a loss! He got it right in the Third Test, we won and so took the series one zip.

Meanwhile, over in New Zealand, The Southern Stars (yes, I know, the nabobs of Cricket Australia have renamed them something boring but I still like that name) are going great guns and really haven't been troubled to date. It's still early days but they're looking good.

By the time you read this, the fate of the Australian soccer team (No, it's NOT FOOTBALL, it's soccer) will be clearer. They haven't played all that well to date and now find themselves between a rock and a hard place! They're not one of the top two in their division who get automatic selection to the World Cup. They played Japan t'other night and got walloped. They're still to play the other top team (Saudi Arabia) but they won't be able to overtake them so if they still want to go The Big Game, they're going to have to beat the bottom qualifying team out of South America and that won't be easy. In short, I don't like their chances.

The two other codes of football have begun and while I'd like to say The Heavenly Cohorts (St George and St Kilda) are both on top of their respective ladders, they're not. BUT, it's early days yet and they're not at the bottom! There is still hope: St George is in front of Manly and St Kilda is in front of Richmond. And speaking of Richmond, I ran into the local Richmond ear-worm at the Nabiac Show last weekend and after exchanging pleasantries ("St Kilda are a bunch of losers" and "Richmond's a side full of geriatrics") he surprised me by saying he was really impressed with the way Collingwood had played the night before and had decided to begin following them! As we sport loving folk know, there is only one thing worse than a Collingwood/Manly supporter and that's a turncoat: someone who has religiously followed a team for years and then, just because their team has hit a bit of a rough patch, they're abandoned and the fan flits to another team! While I tried to think of something cutting to say, his mate levelled him with a stare and in a voice that oozed venom, muttered, "But do we want you?" To abandon one's club is bad enough but to then be rejected so violently by your new love probably has the ex-Richmond ear-worm in therapy at the moment. I'll let you know how he's progressing down the track.

Tom Brady was the quarterback of the New England Patriots for some 20 seasons before switching to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers where he won his 7th Super Bowl ring! He retired last year and (I'm not making this up) some idiot paid almost US\$520,000 for the football he threw for his last touchdown! Then a week ago (at the age of 44) Tom decided his place was on the field not in the stands, so he un-retired himself and will pad up again this year! He holds almost every quarterback record in the NFL and will be an automatic selection for the Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible, so you've got to wonder why he retired, why he came back and how long will he be back?

Talk at you next month,
The Hillside Critic.

WAR IS A DYING BUSINESS

Russia's failure to secure a quick victory in Ukraine is another reminder that war is a dying business. It just does not pay. Very rarely have recent wars achieved the successes their initiators had planned.

Part of the explanation is that the nature of warfare has again changed.

Over the millennia there have been occasions when success could come from attack; other times when it comes from defence.

Trends in warfare form a pendulum moving between offence and defence.

For example, French knights in the Middle Ages were a formidable fighting force. But then Welsh archers with their long bows were recruited into the English army. They could bring down knights, who were not agile when forced off their horses. The knights were captured and then ransomed back to their serfs to pay for their freedom.

Leaping ahead to the 19th century, the emphasis was on offensive operations led by cavalry regiments.

World War I (1914-18) saw the pendulum swing back to defence and the use of trench warfare. World War II (1939-45) saw the pendulum swing back to offensive operations, such as the use of the tank in "blitzkrieg" attacks and aerial bombardment, culminating in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Since 1945 the pendulum has swung back to defence. In particular, guerrilla fighters have been difficult to defeat. A guerrilla group fighting on their own terrain, with high morale, and with the support of the local population are almost impossible to defeat.

Guerrillas and other defensive operations have defeated both superpowers. Indeed, Russia is now doing so badly in Ukraine that it no longer deserves the title of "superpower". 40 million Ukrainians are beating 140 million Russians.

Ukraine is putting up more resis-

tance than Putin expected. This is not a rerun of Russia's Crimean operation in 2014, when the west led by President Obama did nothing to resist the Russian takeover in Crimea and other parts of eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian resistance this time has galvanised the international community. It has been Ukraine's spirited defence that has obliged the international community (minus China and India, which are running with their own pro-Russian agendas) to force the international community to avoid a rerun of 2014.

Putin has been stunned by the international community's unified reaction to the Ukraine invasion. Even if Putin were to be shot today by one of his bodyguards, it will take years for Russia to be accepted back into the international community.

Additionally, Putin has given fresh vigour to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). This was created in 1949: "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". It had been largely dormant since its victory over the USSR in 1991 and the end of the Cold War; mission accomplished.

NATO had spent the last three decades as an answer in search of a problem. Three years ago, President Macron of France said that NATO was "brain dead". Suddenly all of this has changed.

Ukraine's spirited defence has inspired much of the world.

Meanwhile, Russia is conducting operations in an era of "transparent warfare". Mobile phones are mobile cameras uploading news reports immediately to a global audience; all of Russia's failings are being publicised globally.

The pendulum of warfare has also

affected the US.

The USSR was beaten by Afghan guerrillas 1979-89 (much as they had beaten British forces in earlier eras).

Now a new generation of Afghans has beaten the US as well.

The US had no clear war strategy 2001-21. Some saw the invasion as a war against Al-Qaida (which had begun in 1997 with bin Laden's declaration of war on the US). The US was also trapped in a civil war between various Afghan tribes (Taliban are Pathans, for example, with kin across the UK-created border [Durand Line] in Pakistan); there are also feuding Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazari minorities. Afghanistan is a pre-modern state (with little sense of "national" identity). Americans and their allies did not understand the country.

Meanwhile there was also a regional war: a struggle between India and Pakistan for regional dominance. China is now also a player (especially given the US\$3 trillion worth of Afghani raw materials and the access south eventually to the Indian Ocean).

The US also took on other agendas: such as education of girls, eradication of poppy, and the provision of infrastructure. These were all worthwhile ventures, but they clouded the military vision. The US didn't know for sure what it was trying to achieve.

The US defeat in Afghanistan – its longest war – needs to be seen in the wider context of the pendulum of warfare. Despite Hollywood movies with their glamour and drama, the US has in fact had an appalling war record since 1945. Hollywood has provided a wrong image of the US.

The US post-1945 US has had only a limited list of victories: 1983 invasion of Grenada, 1989 invasion of Panama and arrest of Manuel Noriega (1934-

2017), liberation of Kuwait (1990-1), and the Kosovo War (1998-9).

They were all "conventional" operations. Korea (1950-3) was a "draw". The defeats were all in the guerrilla conflicts, such as Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The US is not short of money for defence: total military expenditure for the world is US\$1,981bn. Of that the US spend US\$778bn (39 per cent of total and easily #1). China is a long way behind at # 2 at US\$252bn.

But money alone does not guarantee victory. You cannot simply buy victory in an era of defensive warfare.

High morale, a clear sense of military direction, and plenty of scope for local military initiative are all key factors.

Ukraine is demonstrating this on a daily basis, Russian soldiers don't know what hit them; They were told they would be welcomed as liberators, others were told they would only be going on a military exercise. The lies have damaged their morale.

Meanwhile Ukrainian morale is high. The Ukrainian leader is now an international hero (and potentially a *Time* magazine "person of the year"). The Russians are already trying to redefine what would constitute "victory" for them because they will not be able to take over the country. The invasion has failed, albeit at immense human cost.

We will be talking about the Ukraine invasion for many years to come, it will serve as a warning to governments about the risks of waging offensive warfare. Governments will need to find alternative ways to settle their international disputes.

Dr Keith Suter
Managing Director GLOBAL
DIRECTIONS

Is it time for a new gallery?

The Regional Gallery in Macquarie Street, Taree, has been a great space. Well used, great exhibitions and accessible. In my opinion, now, it's time to start planning for a new purpose built Regional Art Centre.

Look what is happening in other towns. Look at Shepparton Art Museum (SAM). Look at the amazing success of Tweed Regional Gallery and Maitland. As a matter of fact, we are now one of the smallest Regional Galleries in NSW. Lismore, Grafton, Orange etc are all attracting visitors from all over the country and internationally.

WE CAN DO THIS.

The travelling community often goes right past our door. The grey nomads and a huge number of the travellers plan visits to these galleries in their itineraries. There are many thousands of people on the road at any one time.

But you don't build a Regional Gallery/Art Museum just for tourists, it is for our community. The old school headmasters building in Macquarie Street was adapted in 1998/99. Council and the Friends of the Gallery (FOGS) have put an enormous amount of energy to fostering the arts in this region but they have stretched the limits of what can be achieved in this space. The Gallery has been the nucleus of art events, exhibitions, workshops, festivals and art competitions. It has been a resource for schools TAFE and WEA. It has provided opportunities for

Aboriginal artists and students and it has hosted Sinfonia and Kantable etc.

We opened the "new" space with the Archibald Prize 15 years ago. Even then we were short of space. We are getting it again this year and there will still be a squeeze. Let's see how it fits in.

Our City Art Collection doesn't have permanent display. There isn't the space to do that. Storage of much of the collection has been moved to the Council Chambers and the rest of the collection and crates, takes up a third of the gallery building.

Now, since the Council amalgamation, the issue of providing adequate cultural facilities for all 3 of the former Council areas is to be considered. It is impractical to build three major Regional Art Centres. The one we do build needs to be the core of cultural activity working in conjunction with the other areas.

What we need to consider is this. We need a purpose designed building. It needs space for active interaction with the arts, temporary exhibitions, the permanent collection, Indigenous art facilities, a restaurant, a shop, a workshop and good parking for cars, RV's and buses. Maybe even a convention centre.

Where should we put it? It needs to be in a location which will never get flooded or be susceptible

to bushfires. It needs to be accessible and visible.

Suggestions made by the arts community include an area adjacent to the existing Gallery. Should this ever become available, the Council should not be caught flat-footed. The site for the existing gallery was a great choice at the time because of its proximity to schools and its accessibility to people in the CBD.

Another suggestion is to build it near the Manning Entertainment Centre and Aquatic Centre. The advantages of this site include facilities that could be shared with the MEC. There is plenty of space and it is on a major road.

A third site that has been suggested is in close proximity to the Mid-Coast Council Chambers. A beautiful new Art Centre at the gateway to Taree would link with the Council facilities and provide an attractive introductory impression.

So how are we going to fund it? (I knew you were going to ask that!) Following the examples of the other regions, funding would be sought by Council from the State and Federal Governments. There are funds allocated by both for arts infrastructure. We would compete with other projects in other areas but perhaps we should start the ball rolling now on this long process. The Council would

need to contribute and funds would be sought from the community.

The Friends of the Manning Regional Gallery have set up a fund for receiving bequests and donations. They have proven to be incredibly successful in raising funds for the refurbishment and development of the existing building and art development in the Manning over the last 36 years.

Gallery patrons, Dusty and Philip Walkom are supportive of the idea of a new arts centre and welcome a greater vision for the arts on the Mid North Coast.

The MidCoast Cultural Plan states that Council "seeks to improve relationships and partnerships, with Council playing both a leadership and facilitation role.

The plan helps to prioritise projects, support cultural infrastructure projects, leverage Council and community groups with State and Federal funding bodies, as well as further educate the MidCoast community about the value of culture."

This will take years to achieve, but it is achievable. Let's begin the process. It's time to talk to the community.

Sue Mitchell

Former Director of Manning River Art Gallery

(Ideas and views welcome! Ed.)

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Lovers Dreamers Fighters

Lo Carmen

Harper Collins Rrp \$32.99

‘We’ve all got them, the lighters of the way, those mythological wonders who glow in our dark. These are the ones I got to be close to, whether in a real or allusive sense; these are the ones

that got to me in a way that still flows through my veins. I think you’ll understand why soon...’

Lo (for Loene) Carmen started singing as a little kid with her dad, a musician since he was 13 years old.

Lo was discovered at sixteen working in a Kings Cross pizza bar and cast as in the seminal Australian film *The Year My Voice Broke*, for which she was nominated for an AFI award. But even before that, Lo has lived a bigger life than most. From being backstage at Rolling Stones concerts when she was a baby to writing her first song at eight; performing an original song onstage at nine; having a baby while barely out of her teens; forming her first band at twenty one; touring Europe without a manager, funds or a safety net; and all the while making music

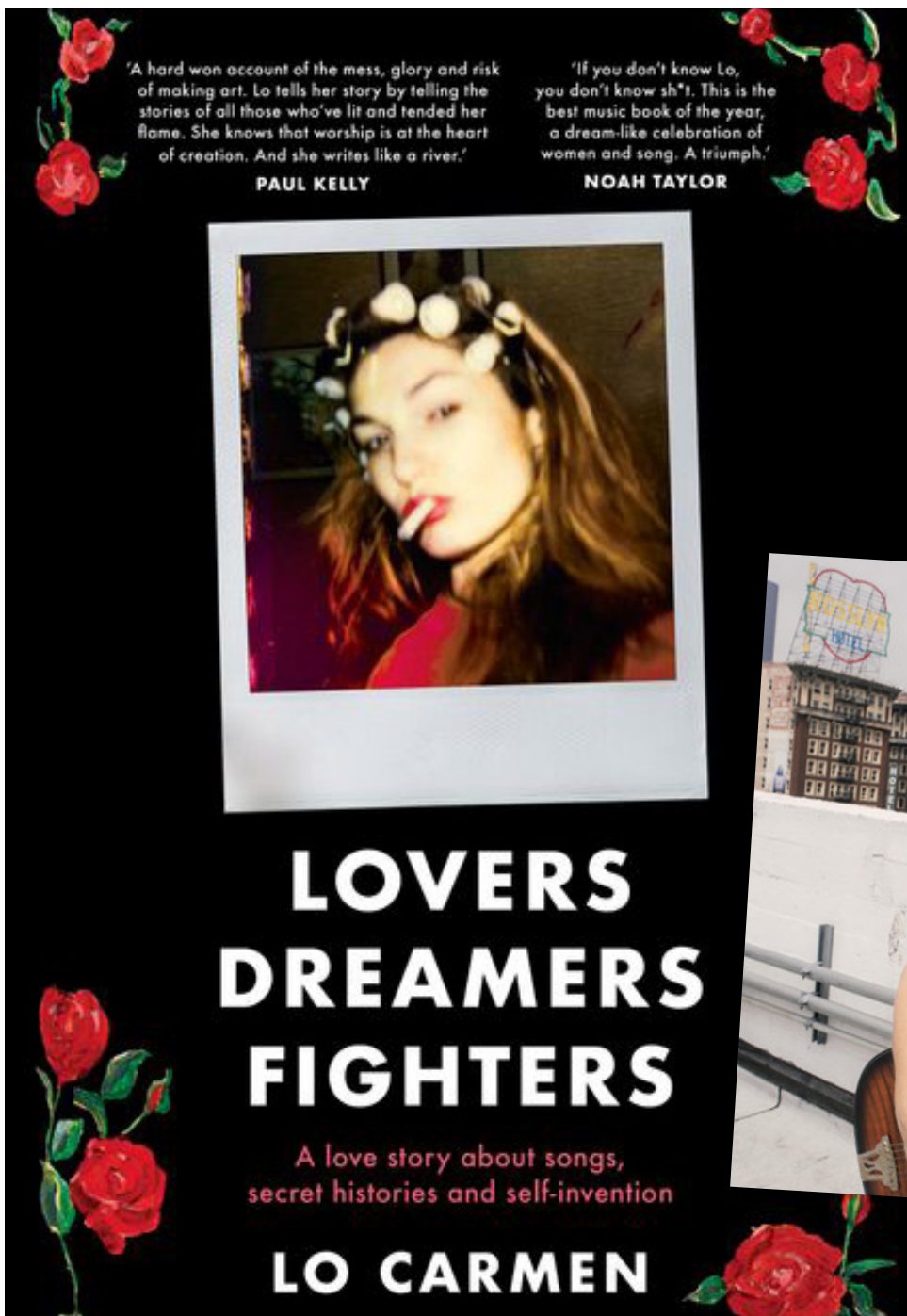
her life and her art. In all this, Lo has been inspired by a handful of women - all icons, one way or another, of modern Australian life.

I rather crept into the book because Lo sounds exotic and fun and talented... which she is... but she is part of a world I don’t really know... the music industry. But I became absorbed, intrigued, entertained and touched. It was like curling up on a sofa with a new friend who starts telling you pieces of her life, sad and beautiful, funny and wild. And you never want her to stop.

It’s a touching self portrait of a strong, wonderful, funny, modest and creative woman... and those she knows and knew.

I’ll be hanging out to make sure I know what Lo is doing next.

DM



Lo Carmen has “composed” a magical book



Lo has been singing since she was a small girl

Sharks Rule!

It is around this time each year when shark attacks dominate headlines whether they be in Ballina, Crowdy Head, Stradbroke Island or Cottesloe Beach. Unfortunately, such is the case this year with the recent horrific attack off Little Bay in the Randwick LGA.

In most cases Great White sharks are rightfully accused, as was the case in Port Stephens when, not so long ago, a young lady was attacked off Jimmies Beach resulting in serious injury. Thankfully, reports of shark attack in and around Port Stephens, over many years, are few and far between.

Before we become complacent, it may be worth considering our past and realise that back in the 1930’s catching and processing sharks was a local industry. The factory, based in Pindimar, finally closed as the supply of sharks dwindled, only after 25,000 had been caught.

Well before the breakwall was constructed it was known that

sharks, conditioned to a feed of scraps, gathered in big numbers around the trawlers which tied up off the Fishermens Coop in Nelson Bay. To swim in that area was out of the question.

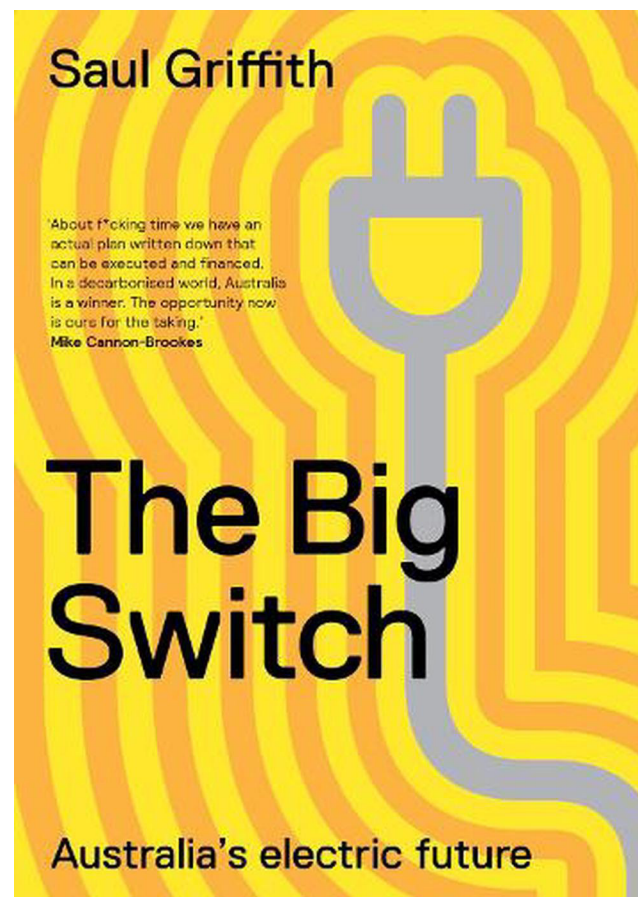
There is a story of a youth who accidentally fell off a trawler while unloading fish and being immediately surrounded by sharks. Fishermen in

nearby boats quickly grabbed their 3.03 rifles from their wheel houses and trained their sights on any shark that moved close to the boy who was pulled safely from the water.

Rifles, used to protect their catch, were standard equipment on trawlers and would be used when nets, containing the fish, were hauled to the surface. It was then that sharks



The Big Switch



Saul Griffith
Black Inc. Rrp \$24.99

Having not previously heard or read anything at all about *The Big Switch* I had no idea of what to expect. When I saw that the author was described as an inventor, entrepreneur, and engineer, and that the topic was electricity my initial thoughts were that it was likely to be to be highly technical, full of obscure detail, and probably heavy going.

I certainly did not anticipate that such a book might have some emotional impact.

What a surprise it was, as I will explain.

I have always been a great fan of the Winston Churchill quote; 'short words are best'. As I started to read the book, I was delighted to see that Griffith had followed Churchill's advice. The first line of the introduction said, 'The kids have it right. It's a climate emergency. It's not a drill.' Straight to the point with no mucking about as to the underlying topic of the book and nowhere did I find his message to be shrouded in obscure language or technical obscurity. The heading on page 5 is 'Calling bullshit'. He even couches the laws of thermodynamics in everyday language.

This book is an easy read. It is also an essential read, particularly for politicians at all levels of government.

Griffith is a born and bred Australian from the Sydney suburbs who has lived and worked for many years in the United States, but is now back home. He has a background in both engineering and physics and has worked for the U.S Department of Energy. He has run his own energy businesses. He is well qualified.

Often when I read articles or books about the climate crisis, I find that I end up being thoroughly depressed and wonder what the point is of trying to do something, and I must confess that when I saw the words 'climate emergency' I had a bit of a feeling that I might need a few more glasses of wine than usual. But very

early in the book Griffith calls for optimism in relation to the climate situation and then goes on to offer well thought out, practical and realistic solutions. He says:

'Pessimism leading to inaction will not help, and more importantly, we have the opportunity for a far brighter future than Doomers think.'

The book is particularly directed to what Australia can do to reduce emissions. He asserts that 'Australia has the luckiest, easiest and almost certainly most economically beneficial pathway to decarbonise and get to net zero emissions.'

Early in the book Griffith lists the huge benefits to Australia of going hard on emission reduction. He mentions, lower energy prices, jobs, improved exports, health improvements, preservation of our beautiful places and fixing inequalities. He then lists what won't work, mentioning such things as carbon sequestration, geoengineering, hydrogen, waste elimination and returning to the past.

The main thesis of the book is that the real solution to the world emissions problem is to electrify everything; cars, transport, agriculture, industry, houses. Everything. And of course, all the electricity for the task must be from renewables.

Chapter 4 deals with the various options for the generation of renewable energy such as solar, wind, hydro, wave and tidal, nuclear, biofuels and geothermal. He concludes, and explains why, that for Australia solar and wind will carry the biggest portion of the load. He asserts that Australia could become a renewable energy exporter.

Interestingly Griffith argues that nuclear generation is relatively safe

but accepts that there is no appetite in Australia for that option.

Griffith dismisses the idea that the solution to the climate crisis can be left to industry alone. He argues that 'Government policy is critical..' and looks at the various levers available to government such as mandates and moratoriums, subsidies, taxes, education and building codes. He points out that governments around the world presently spend trillions of dollars propping up the fossil fuel industry. \$10 billion was spent by Australian Governments in 2020-2021 subsidising fossil fuels.

Chapter 9 analyses the performances of the Federal and various state governments in dealing with emissions, noting their successes and failures. He suggests that 'our federal government spends more money making the climate emergency worse than it does trying to fix the problem.' He notes that the states are generally ahead of the federal government.

This book offers concrete and realistic solutions to our emissions problems and that is why it was an optimistic book. His arguments are tight and compelling. He shows how the goal of zero net emissions can be achieved. Where my optimism faded somewhat was that he doesn't, and probably couldn't, fully explain how our warring, short sighted and self-interested batch of politicians can be convinced to do what needs to be done.

Highly recommended.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of 'The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas'. John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group

would attack the net.

In my research for my book "Old Salt" Great Whites were far more common than they are today. The late George Todd told me of huge sharks that accompanied fishing boats from Yaccaba Headland to Seal Rocks.

"They would swim with the boats hoping for an easy feed. One day my brother Roger fell overboard landing in the water between the boat and the shark. Roger couldn't swim, however, somehow he landed back on board hardly wet".

Original Fingal Bay resident Ken Barry well recalls the time when he and wife Pat rowed a boat off the beach to investigate a huge gathering of "something strange" which turned out to be a huge school sharks: "thousands of them!" Ken exclaimed.

The photo featured was taken off Stockton Beach when a Great White

charged towards a boat on which I was a passenger. Champion fisher George Trinkler took me for a cruise just behind the breakers to show me how many sharks there are along the beach. I counted over twenty.

One well known recreational fisher was warned by Fisheries not to target Great Whites off Stockton Beach as they are a protected species. The fisher had caught and released over forty Great Whites.

The question will now be asked – should we net our beaches and set drum lines to protect those of us who chose to swim in open water?

In my opinion those methods are unnecessary and do little, if anything, to minimize the danger of shark attack. When we enter the water, we are taking a risk, like crossing the road. What do you think?



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



Antiques and Collectables

Collect the past & invest for your future. A great hobby that leads to a lifetime of enjoyment.



Private collection of elegant Doulton lady figurines.

Royal Doulton's rise from London makers of domestic stoneware to an internationally recognised brand, could scarcely have been predicted in 1877 when the Lambeth pottery arrived in Burslem and Henry Doulton made his often-quoted remark. That Royal Doulton owed much of its success to the birth of its two most enduring lines - the character figure and the character jug.

A key figure in the story of Doulton's 'Burslem' studio is Charles Noke. He had spent 15 years at the Royal Worcester factory before he became chief modeller at Doulton in 1889 where he remained the dominant creative force for half a century.

Until his death in 1941 (one of his last models was a character jug of Winston Churchill) he oversaw many of the factory's most popular 20th century lines including the rich brown glazed Kingsware, the practical and decorative Series Ware and the range of loving cups and jugs modelled with scenes from British literature and history.

Noke showed the first Doulton figures at the Chicago Exhibition in 1893 and 20 years later was responsible for launching a designated range of figure models - known as

the HN (Harry Nixon) collection.

Although made across a century in a fantastic variety of subjects, styles and colours, Doulton figures and Toby jugs are instantly recognised and widely collected around the English-speaking world.

Figures may represent only one small part of Royal Doulton's output but the HN series range, which began in 1913 with 20 figures (HN1 was the Charles 'Vyse' figure of a small boy in a nightshirt that Queen Mary christened *Darling*), now reproduced in thousands of forms. New figures are still being designed today.

The inspiration for the figures collection has been extraordinary - child studies, fashionable ladies, occupations, nationalities, historical figures, literature and they have embraced the full range of predominant decorative styles.

Some of the early modellers were well known sculptors in their own right - including Pheobe Stabler and Charles Vyse - while other names such as Arthur 'Leslie' Harradine and Margaret May 'Peggy' Davies are simply associated with Royal Doulton.

The most desirable figures come from the first half of the 20th century. Exact production figures are not available but it

has been said that even a popular pre-War figure would have been made in much smaller quantities than a modern edition. Some of the less popular pre-War models were withdrawn from production in the mid 1930s, others in 1938, while the outbreak of the Second World War and the restrictions that it brought caused the deletion from the range of the majority of the existing figures. As a rule, the fewer figures available in a series the more valuable.

Today, some figures are extremely hard to find in any form while others, such as Noke's classic model *The Jester*, were produced in unusual colourways (the term used to describe the different combinations of colours used to decorate a figure) or were available with special glazes.

However, while there are collectors who, for example, focus only on Art Deco (and sometimes risqué) bathing beauties designed by Leslie Harradine in the 1920s and '30s, it does not necessarily follow in a collecting hierarchy based on rarity that the older the figure the more desirable it will be.

Such was the success of the early *Darling* figure that it is still in production today (only the very early issues command substantial

sums) while other classics such as *Top O' the Hill* or *The Balloon Seller* proved equally enduring and aren't too difficult to find. Often it is the most popular Doulton designs, those that remained in production for many years, which can be bought most cheaply.

The more recent designs can become rare when the edition size does not meet collector demand. These include commercial failures, trial colourways, prototypes, figures with subtle modelling variations or those produced in small 'made-to-be-collected' editions. In determining the rarity from the run-of-the-mill knowledge of your subject is an essential starting points.

Dave (a good friend) and I have opened a shop (Antiques & Old Wares) at 12 Isabella St, Wingham. We have a huge variety of interesting old wares. 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 from the past.

Phone Rex - 0427 880 546.
Take care and stay safe!



Citrus Care Guide

Citrus trees are among the most popular of all backyard fruit trees in temperate areas such as the Manning Valley. Citrus include lemons, oranges, mandarins, limes, kumquats, and grapefruit, and all can be grown either in the garden or in large containers.

To get the best crops from your trees, however, they need attention throughout the year. Follow our tips and seasonal guide to keep your citrus growing well all year round.

LOCATION

Grow all types of citrus in full sun with shelter from cold winds. If full sun isn't available, select a spot that receives sun for at least six to eight hours from the morning.

PLANTING

Good soil drainage is vital for healthy citrus, and these plants tend to grow just as well whether in a garden bed or a pot, as long as their needs are met. Always choose a well-drained position for your citrus. If soil in your garden bed is slow to drain, plant citrus into a raised garden bed or large container filled with specialty potting mix (such as Searles Citrus Potting and Planting Mix). Always ensure that any pot or container you use has drainage holes in its base. If using a container, you're best off to choose a variety grafted onto dwarf rootstock - this will help ensure a smaller and more manageable plant with full-sized fruit.

Citrus can be planted throughout the year, but the best planting times are autumn to spring (avoid planting in very hot or very cold conditions).

SEASONAL CITRUS CARE

Citrus trees are evergreen, which means they are leafy year-round. Most varieties flower in spring (or from late winter) with fruit ripening from late summer, however some will flower and fruit throughout the year.

SUMMER CITRUS CARE

Keep plants watered regularly to avoid them drying out. Erratic watering and heavy rainfall as the fruit matures can lead to fruit split, particularly in oranges.

Feed citrus in mid to late summer with a complete citrus food (follow instructions on the fertiliser bag or container). For container-grown plants, apply smaller amounts monthly from summer to early autumn.

As the crop matures and its weight increases, it may need to be thinned out as weak branches may break



Leaf miner damage

under the weight.

Watch for bugs such as bronze orange bug/stink bug which attack fruit leaving marks on the skin causing dry fruit. These stink bugs often cluster on trunks in the heat of the day. Spray or remove bugs with care. Wear protective glasses as these bugs squirt an irritating spray to defend themselves. Success Ultra is a fantastic organic spray to combat them.

Scale may also be noticed on citrus trees in summer (but can affect trees throughout the year). This insect protects itself with a hard waxy covering that is usually white, brown, or black. Scale can be found under leaves, on twigs and stems or on fruit. Control by squashing individual clusters and applying horticultural spray oil such as Pest Oil.

Citrus leaf miner, which causes the growth to pucker, and which leaves silver trails in the leaves, is a common sight in summer. While this pest doesn't affect fruit production it looks unsightly. Success Ultra is your best defence.

Ants may also be seen on citrus trees often attracted by the presence of scale, aphids, or mealy bugs. Controlling the pest usually controls the ants. Black sooty mould on foliage is another sign of pest attack. Removing the pest usually stops the source of sooty mould but it can be removed by spraying with a soap spray (such as Nature's Way Herb and Vegie Spray Natrasoap).

Mites also frequently cause havoc on citrus during humid summers. Look out for speckled, discoloured foliage, misshapen fruit, and webbing under leaves as characteristic tell-tale signs of mite infestation. Treat with eco-oil.



Stink bug

AUTUMN CITRUS CARE

Watch ripening fruit for signs of pest attack including possums, rats, birds, and fruit fly. Protect individual fruit clusters with exclusion bags or net trees where damage is severe using bird- and bat-safe white knitted netting stretched tautly over trees. Check netted trees regularly as animals, birds and reptiles can become entangled.

Citrus leaf miner may still be causing havoc in your garden through autumn. Treat with Success Ultra.

Protect fruit from fruit fly by using organic splash baits and lures, such as Wild May fruit fly attractant. Thin-skinned fruit such as mandarin is particularly vulnerable to fruit fly.

WINTER CITRUS CARE

Most citrus fruit holds well on the tree and can be harvested as needed; however, mandarins need to be picked when ripe as overripe fruit loses flavour, and its skin becomes puffy. To gauge ripeness of fruit, look at size and colour and harvest a sample fruit to check for sweetness. As citrus ripens the fruit usually becomes sweeter in taste. Oranges may re-green after ripening - this is a natural protection against sun damage. Leave tart fruit longer to ripen further.

Move potted citrus into a frost-free location over winter.

Winter spray using horticultural spray oil such as Pest Oil to control juvenile life cycle bronze orange bugs.

Apply complete citrus food again in late winter, watering well when applying fertiliser.

Yellowing leaves may indicate nutrient deficiency due to cold conditions. Warmer weather should see an improvement in leaf colour. If yellow leaves persist, apply Trace Elements and check watering.

Curled leaves often indicate cold exposure. If the tree is exposed to cold, look at ways to provide more shelter such as by erecting a screen.

Flowering may begin in late winter.

SPRING CITRUS CARE

Expect fragrant citrus blossoms in spring. Harvest any remaining fruit (although many lemons happily support mature fruit, immature fruit, and flowers).

Keep plants evenly watered during flowering and fruit formation, especially if spring is dry or trees are exposed to hot, dry winds.

Immature fruit may be discarded naturally from trees if the weather turns cold, the tree dries out or the crop is too large for the tree to maintain.

If plants weren't fed in late winter apply a complete citrus food in early spring.

Remove weeds from around the tree and apply a light layer of organic mulch, such as sugar cane mulch, taking care not to mound mulch around the trunk.

After a quiet winter, new growth may be attacked by citrus leaf miner come spring. Success Ultra should be your go-to product here.

Also watch out for aphids on new growth. Squash aphids or remove them with a jet of water from the hose. Alternatively, spray with an organic control for aphids, such as Nature's Way Herb and Vegie Spray Natrasoap.

Citrus trees don't need pruning to encourage fruiting, however if pruning is needed to control the size of trees, do this in spring. Avoid pruning in summer as exposed wood can become sunburnt. Dead wood can be removed at any time.

Happy gardening!

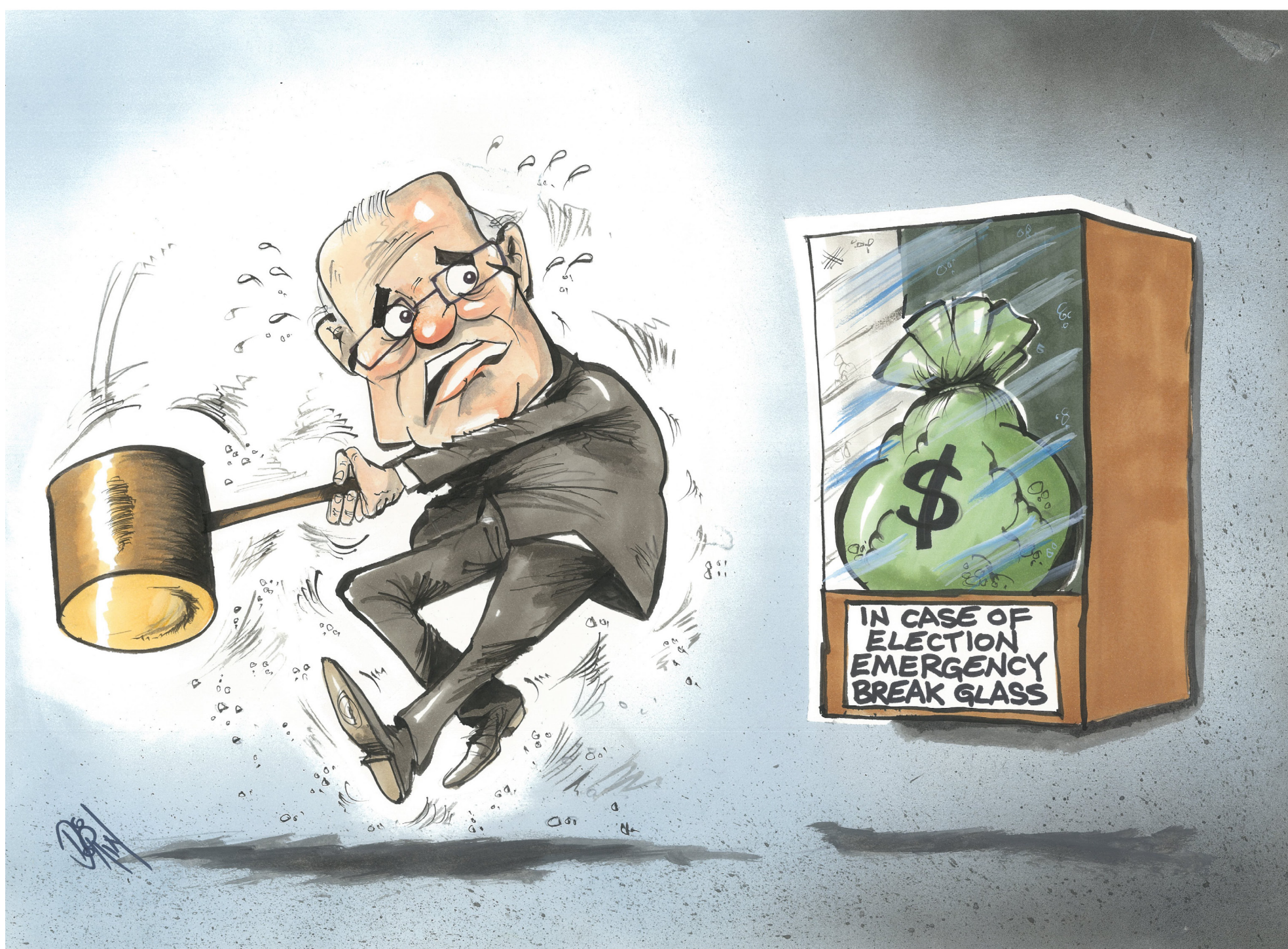
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Tinonee Bread!

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