

The Manning Community News

AUGUST 2021

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

DI AND PETER REMEMBER COMMENTATING THE OLYMPICS

PAGE 10



HOMELESSNESS IN TAREE

PAGE 3

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT RHUBARB

PAGE 18



Plus MAGGIE THE LABEL — PAGE 7 AUSTRALIAN MADE CHIC

Could greed and meanness cost council millions?

Recently the USU (The United Services Union, which represents local government, energy, airline, clerical and administrative employees throughout NSW) filed a claim against MidCoast Council which owns MidCoast Assist (a private ageing and disability support service provider) in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (Case No. 2021/00207000) for unpaid wages and allowances going back years which could amount to MidCoast Council being hit with a bill for millions of dollars.

USU Industrial Officer Noel Martin lays the blame at the intransigence of MidCoast Council General Manager, Adrian Pannuccio, and several members of Council's Human Resources team.

MidCoast Assist employees are covered under the Local Government State Award 2020.

The contentious issue revolves around what is known as the SCHADS Award (Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010), specifically in relation to *Section 25.7 Sleepovers*. This refers to a situation where an employer requires an employee to sleep overnight at premises where the client, for whom the employee is responsible, is located. This includes respite stays.

MidCoast Assist frequently

requires some employees to sleep over in assisted housing where there may be up to four persons requiring varying levels of support during the night.

Typically the employees work shifts that start at 6pm in assisted housing where there could be up to four vulnerable, elderly or disabled residents at one time, all of whom may require assistance. The shift breaks between 10pm and 11pm, when the employee is entitled to sleep (in a dedicated room provided for that employee), and the shift recommences between 6am and 7am and generally concludes after 7 hours of work. The reason the employee is required to sleep over is in the event that any, or all, of the residents in that housing facility may require recurrent assistance throughout the night. Which happens frequently and routinely. The employees who

sleep over are entitled to additional payments (A Sleepover allowance of around \$40 a night) if they are needed to break their rest / sleep during the night to provide assistance or support for residents in the assisted housing facility.

MidCoast Assist charges each participant for the sleeper over service and typically the daily fee could be between \$1400 - \$2000 per supported person in the assisted housing facility, where there are often four people at a time in residence, in which case \$8000

goes to MidCoast Assist which is claimed against the NDIS, (National Disability Insurance Scheme) but the employee doesn't get any additional payment.

Prior to the Council amalgamation which formed MidCoast Council in 2015, MidCoast Assist Great Lakes Ageing and Disability Services, allegedly did pay employees the sleep over allowances. After the amalgamation the sleepover payments were discontinued.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Be Smart – Get The Jab!



Welcome to Dr Edah Obligado as she gets her jab from nurse Vicky Peters at the GP Respiratory Clinic/Commonwealth Vaccination Centre, Taree

Coronasomnia

Within living memory, no event has forced change on human behaviour quite like the coronavirus.

World travellers have had their wings clipped. All that is left from carefree holiday travels are old photos from a previous era. Before the turmoil began 18 months ago, the promise of a trip overseas at least every year was a reliable punctuation in many people's lives, including my own.

Looking back now, this entitlement appears as something different, like an irrepressible compulsion. The sky was so busy, at any moment, more than a million of us were hurtling a mile high, criss-crossing the planet in silver tubes.

More tragically, forced separations have created anguish for many families who cannot touch or meet, even for final farewells. There is only Zoom. We exist in a reality gap because not many Australians are personally acquainted with Covid victims, but stories from other countries paint a different scene.

For example, a local pastrycook here with a successful cottage industry, suddenly, had to rush home to Argentina because both his parents were infected. His father, breathing by ventilator, has since died. He was fortunate to be able to leave and be with him.

We smugly think we are safe in Fortress Australia, but that landscape is changing very quickly. The Delta variant, for instance, is said to be 40 times more infectious and can be shared by strangers passing in the street or a mall, and the NSW government is currently fighting a rearguard action.

The Cov-2 virus seems to be mutating into a really dangerous enemy. If it keeps leaking out of hotel quarantine, our unvaccinated population is like dry tinder to a bushfire. We are left high and dry by a government that couldn't get it together and missed the golden moment of opportunity.

Can we be saved by an army general? Hopefully the government is starting to wake up. It has declared that vaccines have been ordered for later this year, but right now, it is frustrating for those who want to vaccinate but are not eligible. We need to be vaccinated NOW, for our own sake, also for the common good. Later might be too late if this thing spreads quickly. Vaccination has a few problems for sure. I had a sore arm for a week or ten days, but was reminded that COVID is a thousand times worse.

Confusion is arising from defeatist messages by some of our leaders, who say we have to live alongside this virus, just like we do with the flu.

After all the sacrifices (most) people are going through to keep the community safe, how are we supposed to cop that? Mixed messages and serial lockdown fatigue must be taking a

toll. Some people with symptoms and contact are not coming forward. Covid conspiracy theories add to the mix for non-compliance.

The many mixed messages include denial of the condition, to scaremongering of the vaccines. It can get pretty bizarre. One Dr. Sherri Tenpenny has claimed that the coronavirus vaccine is actively magnetizing people, stating in her testimony, "I'm sure you've seen the pictures all over the internet of people who have had these shots and now they're magnetized. You can put a key on their forehead, it sticks. You can put spoons and forks all over and they can stick because now we think there is a metal piece to that."

What can we do to stay sane?

A neighbour remarked over our boundary fence, 'If you can't go out, then go in.'

Even though we feel so inconvenienced by our groundings, social distancing is hardly a new turn in human history. In one episode of the endlessly recurring bubonic plague, over three hundred years ago, genius Isaac Newton was isolating in his country garden when he observed an apple fall from a tree and be pulled down to the earth. His forced isolation endowed us with the law of gravity. A time of stopping can also be a time of creativity.

Again on the plus side, an unexpected positive aspect of social distancing has been a reduction in seasonal coughs, colds and flu. So maybe we are getting lessons in how to live amongst ourselves more simply. Customs like hand-shaking and hugging are optional without giving offence.

Stripped of our usual distractions, we are stuck in the same zone of time and place, seemingly without end. We cannot so easily escape the confronting reality of the night that follows day, day after day. That knowledge is enough to turn anyone into an insomniac. 'What if I can't go to sleep tonight, just like last night?' The shifting landscape's anxieties have led into a sleep disorder known as 'coronasomnia'.

The cure is VACCINATE.
Sweet dreams.

**Dr David Miller
Brunswick Heads.**

Dr Miller is a retired GP who writes on health and travel.



ARE YOU BOGGED MATE?

Men's Mental Health Awareness Night
BRING A MATE and join in the fun!

Guest Speaker: Mary O'Brien from Are You Bugged Mate?
Entertainment from The Bowden Bros.
BBQ, drinks & dessert • Lucky door prize • Giveaways • Raffles

FRIDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER 2021

TIME: 5.30pm till late • VENUE: CRT 18 Tate Street, Gloucester
Gold coin donation - proceeds to support Gloucester Prostate Group

REGISTRATION ESSENTIAL: 0484 787 300



Logos: CBC, NSW Government, Local Land Services, MIDCOAST council, CRT, Rotary PEOPLE OF ACTION

Homelessness in Taree

Terry Stanton

“There is no homeless problem in Taree”, the lady told the guest speaker at the Rotary Club meeting. “Unfortunately there is”, responded the Anglican priest, one of the members. “They sleep in the porch of my Church, and sometimes on the verandah of my Rectory”.

Someone then made the usual untruthful remark: “Anyway, they are all drug addicts and alcoholics”.

Since the bushfires and floods that is definitely untrue, and it never was. If some may be on drugs or the bottle, or suffering other mental illness, it is, more often than not, due to being homeless, not the cause of it. Men and women become homeless if they are made redundant in the interest of bigger profits for their boss, or more efficient robots or computer systems replace them, or their rents go up to unaffordable, or government funding for homeless agencies is cut. When there is nowhere to keep clean clothes, and you're washing in public toilets, it's hard to keep a job if you have one, let alone find one.

North Taree Rotary Club gives sleeping bags to Samaritans, who have the unenviable task of trying to house the local homeless. The Club had this thank you letter from the agency:

Both Samaritans and our homeless clients are so very grateful for Taree North Rotary Club's annual sleeping bag project.

Before I commenced working with Samaritans, I had absolutely no idea of the issue of homelessness which exists in Taree. It's a much bigger problem than I ever thought and I've come to the realisation that, if my life had taken a different path, it could have easily been me - it still could happen to someone I love. I really was very ignorant and, I'm ashamed to admit, that previously I would have passed these people in the street and not given them a second thought.

The main causes of homelessness are poverty, unaffordable rents and/or family violence. We see families sleeping in their cars because the breadwinner was retrenched and suddenly there's not enough money to cover rent and bills. We see women with children fleeing domestic violence and left with nowhere to go and they end up sleeping in the car with their children. We see many people with varied mental health and/or drug issues. We even see elderly people who fall through the cracks with no family or friends to help them.

Homeless just aren't the rough sleepers we see living on the street or sleeping in parks - homeless people may be “couch surfing” at a friend's or relative's house, sleeping in their

car or tent or staying at a short-term crisis refuge.

Samaritans are the only Specialist Homelessness Service for Men, Women, children and families covering a very large area from Johns River down to Tea Gardens and out to Gloucester – all of our clients come to Samaritans in distress - they are either homeless, becoming homeless or at risk of homelessness or escaping domestic and family violence.

We are currently overwhelmed with clients who cannot be housed. The current rental availability in our area is 0.5% and all temporary accommodation is full. Real Estate Agents have 70 people attending open houses for rental properties. This is largely due to Covid 19 with no travel outside of Australia and men, women, children and families relocating out of main cities. The affordable rentals are no longer available due to the pandemic.

Winter will be here shortly and we urgently require funding to buy swags, sleeping bags, pillows & blankets. Unfortunately due to COVID 19 we are only able to accept new items.

If your Rotary Club would be happy to assist, would you mind discussing our needs with your members at your next monthly meeting. I'm sure our Coordinator, Suzi Rowe, would be happy to attend one of your meetings.”

North Taree Rotary also gives sleeping bags for the homeless to such welfare groups as Catholic Care and Manning Uniting Church (MUC). I am shocked that in as allegedly wealthy a country as Australia anyone needs to do this, as if we were a third world country. But here the emphasis is on tax reductions, so Samaritans do not have the money to do the job properly. As a result they have to go begging to Rotary if they are to have any chance of doing their job. But the housing and homeless crisis has reached new dimensions of awfulness as house and rent prices rise.

The figures provided by Suzi Rowe of Samaritans Taree are shocking. According to her, they supported 508 people in April, and 438 in June. What does ‘supported’ mean? Obviously they didn't find them all a home, but that is the Government's fault, not Suzi's. The annual funding she gets for accommodating people runs out in three months, so for nine months they can do little except counsel the homeless.

My friend Les Barnes was told

by local homeless men on the riverbank there are about twenty of them in town. His enquiries showed local estate agents are short of houses to sell and to rent. At the end of May rentals were only 8, and for sale 29. Normally it's about 67 for sale and 30 for rent. Prices have gone up 15%. People are living rough near Taree in a forest which Les and I visited. Suzi was there delivering sleeping bags and clothes.

Every government housing policy forces up prices and rents. As Alan Kohler said on Q & A recently, the \$2000 first time home buyers' grant just gets added to the price of houses. The previous \$5000 grant did the same. The real winners are the landlords who own several properties; if they have ten properties which go up \$2000, they are \$20,000 better off.

Why a shelter for men? What about the women? Women's problems feature in many news broadcasts, in questions on Q & A, and articles in papers almost every day. I will be called misogynistic for saying that, but I don't care what I'm called for telling the truth.

The Taree and Forster women's refuges may not be enough, but it is better than men having nowhere to sleep. There is nothing for men in the Manning Valley. My wife does Welfare at MUC; recently she gave a man a food parcel. He'd been sleeping in his car for nearly a month, despite having a Samaritans case worker who could not find him any accommodation. Sue Abdoo of Catholic Care saw a 78 year old man at the Community Kitchen she manages. He had health problems and had been sleeping in his car for weeks and was starving. She fed him, spent two hours on the phone to Link-2Home and other housing agencies without success, and then got him into hospital.

On the MUC Welfare team I gave food to a man who was sleeping in his car under Martin Bridge for weeks. Ruffians set on his car and in defending himself and the car (his ‘home’) his index finger was slammed in the door, broken and permanently bent. Samaritans had no solution for him either. I struggle to imagine how frustrated Suzi and her team must feel having inadequate resources to do the job they are paid to do.

These stories do not get onto TV. I understand the homeless males/

females are split roughly 50/50. Perhaps I'm wrong to think that the homeless should be treated equally regardless of gender. Am I a lone voice in that regard?

On 7th July Les and I hosted a meeting at MUC to promote the idea of a Sleep Bus for men for the Manning Valley. Twenty-six people attended. As a result a committee was formed and has already met to plan the raising of the \$100,000 necessary. A GoFundMe account is being opened for Manning Homeless Action Group, and another with North Taree Rotary, to take donations. Payments to the Rotary account should be tax deductible. Please look up Sleep Bus on the internet. One of these can give twenty men a safe bed for the night. It may be possible for women to use the bus too.

Some local Churches came, with groups such as Rotary, Quota, Freemasons, and others who are or wish to be involved in charitable and humanitarian work. Local businesses and people could contribute funds to acquire a Sleep Bus, and to pressure Federal and State Governments to fund refuges for both sexes properly. It will take years for sufficient social housing to be provided, even if the Government kept its promises.

Les and I have booked another public meeting for 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 4th August, 2021 to discuss the needs of the homeless generally, and of men in particular, and to create an organisation to provide a Sleep Bus. Should you be interested in this, please get in touch. We hope you or representatives of your group or Club will attend.

Terry Stanton.

Tinonee.

02 6553 1360.

tez_stanton@hotmail.com

(Homelessness is a major and contentious issue in our electorate. COVID has acerbated domestic violence and abuse towards women and children. We do not have enough facilities, financial means or local support to cope with the homeless of any sex, age or situation. Perhaps a new council will think about these matters and not just leave it to welfare support groups. ED)

Don't Hold Your Breath To Get A Foot In The Door... Of Any House!

Between January 1991 (in the aftermath of mortgage rates rising to an all-time high of 17½% in the late 1980s) and September 2017, Australian residential property prices rose by 313.5%, according to CoreLogic's now widely-used measure. Over the same period Australia's population grew by 29%; average weekly ordinary-time earnings rose for full-time adults rose by 82%; the consumer price index rose by 92%; and Australia's economy (as measured by real GDP) grew by 128%.

For the roughly 3.2 million Australian households (out of a total of almost 4.5 million) who owned at least one property – and especially for the almost 750,000 Australians who owned at least one investment property – at the beginning of this period, this dramatic escalation in residential property prices was unambiguously a Good Thing.

For the additional 2.2 million Australian households who managed to become home-owners during this period – and again, especially for the just under 2.2 million individual Australians who by the end of it owned at least one investment property (and even more so for the 600,000 or so who owned two or more investment properties) – this huge rise in property prices undoubtedly made them financially better off.

Between the December quarter of 1990 and the September quarter of 2017, the value of household wealth held in the form of residential property rose by almost \$5.7 trillion dollars – or 708%. Even after offsetting the \$361 billion increase in mortgage debt over the same period, the *net* value of wealth in the form of residential real estate rose by some \$5.3 trillion, or 680%, over this period.

But for the 1.1 million Australian households (almost one-quarter of the total) who were living in rented accommodation at the beginning of this period – a number which by the time of the 2016 census had risen to almost 2.6 million (or almost 31% of the total) – none of this eye-glazing increase in wealth came their way. The amount they paid in rent increased from \$5.7 billion in 1990-91 to \$46.4 billion in 2016-17 – an increase of 713%.



Among this almost one-third of Australian households were people who, at the beginning of this period and as it continued, would have expected to have been able to step on to this wealth escalator – only to find that they couldn't.

Between the 1991 and 2016 Censuses, Australia's home ownership rate fell from 68.9% to 65.5% - the lowest it has been since the Census of 1954. But for people aged between 25 and 34, the home ownership rate dropped by 11 percentage points between 1991 and 2016, to a lower level than it had been in 1954, indeed to only 3 percentage points above where it had been in 1947. For people aged between 35 and 44, the home ownership rate dropped by 12 percentage points, to a level just 1 percentage point above where it had been in 1954. Even for people aged between 45 and 54, the home ownership rate at the 2016 Census was 3 percentage points lower than it had been at the 1961 Census, and 9 percentage points lower than it had been in 1991.

Hundreds of thousands of would-be first home buyers – a group for whom politicians of all persuasions routinely profess profound concern – were effectively squeezed out of home ownership by cashed-up immigrants and, even more, by investors able to take advantage of more readily available credit and more generous tax breaks.

The share of housing finance going to first home-buyers fell from over 20% in the mid-1990s to just over 10% by 2003, and then, following a brief recovery during and after the global financial crisis, fell back down to less than 11% again by the first half of 2017. Meanwhile the share of housing finance going to investors climbed from less than 10% in the early 1990s to over 40% in 2003, and was again back over 40% between mid-2013 and mid-2015, and in the latter part of 2016.

Then, after a series of steps by the financial system regulator APRA to curb some of the more egregiously risky forms of lending to investors that had mushroomed in the first half of the past decade, stricter enforcement

of rules pertaining to foreign investment in established properties, and perhaps also in response to expectations that the tax preferences enjoyed by residential property investors would be scaled back in the event of a Labor victory at the federal election due in 2019, residential property prices began falling in Sydney, Melbourne and to a lesser extent Brisbane (as they had been doing in Perth and Darwin for some years previously, after the end of the 'resources booms' that had further propelled prices in those two cities).

Between September 2017 and May 2019, residential property prices fell by an average of 8.6% across Australia. They fell by almost 15% in Sydney, and by more than 10% in Melbourne – more

than they had (in nominal terms) in either city in the recessions of the early 1990s.

Those declines were ruthlessly exploited by the Government, and by property interests, as 'evidence' of what would occur if Labor were to win the 2019 election, and implement their commitments to scrap 'negative gearing' for all but newly-built investment properties and to reduce the capital gains tax discount – something the Government could do knowing that the number of voters who believed that they benefited from continually rising property prices greatly exceeded the number of voters who saw themselves as 'missing out', or losing.

And after a brief revival in the aftermath of the Coalition's largely unexpected victory at the 2019 election, the onset of Covid-19 in March last year initially prompted a renewed decline in property prices, and widespread speculation (including by all of the major

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

banks) that double-digit percentage declines could be in the offing.

As always happens in Australia whenever it is feared that property prices might fall, governments at all levels and of both major political persuasions moved heaven and earth to ensure that they didn't. State Governments committed at least \$2 billion over two years, and the Federal Government \$680 million, to expanded schemes of cash grants or stamp duty concessions to first time buyers. And (admittedly for reasons other than propping up property prices), the Reserve Bank slashed interest rates to new record lows.

And as it always does, it worked. The property price escalator has started up again. Since September last year, residential property prices across Australia have risen by an average of 14.2%. That's the largest increase over a nine-month period since that nine months ended January 2004: apart from that episode, the only other period in the last 40 years when prices have risen at a faster pace over nine months was in 1988-89.

And many of the same factors appear to be behind this latest surge in property prices as were prevalent between the early 1990s and the previous peak in 2017.

Generous cash grants and tax breaks for first-time buyers 'brought forward' demand, funnelling it into a relatively short period and allowing those who were able to get to the front of the 'queue' to pay more for the homes they bought than they otherwise would – the value ending up in the pockets of vendors or the profit margins of builders and developers. Strongly rising prices then attracted the attention of investors, who could then capitalize on the eagerness of banks and others to lend at record-low interest rates.

Although 'negative gearing' isn't as attractive a strategy as it once was – given the decline in interest rates – the most recent data from the Australian Taxation Office shows that over 1.3 million individual taxpayers (12% of the total) were still doing it in 2018-19. They, moreover, are dispro-

portionately high-income earners: 22% of those in the top tax bracket (that is, those with taxable incomes in excess of \$180,000) were negatively-gearred property investors, compared with just 8.6% of those with taxable incomes of \$180,000 or less.

The share of new mortgage loans going to first-home buyers rose in the months after the onset of the pandemic, as elevated cash grants and stamp duty concessions enticed them into the market while investors shied away: it reached a peak of 25% in December last year.

But now investors are coming back: their share of mortgage lending rose from just under 23% in the December quarter of last year to 28% in May.

And data from the banking regulator APRA suggests that mortgage lending standards are again beginning to decline – albeit not yet as egregiously as they had done before 2015. The proportion of new loans being made on interest-only terms has crept up from less than 16% in the last quarter of 2018 to 19¼% in the first quarter of this year. The proportion of new loans being made at loan-to-valuation (LVR) ratios of 80% or more has more than doubled, from less than 14% in the first half of 2018 to over 31% in the first quarter of this year. Some of that can be explained by the increased proportion of loans going to first-home buyers, who typically have smaller deposits than those borrowing for the second or subsequent home – but not all of it. The proportion of new mortgages being written with LVRs of 90% or more has risen from 6½% in the middle of 2018 to 10½% in the first quarter of this year.

Australia is by no means alone in experiencing an unexpected resurgence in residential property prices in the aftermath of the pandemic.

It's happening almost everywhere around the world – including in countries which hadn't seen rapid growth in property prices over the previous two decades, such as Germany. Property prices have more than twice as fast in New Zealand over the past 12 months than they have done on this side of the Tasman – in part because the New Zealand subsidiaries of the

Australian banks relaxed their lending standards much more (in response to very strong demand from investors) than they have thus far done here. That's prompted a strong regulatory response from the Reserve Bank of New Zealand – and a much more dramatic curtailment of tax preferences for property investors than the Labor Party had contemplated for Australia.

As a result, it seems almost inevitable that, when the results of the 2021 Census are published around this time next year, they will show yet another decline in rates of home ownership – especially for younger age groups.

The increase in home ownership rates which was achieved over the first two decades of the post-war era – culminating in a peak of 72.5% at the 1966 Census – occurred despite Australia's population (and in particular the populations of its largest cities) growing at a much faster percentage rate than they have done over the past two decades.

That was possible because, throughout that period, the housing policies of the Commonwealth, state and local governments focussed on boosting the supply of housing – both by building a lot of housing themselves, and by facilitating the construction of housing by the private sector. As a result, despite the strong growth in the 'underlying' demand for housing, the ratio of house prices to average incomes remained relatively steady at around three times.

But, starting from 1963, when John Howard (as President of the New South Wales Young Liberals) managed to persuade Sir Robert Menzies to promise cash grants to first home buyers at that year's federal election, the emphasis of government housing policies has gradually shifted away from boosting the supply of housing, instead to inflating the demand for it.

The (almost inevitable) results of this shift in housing policy have been that house prices have risen to, typically, six or seven times annual disposable incomes; that it now typically requires two incomes to accumulate a deposit and service the mortgage required to buy an average-priced home; and that (as noted earlier) the home ownership rate is now lower

than at any time since the mid-1950s (and possibly earlier).

Indeed, it is hard to think of any area of widespread public concern where the same policies have been pursued for so long, in the face of such incontrovertible evidence that they have failed to achieve their ostensible objectives.

The only plausible explanation for that is that the real reasons for the housing policies which governments at all levels and of all political persuasions have pursued for so long are not the ostensible reasons.

For all the crocodile tears which politicians of all persuasions routinely shed about the difficulties facing those wishing to get their first foot on the property ladder, deep down they know that there are far more people who already own at least one property (and who therefore have a very strong interest in policies which result in continued property price inflation) than there are who don't, but who would like to (and who would prefer, at least until they succeed in their aspiration, policies which would restrain the rate of property price inflation).

And, sadly, there's no reason to think that political calculus is going to change. Nor, therefore, are the housing policies which have resulted in created the housing system which Australia has today.

(Note: Property price data referred to in this article are sourced from [CoreLogic](#); data on home ownership rates from ABS Census data for 2016 and earlier years; data on mortgage lending from ABS [Lending Indicators](#) and APRA [Quarterly authorized deposit-taking institutions property exposures](#); data on the value of housing wealth from ABS [Australian National Accounts: Finance and Wealth](#); data on prices and wages from ABS [Consumer Price Index](#) and [Average Weekly Earnings](#); data on the incidence of negative gearing from ATO [Taxation Statistics](#); and data on Commonwealth and State government grants and tax concessions for first home buyers from Commonwealth and State Budget Papers.)

SAUL ESLAKE

Corinna Economic Advisory

HAVE YOU HAD PROBLEMS CLAIMING FOR FLOOD DAMAGE FROM THE RAA (RURAL ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY), DR DAVID GILLESPIE'S OFFICE OR MIDCOAST COUNCIL?

There seems to be a lot obfuscation, left hand not knowing what right hand doing and general confusion and in some cases disinterest.

IF SO COULD YOU PLEASE LET ME KNOW –

editor@manningcommunitynews.com or PO Box 62, Tinonee 2430

Truth, media and Democracy

Virtue and truthfulness in public life is a cornerstone of democracy, or so tradition has it.

The idea was well established in US mythology by 1867, when John C. McRae produced his famous engraving. "Father, I Can Not Tell a Lie: I Cut the Tree". Thus spake the young George Washington, first President of the United State of America, vaccine advocate, and heroic leader of the largely volunteer continental army that defeated the professionals of the British army and navy.

But did George ever say that to his angry father? No. The story was invented by Mason Locke Weems, a clergyman and book agent, and one of Washington's first biographers. It buoyed up sales of the fifth edition of his *The Life of Washington*.

But clergyman Weems also had a higher purpose: it was to show that Washington's "unparalleled rise and elevation were due to his Great Virtues," and those virtues were a prerequisite to greatness in public life.

Fast forward to the 21st century. Put aside the lamentable record

of the 45th US President, Donald Trump, and the tens of thousands of false or misleading claims he made – lies, only if he knew they were false, rather than the product of self-delusion.

Instead: the instructive tale of freshman Rep. Madison Cawthorn (R - N. C.).

At 25, and its youngest member, he rode into Congress on an heroic and tragic story.

As the Washington Post reported (Feb. 27, 2021) 'By his account, Cawthorn led a charmed life growing up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina. Handsome and athletic, he was homeschooled and played high school football.'

Left to die in a fiery road accident by his best mate, but rescued by passers-by, partly disabled, he had to drop out of college and was denied the opportunity to serve his country when turned down by the Naval Academy.

But the details of his widely publicised timeline are wrong: Cawthorn rearranged the sequence of events for his own benefit. The Naval Academy rejected his application, then the accident, and it was his best friend who rescued him from the crash. Then he dropped out of college after a string of poor grades. Lastly, more than 150 former fellow students signed a letter naming him a sex predator.

So, at least in the USA today, virtue and truthfulness seems no longer a prerequisite for public service or the support of the once great Republican Party.

HOW WE SHAPE UP

In Australia, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed heightened public concern about truth in politics, and expectations of truthfulness in public life. Nevertheless, expectations of lying remain rife, not just among a sceptical public but among parliamentary staff and

members too.

When Brittany Higgins made allegations of rape, by a fellow staffer, in the offices of their minister, Linda Reynolds, in March 2019, it seems the claim was met with such doubt that PM Morrison was not informed of the allegation for 23 months.

And then Linda Reynolds was moved to label Higgins a 'lying cow', though the minister insists the remark was to characterise Higgins' report of the lack of support provided, rather than the alleged rape. Irrespective, the remarks were withdrawn, an apology made to Higgins, and there were reports of financial compensation, but only after the remarks were made public. The alleged rapist appears in court this month.

But why would a minister expect that her staffer would lie in the first place? Are her expectations of her personal staff so low? And who snitched on Reynolds?

Then an historical allegation of rape was made against the then Attorney-General Christian Porter, in letters sent to PM Scott Morrison, Labor's Leader in the Senate, Penny Wong, and Greens' Senator Hanson-Young. It is an allegation he has vehemently denied.

Few seemed satisfied with his denial. The Prime Minister's defence of Porter was not couched in the simple, unambiguous statement: 'I believe Christian Porter'. Instead, reminded us of the rule of law: the presumption of innocence as a fundamental tenant of Australian law. As it is, but a Clayton defence.

All further discussions were headed off by Porter's decision to prosecute for defamation, not against the woman who made the claim, as she is dead, or against those who wrote the letter making the allegation, as they have remained anonymous, but against the ABC and reporter Louise Milligan, the first, among many media outlets, to publish the allegation without identifying the subject of the allegation.

Porter withdrew the action. Successful defamation may have

provided some legal resolution, but would not address the fundamental issue of public trust in a public office holder. The discontinuation of the actions leave all the questions unanswered.

WE DISTRUST POLLIES

These and many similar examples, world wide, point to a profound distrust in politicians, from the local councils to the national capitals. The unconstrained channels of social media have, if anything, further undermined trust by providing a constant flow of misinformation, ill-informed opinion, and unchallenged, outright lies.

At times like these it is easy to give way to cynicism, to say: 'no matter who you vote for, a politician always wins'.

We must all pay a great deal more attention to politics, because the quality of the politician we get, reflects our knowledge and expectations of them. Many of the present crop reflect our low expectations.

In this torrent of doubt, the role of the media is even more important because few, if any of us, can spend the time to chase-down every doubt, every lie, every deception. Since journalists were first let into the British House of Commons to report on procedures, newspapers have had the job of filtering out the dross, the lies and deceptions in public discourse.

Some do it well, others less so. We have to use the same sceptical filters we use on politicians on the media. Equally, we have to ask what has not been reported, what has the editor judged unimportant to the reader/listeners/viewer.

But also we must ask what has been shaped to serve concealed agendas of owners, editors or their mates.

A healthy independent and trustworthy media is essential to delivering virtue and truthfulness in public service.

Vincent O'Donnell
Media Researcher and Analyst



It's good to see communities taking media diversity into their own hands, like the Manning Community News, but we need more sources of reliable local news in every community around Australia. Thanks to publisher, Di Morrissey AM, for sending me a few copies.

 Kevin Rudd
twitter.com

Maggie The Label – Australian Made Chic

A new designer presently wowing Australia's fashion world is Maggie Meehan. Maggie's success is based on her using nothing but sustainable fabrics. Everything is made in Australia.

Her stylish flair and elegant yet simple sophistication is never compromised by cutting corners or using cheaper materials or foreign labour. Where her fabric comes from, matters to Maggie, as do the hands who help create her garments. She buys her fabrics from an Australian company. Their move to linen is for its durability (30% stronger than cotton) and linen is made from the flax plant (every part of the plant is used) and does not require any pesticides or additional water other than rainwater. Linen is organic, biodegradable, recyclable and great for people with allergies

and sensitive skin. Maggie has also started working with hemp denim and organic cotton, focusing on sustainable fibres.

Now launching into a growing number of shops in most Australian states, **Maggie the Label** uses the Meehan family brand. She is the fourth generation to do so. Maggie's name signifies high fashion, with a distinctive relaxed Australian style at a fair price.

From the very beginning, Maggie has insisted on sustainability and ethics in her collections. Her dedication and hard work began by her making fashions in her garage with the help of her husband and business partner Anthony Laface. From



these humble beginnings she was recently invited to launch her label at Cockatoo Island in Sydney along with a selected group of significant up and coming Aussie designers, featuring in major fashion magazines.

Maggie the Label fashions are available in a growing number of specialty shops in New South Wales,

QLD, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania and will also be available online from September 2021.

The online store will be launching in September 2021. To shop online, visit: www.maggiethelabel.com.au. For any telephone enquires, contact Anthony on 0402 226 567.

Retailer enquires welcome.



Celebrating Sixty Years Of 'Four Corners', Aunty's Flagship

Tuncurry local, Wendy Borchers, archivist at ABC TV for many years, looks back.

The road leading to the birth of the ABC's flagship program, 'Four Corners' was a rocky one. But I'm proud to have been part of this television institution.

In his book 'Out of the Box' (Seaview Press, 1999), original producer Robert Raymond explains that the idea was conceived, along with presenter, Michael Charlton, over many plates of spaghetti bolognese, accompanied by bottles of house red, in a restaurant not far from their office at 171 William Street, Kings Cross.

Management seemed to be lined up against them and one TV executive even snarled as he brushed past in a corridor of the television studios (at Gore Hill just over the Harbour Bridge on the north side), that 'this program will go to air over my dead body'. It seems that the News Department came up with a proposal of its own and the powers-that-be were learning towards that format, rather than the one proposed by Raymond and Charlton.

'Four Corners' DID go to air, as scheduled, on Saturday, 19th August, 1961 and obviously won the approval of those recalcitrant ABC executives and after 60 years, there can be no doubt that their trust and faith has paid off 100 fold.

In 'Out of the Box' Bob Raymond quoted a later presenter and executive producer of the program, Bob Moore, as saying of Raymond and Charlton that "they legitimised the Australian accent on TV. They showed real Australians to be seen and heard and changed our consciousness of ourselves and our country."

In 1963 Michael Charlton was the recipient of a Gold Logie Award for the most popular personality on Australian TV!

WENDY'S JOURNEY

My road towards becoming a film researcher on 'Four Corners' was not so rocky, but it was certainly long and winding. The program has become part of me.

I Joined the ABC in Radio Talks (now Radio Current Affairs) and



became the first secretary to the Executive Producer on AM in 1967, where I remained for many months- a period which included the disappearance of our prime minister, Harold Holt, in the ocean off Portsea in Victoria. In 1968 I found myself in the permanent position of assistant to the Chief-of-Staff in the News Department at Gore Hill, but later I was offered the exciting job as production secretary on a new all-film drama series, called 'Delta'. After two years, I returned to News, just in time to witness the saga of the Qantas hoax, during which it was claimed by a 'Mister Brown' that there was a bomb on board the Qantas jet 'City of Broken Hill' and if the airline didn't hand over a huge sum of money immediately, the bomb would be detonated! There was no bomb.

I had become quite friendly with one of the Film Librarians, Lois Lawson, who used to visit News on a regular basis to collect the daily film from our editors for accession into their collection. One day I enquired as to what were her duties, which she explained and told me a va-



Bill Constable (left), Michael Charlton (centre), and Bob Raymond at a street cafe in Sarajevo [Yugoslavia] where the Four Corners Team filmed the place where the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated which sparked off World War 1" [Taken 1962].

cancy for a researcher was coming up soon so why didn't I apply? I did and was appointed, which was very exciting and meant my life changed dramatically, especially as I was now working on a shift.

As the junior researcher on the team of four, which consisted of Lois, Elizabeth Steptoe and Wendy Odlum, I was assigned to children's programs such as 'Junior World'

when I was asked to find films with fascinating titles such as 'Root Knot Nematode' and I still have no idea what this is exactly.

My lucky break came one day when 'Four Corners' producer, Gordon Bick, arrived in the Library with an urgent request for a film researcher to find footage relating to the Croatian terrorist group, Ustasha, which had been active in

Sydney. My colleagues were all busy with other urgent stories, so I was allowed to take this assignment. Meticulously combing through the records I managed to unearth all the items Gordon had listed and he told me he was going to give me a visual end credit on his story – ‘Ustasha Down Under’ to show his appreciation. Wow – a credit – I hadn’t thought of that and when my name appeared my flatmates and I cheered. My mother, in the Hunter Valley, saw my name in lights too, having gathered some of the neighbours together to watch the show with her. It was one of the proudest moments to the start of a long and fascinating career.

BRILLIANT STAFF

I was privileged to work with so many brilliant staff members on ‘Four Corners’ over the years that it is hard to single out any person, or any story for a special mention, but I would like to make an exception to the rule to tell the story of Nancy Young, transmitted on the program in 1969, one of the worst miscarriages of justice I had ever encountered.

In May, 1968, an Aboriginal woman, Nancy Young, carried her critically ill baby daughter, one and a half kilometres, through scrubby country, from her home at the Cunnamulla Aboriginal reserve in Queensland, to the hospital in town, where she arrived at 1am. No doctor examined the baby until 9am and she died two days later. Nancy was subsequently found guilty of manslaughter by an all-white, all male jury and sentenced to three years hard labour.

In the ‘Four Corners’ film, ‘Out of Sight, Out of Mind’, transmitted on August 30, 1969, Peter Reid revealed the injustices of the case; the steady increase in the death rate amongst Aboriginal children and the appalling squalid conditions under which Aboriginal people on the Cunnamulla reserve were expected to live. After serving the majority of her three-year sentence, Nancy was released, following fresh evidence, which resulted in the conviction being quashed. It was later acknowledged that the baby Evelyn died from scurvy, which she contracted in the unsanitary conditions of the Cunnamulla reserve. This story created a huge surge of public outrage.

In early 1976, ABC New York correspondent, Ray Martin, interviewed the former head of the CIA, James Jesus Angleton, who it is said, spilled



the beans on the CIA’s involvement in the sacking of the Australian Prime Minister, Edward Gough Whitlam, by the Governor General, John Kerr, on 11th November, 1975. Unfortunately we will never know for sure the content of that interview because the film “disappeared” from the office of the ‘Four Corners’ production unit, which means it did not make it to the library or the screen. It’s just another one of life’s little mysteries, but how I’d love to know the truth.

ATOMIC BOMB OFF WA

In 2018 I was on a mega-adventure on an aerial anti-clockwise circumnavigation of Australia. We had just visited the lighthouse at Vlamingh Head in Western Australia and I was studying a map of the region of the Exmouth Gulf in the Pilbara, when I spotted the archipelago of the Monte Bello Islands. In 1978 I was assigned to a ‘Four Corners’ story of the same name, produced by Bob Pride, when I learned there had been three top secret British atomic tests, 1952 and two in 1956, on the islands in the Cold War of the 1950’s. When I checked with my fellow travellers no-one had heard of them – Maralinga yes, Monte Bello Islands, no. There is no proof that the Australian prime minister at the time, Robert Menzies, had ever consulted with his Cabinet when he gave the



Producer Robert Raymond and presenter Michael Charlton.

British government the green light to detonate the blasts, contaminating atmosphere and blackening the sky! The islands are still radioactive but tourists ignore the warning signs and camp there anyway.

(In 1956, 4 year old Kevin Strelitz watched a mushroom cloud rising to the north west of the gulf; the deserted Monte Bello islands were a mere 130 kilometres from the WA coast, but their selection of the site for two British atomic bomb tests in 1956 and an earlier one in 1952, underlined the remoteness and near-emptiness of the state, stretching to the north of North West Cape. ‘A Little America in Western Australia’ by Anthony J Barker and Michael L Ondaatje UWA Publishing, 2015)

I knew about those contentious atomic tests because I used to work on ‘Four Corners’.

‘Four Corners’ I salute you, you have created a priceless record of Australian history and I congratulate all of you who are still there ensuring that Aunty’s Flagship remains

world class. Robert Raymond and Michael Charlton would be so proud of you!

**Wendy Borchers AM
Tuncurry, NSW**

Thank you Wendy. You’re a legend too. And I know you’re still called upon on occasion as you seem to have archives filed in your head!

In this sad time of diminishing and threatened honest media, we need fearless ‘Four Corners’ and other brave programs and newspapers to reveal the stories that some in our government, corrupt organisations and individuals do not want told.

This current government has slashed the budget and undermined the ABC in many ways. But it will never silence it’s journalists, Chairwoman, General Manager and staff nor we, their loyal audience.

Here’s to another brave sixty years “Four Corners.”

DM



Wendy Borchers searching footage for “Four Corners”

'Feeling Very Olympic'

"I am feeling very Olympic today" was that great and memorable line spoken by the character 'Sanka Coffie' (played by comedian Doug E. Doug) from the hilarious 1993 Hollywood movie, "Cool Runnings", arguably one of the better underdog sport stories, which was centred around the Jamaican Bobsled Team competing at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary Canada.

Many Australians throughout the country have also been 'feeling very Olympic' as we bathed in the triumph and despaired in the tragedy of our athletes competing at the Games of the XXXII Olympiad, the 2020 Summer Olympics, officially branded as 'Tokyo 2020'.

And while there's been significant global controversy and debate leading up to these Games as to whether they should have proceeded during the Covid crisis, the end result has seen our nation and perhaps much of the world inspired and spiritually invigorated with hope and confidence. A feeling that we can also overcome; all that is required is the good will of humanity, as was so wonderfully displayed by the youth of the world (and the not so young) at the Tokyo Games.

It's been refreshing and breath taking to watch not only our Australian athletes, but those from the entire world; the 11,000 women and men from 205 countries competing across 339 events from 33 sports.

One very striking theme, illustrated consistently from our Australian athletes at these games during TV interviews, should be a lesson for many of our politicians in power: don't talk about the results or the rewards until the event is over, focus on the task, and if you do the work and deliver, then you will achieve the results.

Also feeling very Olympic here on the MidCoast, is our own Councillor Peter Epov, who was a TV Commentator at two Summer Olympic Games: in Los Angeles 1984, and Seoul 1988.

Back in the 1970's and '80s, Councillor Epov was a highly successful volleyball coach, having coached the Australian Men's Volleyball Team at its first ever appearance at a World Championship in 1982, in Argentina, several weeks just after the Falklands War.

In 1984, several months before the LA Games, while working as a professional sports administrator and the National Coaching and Competitions Director of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, then preparing to stage the 1985 Coolangatta Gold, Peter was invited by Ron May, the Executive Producer of Network 10, the official Australian Broadcaster of the LA Olympics to work as commentator for the sport of Volleyball.

Recalls Peter, "It was all kind of strange, mysterious and indeed surre-



Volleyball Pete with co-commentators Mike Gibson and Bruce McAvaney

al. Ron invited me to lunch and I had assumed the purpose was to discuss the next Coolangatta Gold. As the Project Director for the 1985 event it was part of my role to facilitate the television coverage.

"After about 25 minutes conversation, he totally surprised me with a question: 'So what do you know about Volleyball?' I replied: 'enough to get by' and so started a strong professional relationship and a friendship which would last beyond the term of Network Ten's coverage of two Summer Olympic Games."

Initially, May's plan was for Peter to cover 15 to 20 minutes from each day's competition, somewhat like recording a highlights package.

"This was particularly attractive, as I would be given a Commentator's Accreditation which, back in those days pretty much allowed free access all the Olympic competition events in the media section, which was located in the best viewing areas. Also the great thing was that my accommodation, meals and travel were all paid for by Network 10 and they even threw in some spending money.

"On arrival in LA, I was slated to work with Peter Waltham, who had been a newsreader from a rival TV network in Perth drafted for the Olym-

pics. And so what started out as a 20 minute highlights package ended up with Peter Waltham and I recording up to three matches per day which on average were around two hours long, and as a result of that work the sport of Volleyball was broadcast daily back to Australia.

"So in total, over 14 hours of Volleyball were broadcast in Australia from the LA Games, a stark contrast from the Moscow Games which only had 3 minutes from the gold medal match. And this was actually achieved without any Australian Teams having qualified for the LA Games.

"This coverage was also achieved at a time when there was only a single TV channel broadcasting the Olympics which resulted in enormous national exposure for the sport of Volleyball leading to a massive increase in participation, public interest, and government and corporate support for the Sport.

"We were receiving telegrams in LA from all over Australia, calling for more volleyball.

The Olympics were such a great success for Network 10, rating in the 40's, which was really high, and so the owner at the time, Rupert Murdoch, threw a huge party at the Beverly Hilton in LA for the commentators and

the entire crew. I still recall Australian Tennis legend, John Newcombe, leading Mr Murdoch and his huge entourage of Newspaper executives around the room and introducing him to all the commentators.

"On my return to Australia I was invited to join the Board of the Australian Volleyball Federation as Honorary Director for Publicity and Promotions.

"The success of the LA Games led to Network 10 successfully bidding for the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea and I was again invited to be, this time, the sole commentator for the Sport of Volleyball.

From Seoul, we broadcast just over ten and a half hours of Volleyball back to Australia, which was again quite a remarkable feat as there were no Australian Teams competing. This time Network 10 was owned by Frank Lowy and the Westfields Corporation. Mr Lowy was very unassuming but appeared to be quite interested in the telecast. I ran into him several times in the studios. On the first occasion, Ron May went to introduce me and Mr Lowy said; Oh, I know Peter, he's the Volleyball guy!

"I was very lucky to score a seat for the memorable Opening Ceremony of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

the LA Games at the Coliseum and I can still remember and feel the build-up in the electricity as the amazing stadium progressively filled with the spirit of 100,000 people. Once you feel this energy it's very hard to forget.

"To be part of the Olympic Games was an amazing and incredible experience, one which I can only highly recommend.

"My wife Helen and I had plans to attend the Tokyo Games, but Covid 19 had other ideas. Perhaps Paris?

"Oh, and PS, I also happened to run into one of the other Network Ten Commentators at the Los Angeles Olympics, the esteemed Editor of this paper! Over to you Di."

....
Nothing Murdoch does is small potatoes, so he went all out, and at the time technical live and staggered broadcasts were quite a feat.

I was the entertainment reporter for "Good Morning Australia" the first live breakfast current affairs show in Australia hosted by Gordon Elliott and Sue Kellaway. (Later Kerri-Anne Kennerley outdid us all by hanging in there for *ages!*) I took little notice of the frenzied build up to the Games and who would get a gig. Sport was not my thing!

So I was amazed when I was called to the big Chief's office on the carpeted top floor of Channel Ten (out at Ryde.) I thought I must have been for the chop and was trying to think what I might have done to have the big banana fire me rather than our EP.

Managing Director Wilf Barker leaned back in his swivel chair behind a massive desk and finally said, 'Your lucky day, Di. We're sending you to the LA Olympics!' And paused.

There had been endless scrambling, pitching and pushing to be one of the coveted broadcast team apparently.

I blinked and looked at him and said, "Why? Why me, I don't know a thing about sports!"

Wilf sort of winced, I guess because I didn't go on bended knee in appreciation, and tersely explained that I would cover the "colour" of the opening ceremony and do human interest stories for the

network. I was being assigned a young producer to work with me and a cameraman and we'd do our own thing after the opening and produce as many stories a day as possible.

When I met and thanked the lovely gentle and talented EP Ron May for this opportunity, it turned out he'd gone around Channel Ten asking all the crews who they liked working with and who was easy going, competent and had an eye for a story... and that was me.

And in the course of preparations (we also had a uniform) and photo ops and homework I met a tall bloke...the volleyball guy - Peter Epov!

To be part of the LA Olympics of 1984 was an honour, and eye opening, challenging, exhausting and fun. After covering the opening ceremony... one of the first big spectacles, Station Manager George Brown kept sending back messages to do more stories "like the last one." So I trawled athletes, LA and the underworld of the Olympics. It was a special time.

We commentators, journos, crews and technicians were all holed up in one hotel and ferried from there to the stadium. There was one phone line back to Australia and we were allowed turns during the social daily get-together at the hotel.

My mate Tom Keneally was covering the Games for the Herald, and roy-



Editor Di Morrissey and (far right) Cr Peter Epov - the commentary team for the LA Olympics

al husband (Mark Phillips, at the time married to Princess Anne) known as Foggy, was making his commentator's debut for the equestrian events. (Poor bugger was nervous and wouldn't you know it, the first 4 minutes of his

commentary, there was drop out and he had to ad lib, but managed rather well.) Later in our social and phone home time I complimented him on a good job then he disappeared for his turn with the phone.

When he came back to our little group Tom asked him had he been whingeing about the tech difficulties. But Foggy said 'No. Just talking to my children. They're with my mother in law on the boat.'

(That would be the Queen on the Britannia.)

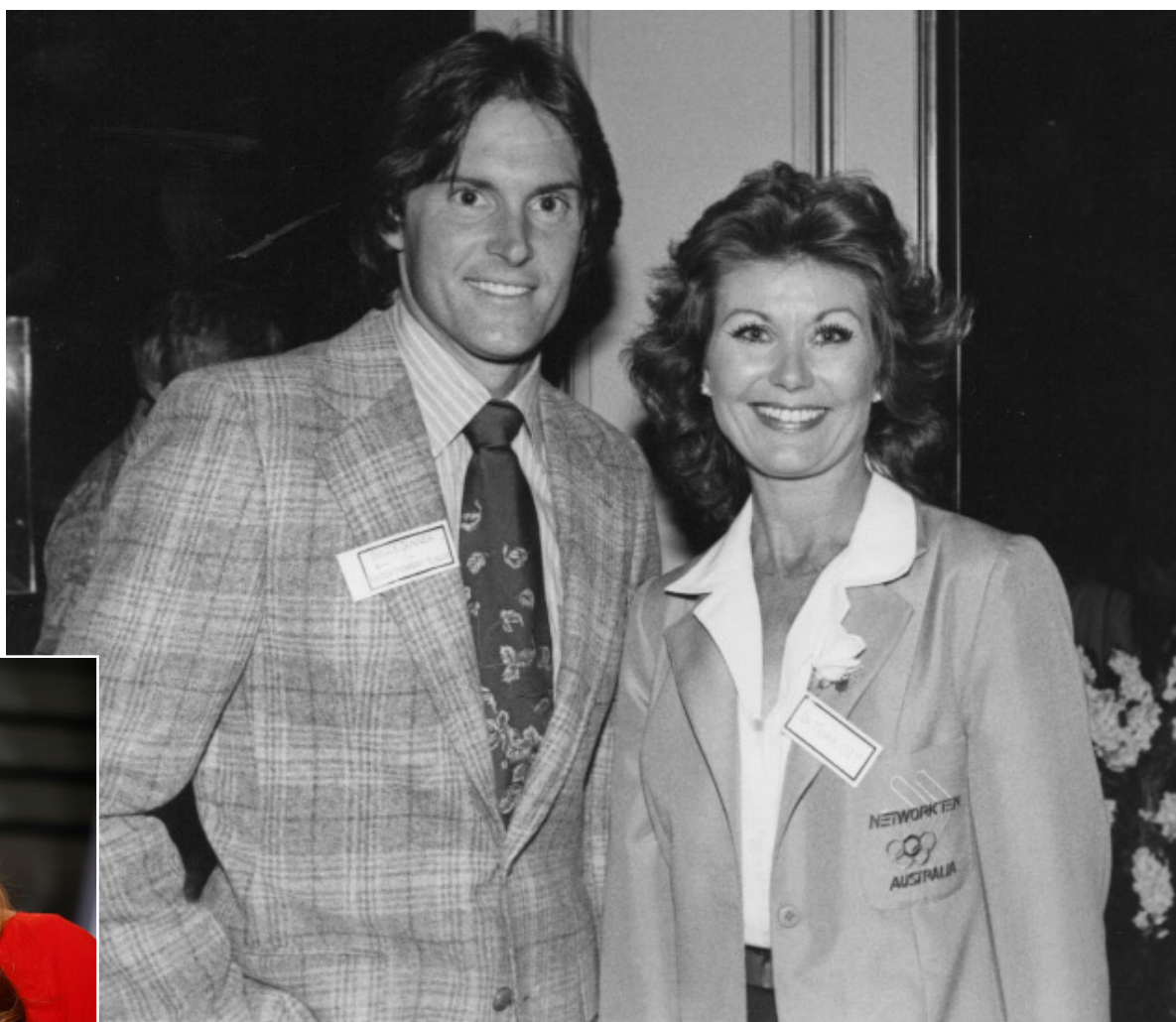
I was at Murdoch's party Peter mentions, and of all the celebs there, I spent time chatting with a nice fellow, an American chap who was doing some commentating about something I don't recall. Tall, good looking, friendly. Called Bruce.

You might know him better these days as Caitlin Jenner.

Ah, they were the days, hey Pete!

DM

("Di one day we'll have to spill the beans on the filming of the movie 'Coolangatta Gold' where we next crossed paths! And PS, Jenner was a champion decathlon athlete." PE.)



Di at Murdoch's party with Bruce Jenner



Caitlin Jenner

Afghanistan: An Enterprise For The Stupid

An understanding of history might have seen Australia refuse the opportunity to get involved in Afghanistan, but an understanding of history has never amounted to much in Australia, unless it has been to embellish white supremacist myths, like Bean around Anzac.

Afghanistan has been the death bed of modern invading armies, first Britain, then Russia and now America. The reasons are topography and use of it by the Pathans, the ruthless and dominant tribe.

I have some experience with Afghanistan. My grandfather skirmished against the Pathans, with the British Army, on the border between India and Afghanistan in the North West Frontier Province in 1904/5. He was based in Quetta, Peshawar and Rawalpindi. He was with the Yorkshire Light Infantry but on secondment to 44th Punjab Regiment. He later became an instructor at Duntroon. I was posted twice to Pakistan, 1972/73 and 1986/88. The Embassy had reporting responsibilities for Afghanistan and by the time of my second posting it had leased a house in Kabul.

My bearer on my first posting, Doust, was a Pathan. His married son lived in a village outside Peshawar on the road to Kabul. His son had accused his wife of having an affair and smashed his baby's brains out against the wall of his house. Doust was concerned about this and sought my time and the use of an embassy car to drive up and see his son. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity. The son was a most handsome man, tall with black beard and hair, penetrating green eyes and a complete lack of humour. Doust told the village I had been in the army, so an ancient Belgian FN was produced and the honour of Australia was tested against bottles placed on the compound wall which I was instructed to shoot down. Honour was preserved. On the way home Doust told me he had given his son money to give to his wife's family. He said his son regretted his action.

From 1986/88 I visited Kabul regularly; it was a war zone. From time to time, it was under attack

from the Mujahideen using rockets, mortars and machine guns as well as acts of sabotage. In view of my military experience JIO gave me a compact camera and kept me supplied with film. I took pictures of Russian AFV's, planes, helicopters, installations, radio communications and soldiers as well as damage to villages and crops. This was a risky business.

I have written a lot on Afghanistan, since Howard first committed Australian troops in October 2001. He did this without seeking the approval of Parliament. In October 2009 (see my website and ABC Unleashed) I wrote in 'What are we doing in Afghanistan?' that, *'The United States Administration is said to be giving close consideration to its role in Afghanistan. The US military commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal is calling for an extra 40,000 troops... Presumably if the United States decides to pull out, all the allies will pull out and if the United States decides to increase troop numbers and stay the allies will stay.'*

The lack of input and involvement with the weighty policy issues the US is grappling with throws into stark relief the role of the allies... Naturally the US military will argue for increased troop numbers in order to tame the Taliban, they are not the most imaginative... their solution was the same in Vietnam...'

And then I observed, *'Nothing can be resolved in Afghanistan without changing the nature and role of the Pakistan Army and the intelligence services (ISI). In other words, Afghanistan extends deep inside Pakistan and the United States and its allies have to date demonstrated few strategies to deal with this...'*

Policy makers in Australia need to ask, what is it that they hope to achieve from the Australian military presence in Afghanistan? Is it just support for the US/Australia

alliance or is Australia seriously engaged in a fight against international terrorism? If it is the latter then it needs to be explained how this commitment is achieving that and in what way does it impact positively in the long and short term the lives of Australians?

Are US objectives realistic? Can they be achieved? At what cost and over what period of time? Is the Australian commitment making a positive contribution? Are we getting value for money? Is there a down side and if so, what is it?'

Those were questions I asked in 2009. They were never answered, the mindless uneducated hawks won out and we were left to crawl away defeated with our tail between our legs.

In December 2010 we learnt from WikiLeaks that there was some pessimism on the part of the Australian government about the likely outcome of the war. A lack of confidence was expressed in the ability of the Afghan police to be trained, the capability of the Afghan government and the strategies deployed to win the war. These concerns were not expressed publicly.

Major-General Jim Molan was a vigorous and vocal defender of our involvement in Afghanistan as was Neil James, the executive director of the Australian Defence Association. In an article I wrote in The Canberra Times, 15 December, 2010, 'The Agony of Afghanistan', I quote his comments on WikiLeaks made in Crikey, on 29 July, 2010, 'Put bluntly, WikiLeaks is not authorised in international or Australian law, nor equipped morally or operationally to judge whether open publication of such material risks the safety, security, morale and legitimate objectives of Australian and allied troops fighting in a UN-endorsed military operation. Nor should and can groups such as WikiLeaks be so authorised or equipped respectively, especially

when they are unaccountable to any responsible authority or international humanitarian law (IHL) in a legal or moral sense.' Such was the intellectual calibre of the supporters of our involvement in Afghanistan.

IGNORANCE OF AFGHANISTAN

The lack of knowledge of Afghanistan, its politics and people, saw the Australian task force in Uruzgan Province work closely with corrupt war lord Matiullah Khan. It was a poor decision. He was believed to be involved in the production and sale of opium which financed the Taliban, just as it had the Mujahideen. It was also alleged that he ran protection rackets. Did any of his corruption rub off on the ADF?

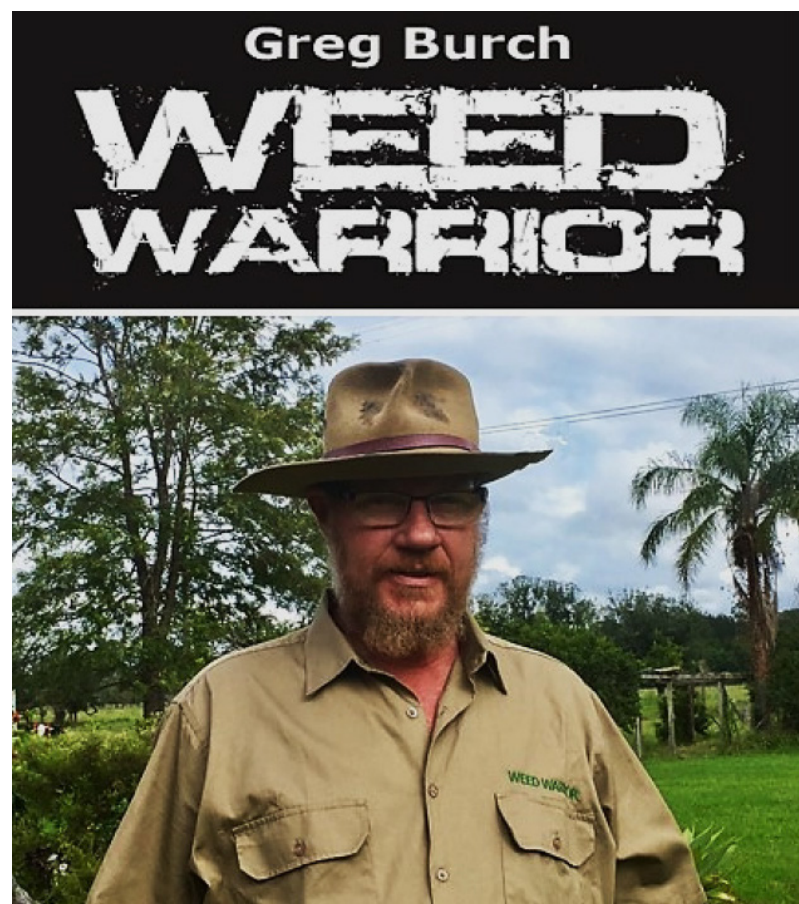
Writing in the SMH on 26 August, 2011, Rafael Epstein said, 'Until last year, the Australian government paid Matiullah Khan for his armed men to work with Australian special forces.' Epstein said he controlled the police unit which partnered with the Australian commandos, Dutch troops refused to work with him and the US Ambassador did not want him holding any formal Afghan government position. It seems to have been an act of pragmatic poor judgement to have aligned with Khan.

In his investigations into the war crimes of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan did Major General Brereton look into ADF involvement in the drug trade? Did he look into the use of and trading in drugs by the Special Forces in Afghanistan? And if not, why not? As in Viet Nam drugs were easily available. It would be surprising if some soldiers did not succumb, with adverse consequences on their performance in the field.

The Brereton Report covered the period from 2005 to 2016. The unlawful killings discussed in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

If you're looking to gain greater control over the weeds on your property prior to Spring growing season, call now to arrange a free consultation.



With over 10 years' experience in managing noxious and invasive weeds, I offer various methods of control to suit your preferences and budget, as well as a Caretaker Service for your property. Drought, Fire and Flood, along with current warm moist conditions, have all contributed to the weed growth we are currently experiencing. Creating a regular maintenance program can help keep invasive and noxious weeds under control on your property.

For instance, Parramatta Grass is spreading rapidly at the moment in many areas. With around 85,000 seeds per plant per year, the sooner you get on top of it the better your property will be. Not only do you do yourself a favour, but the effects flow on to neighbouring properties as seed is easily spread by animals, birds, vermin, wind, people and vehicles, with seed remaining in soil often for years. Parramatta Grass offers no nutritional value to stock and indeed is full of silica, which is known to erode the teeth of animals if ingested in quantity. For those not wanting to use chemicals I have used Soil Trooper, a natural fungus product developed on the Mid North Coast, that causes crown rot.

If you have recently purchased in the area, I am happy to arrange a time to meet you and 'walk the property' with you to look at the weeds you may

be facing. Even more important if you are grazing stock, as a number of these weeds are toxic to animals, creating permanent damage and possible death. For example: Horses are drawn to Crofton Weed, which can cause lung and possible heart damage. Fireweed, generally only eaten by younger stock, can cause irreversible liver damage. Castor Oil Plant is fortunately not popular with stock, but if ingested it releases Ricin, which is highly toxic. Understanding the weeds and risks on your property can help to create an ongoing program of reduction.

I maintain our local railway stations, as well as race clubs, horse studs, rural, commercial and residential properties. Happy to do one-off jobs or regular weekly, monthly or quarterly program to assist you in caring for your land. Local references are available.

You'll find where weeds are rampant, the soil is highly acidic. I am able to arrange soil tests and

work with you on what product/s to use to bring a greater alkalinity to your soil. This will discourage weeds and encourage crops and feed to grow. Sometimes a simple starter to correcting PH balance can be 'liming' a particular paddock. An ongoing and gradual liming program can be discussed in conjunction with your soil test results, and other referrals as needed. As well as raising the PH in soil, lime can also increase available nutrients and stimulate earthworm and microbial activity, adding calcium which helps make soil more stable. Additionally, the making and distribution of 'weed teas' and 'compost teas' can be of great benefit in controlling weeds and improving soil.

For a comprehensive and holistic approach to your weed needs, call Greg Burch WEED WARRIOR, on 0402 830 770.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

report began in 2009, with most occurring in 2012 and 2013. It claims that 39 civilians and prisoners were murdered. A 2012 incident was described in the Report as 'possibly the most disgraceful episode in Australian military history' and noted that 'the commanders at troop, squadron and task group level bear moral command responsibility' for these events.

Dutton and Morrison have shown little interest in pressing the investigation. Dutton overturned a recommendation in the Brereton Report, implemented by the CDF, to deprive 3000 Afghan

veterans of a unit citation. Both have been supportive of Ben Roberts-Smith VC, accused of war crimes in Afghanistan. There seems little compulsion or motivation on the part of the LNP government to pursue the issue of Australian war crimes in Afghanistan.

The war crimes were committed around the time there was a realisation at both the military and political level that there was nothing winnable about the undertaking in Afghanistan. Morale and leadership appear to have collapsed at about the same time. It might be said that the Viet Nam syndrome took over. That is why an investigation into the use of

drugs is so important. Hastie no doubt can provide some answers.

Many members of the Taliban were members of the Mujahideen. Their existence is a direct result of the occupation of Afghanistan by a foreign power, firstly Russia then America. The Taliban has links to ISIS whose existence can be sheeted home to the American destruction and occupation of Iraq.

The American withdrawal from Afghanistan will follow the blue print of the Russian withdrawal. Retribution and a crackdown on all Western manifestations of influence will result, including female education and role in a Taliban dominated society. It is a condemnation of the false hope

generated by a major power which had no game plan and no intention of staying the distance. Viet Nam, Iraq and now Afghanistan demonstrate that our ally, the US, is flaky. Driven by the arms industry it has no interest in long term outcomes, short term profit is the objective. That is why the US project against China is such a worry. China is Iraq and Afghanistan revisited. America is not a good country; it acts only in its own interests. Profit. They don't give a fig about Australia.

Bruce Haigh
Retired diplomat, political
commentator and author.
www.brucehaigh.com

Opinion - Why The Bight Cemetery Matters!

(Opinion of The Blight of the Bight Group)



The two-year anniversary of the desecration of The Bight Cemetery has just passed. The lack of progress in the repair of the damaged monuments might lead some to question whether the Bight Cemetery really matters.

IT MATTERS TO FAMILIES

Two years ago, families found their ancestors' and loved ones' monuments damaged and laying on the ground. They had no prior knowledge that this was going to happen. There had been no consultation. Two years later they want to see the monuments restored. The Bight Cemetery is one of many small bush cemeteries in the Mid Coast region, holding not only treasured memories for generations of descendants of early settlers, but holding historical and heritage value to the whole community. The Bight Cemetery is a much-loved place, quiet and tranquil, a place to visit and remember family stories and

local history.

The wider community watches on, worried that something similar might happen to their family graves and monuments at another cemetery under the management of MCC.

IT PROVIDES AN INSIGHT INTO HOW COUNCIL OPERATES

The Bight Cemetery story offers a window through which we can see how Council operates and how it performs. For two years we have watched as Council has stumbled in their attempts to set things right. Issue after issue has been revealed as Council has tried to play catch up on operational and policy matters that they should be fully across. The Bight Cemetery has proved to be a litmus test for how Council performs in a crisis, and how it deals with the community.

There are three key questions to ask. The first question is one of performance. Has The Bight Cemetery matter been dealt with

competently? The second question is one of compliance. Has The Bight Cemetery matter been dealt with in compliance with regulations, policies and codes of practice, etc.? The third question is one of values and business ethics. Has Council's actions reflected the values and business ethics they espouse?

1. COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE

A crisis, such as the desecration of the Heritage Golden Cypress tree line and monuments at The Bight Cemetery shines a spotlight on how well a business is operating and what gaps there are. It quickly became apparent to the Bight families that Council's performance fell short. They did not appear to have any policies, processes or procedures for the cemetery business, nor a published business plan, nor an approved plan for the Monument Risk Assessment Program. It seems that the staff who knocked down the graves at the Bight cemetery had

not received any training in monument assessment. It seems that planning and environmental regulations were ignored or not given due consideration, as was the licence for the endangered Donkey Orchid. This list goes on.

As the two years has unfolded, other problems have emerged.

Council's commitment to community consultation has waned from consulting with families, the Blight of the Bight group and the National Trust to the occasional one-way email update. If Council had worked regularly with affected families and subject matter experts such as the National Trust's Cemeteries Advisor, to keep information and communication channels open, Council would have demonstrated its commitment to community and stakeholder consultation, more may have been achieved and Council may have commenced to rehabilitate its reputation.

Council has ignored most of the extensive feedback from families on the draft Conservation Management Plan, which aimed to correct a multitude of errors in the document. The document has been signed off and made available to the public with substantial errors – it is not an accurate record.

Council has developed and approved two Restoration Action Plans, detailing the necessary steps for the repair and restoration of the damaged monuments, with dates and timelines. Neither the dates or timelines are being adhered to. Meeting objectives and timelines is a measure of both competence and accountability.

Council has questions to answer about whether it breached its responsibilities relating to the registration and transfer of interment rights. Council is required to keep an updated register of interment rights for all graves for which it is responsible, but it took an alert from Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW in November 2020 to get Council to address this issue in relation to The Bight. Only in June 2021 did Council approve and make available on their website, the necessary forms for the transfer of an interment right. At this point

many Bight Cemetery families do not know who Council has on their records as the interment rights holder to their family's graves.

Despite a 25 March 2020 resolution that directed Council staff to undertake an assessment of all impacted headstones, and despite Council being provided with a list of suitable Heritage Stone Masons by the National Trust and their own Heritage Advisor, no action seems to have been taken. The Restoration Action Plan approved in December 2020 scheduled this assessment for January and March 2021, but nothing has happened, some 16 months since the original resolution.

COMPLY REGULATIONS, POLICIES AND CODES OF PRACTICE

There are multiple instances where questions can be asked about whether Council has complied with its obligations. Council should provide answers. For instance:

- Why didn't Council have a Development Application for the Monument Risk Assessment Program (MRAP) at The Bight?
- Was the MRAP at The Bight Cemetery in line with the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act*? A large number of the monuments seem to have been in good repair and should not have been disturbed, and this was done without notification of the Interment Right holders.
- Why did the Council undertake works at The Bight Cemetery without an active licence for the critically endangered Yellow Tailed Donkey Orchid and then, after obtaining a licence renewal, mow the cemetery in the exclusion period?
- Were obligations under the Privacy Act fully considered in advance of Council's decision to mount surveillance cameras at The Bight?
- Why was a trade union official permitted to address a Council meeting, seemingly against Council's own Code of Conduct and despite three Councillors pointing this out?

VALUES AND BUSINESS ETHICS

Over the last two years Council has demonstrated significant gaps between its espoused values, as stated in its Statement of Business Ethics, and its actual behaviour.

BE ACCOUNTABLE AND ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

One wonders whether Council has lost sight of what 'in the public interest' means – both the interests of the impacted families and the broader community, who don't want

to see what happened at The Bight repeated elsewhere. Two years on and no repair work has commenced, let alone been completed. Also, there is nothing to suggest the necessary cemetery policies, processes and procedures have been developed. The rejection of most of the substantial feedback from the community on the Conservation Management Plan makes a joke of the consultation process. How could this be in the public interest?

Act honestly, openly, fairly and ethically in all their dealings with you; Exercise authority appropriately, lawfully and transparently

For those who have attended, watched or listened to the Council meetings where the Bight issue has been debated, we leave it up to you to assess whether they lived up to these ethics.

Promote fair and open com-

petition while seeking best value for money; Fully and clearly document all procurement activities and decisions to provide an effective audit trail to allow for effective performance review of contracts; and treat all potential suppliers with impartiality and fairness and give equal access to information and opportunities.

MidCoast Council have not yet confirmed to affected families that they have tendered for suitably qualified heritage and ordinary stone masons for the assessment of the damaged monuments and the preparation of individual specifications of the scopes of works for their repair. After two years, why not?

Not call tenders unless Council has a firm intention to proceed to contract

The fact that it appears that Council has not called tenders for the

assessment of damaged monuments after being directed to do so by Council resolution (25 March 2020) makes one question whether Council has any intention to proceed with the independent assessment of the damaged monuments' condition and the specifications for the required repairs.

So here we are two years on, and nothing has happened. It speaks volumes about Council's operations. This situation and track record would never be tolerated in corporate Australia. Why do the impacted families, community and MidCoast ratepayers have to accept it? As we head into a local government election on the 4 December, it is worth reflecting on this sorry saga when casting your vote.

Does The Bight matter? Yes!

(This is an edited (for space) reply from Mr Paul DeSzell, MidCoast Council in reply to Dr John Stockard's letter we published last month regarding the poor council care of The Brush and gardens in Wingham.)

Dear John,

As part of my investigation in relation to the matter, I have personally inspected the site in question as referenced in the attached photos.

Let me begin by acknowledging that I completely agree with your statements in relation to the vegetational complexity of the Wingham Brush Nature Reserve and that the management goal is to produce a rounded verandah edge to protect the remnant to prevent desiccation and environmental weed invasion.

In relation to your comments regarding the work undertaken, I can confirm that the works were initiated by the crews you spoke to onsite and that the NPWS had not been consulted.

I can also confirm that no other staff members provided instruction or any direction to the work crews.

From my investigation it is evident that the crews were approached directly to trim the branches and acted upon this request without knowing the kind of tree they were cutting or that it was part of an Endangered Ecological Community and within a Nature Reserve. The staff have been counselled in this regard to ensure that it does not happen again.

When is Council going to consult and work with NPWS

and knowledgeable community residents constructively about the Wingham Brush?

Council regularly consults with and has an excellent working relationship with the NPWS in relation to the Wingham Brush and to my knowledge has never received any complaints from this agency in regard to the Brush.

When and where will Council strike next? That's becoming a real concern for me and other residents. This threat of impending Council vandalism makes Wingham an unliveable community, Paul.

I do not concur with this statement – Wingham is a very liveable community with a number of natural and built assets that provide a unique amenity.

Who has directed these workers to damage our Brush this morning?

As stated above the works were not directed by anyone in a supervisory capacity.

Who directed the debacle at the Bight Cemetery?

As you would be aware an independent external investigation was undertaken in relation to this matter – I am unable to provide any further information as all staffing matters are confidential.

Who directed the removal of the Flintwood in our town square?

I can confirm that the works

were initiated by the individual that you spoke to onsite and were not directed by anyone in a supervisory capacity.

Has anyone been cautioned, disciplined or sacked?

As you would appreciate all staffing matters are confidential and I am unable to provide any of the information that you have requested.

Lastly, if you are implying that I as the Director of Liveable Communities has provided any instruction in relation to any of the above matters I would invite you to call me and I would be more than happy to discuss them further with you.

Kind Regards,
Paul De Szell

Director Liveable Communities

(It appears to the community that the workers are not supervised and there is little accountability. It seems they're set loose with chainsaws and trucks to do as they like. Do they know one tree from another? Nobody has been named over the vandalism of our Bight Cemetery. An internal report is just not good enough. Somebody needs to be in charge who is knowledgeable, qualified, trained, respectful of our heritage and ACCOUNTABLE. And Council should be hiring better quality and better qualified field staff. ED)

Choose Wisely!

The Minister for local Government, Shelley Hancock, recently announced that due to the Covid 19 outbreaks, the NSW Local Government elections have now been deferred to 4 December 2021.

While the announcement doesn't come as a surprise to many who have been following the spread of the virus throughout Sydney and the central coast and the NSW Government's feeble attempts at managing the crisis, it does come as a disappointment to many locals who have been looking forward to their opportunity to express their concerns and outrage at the ineptitude of the MidCoast Council through the ballot box.

Many residents watching the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, were surprised to see an advertisement screened on Prime 7 entitled 'Choose Wisely' featuring 12 locals of varying ages and backgrounds urging the local community through very clear statements such as to: 'Be informed', 'It's our future' 'Make your vote count' 'Vote for a person not a political party' 'Put our community first, 'Vote for a genuine independent'.

Former Emeritus Mayor of Greater Taree City Council, Paul Hogan, who funded the community service advertisement was delighted with the results.

"We want to encourage the community to think carefully about who they should vote for. Council is now a very big business which could play an important and positive role in our lives, so its essential that we have people with the right levels of expertise elected, and not just well meaning amateurs. It's a \$280 million a year business!"

"The current Council has failed on too many levels, and not just some of the elected Councillors, but the Administration. Things have to change. We need strong, intelligent leadership which can effectively direct the administration through strong financial management and sound policies. For this, you need people who understand how organisations of such scale operate and how to lead them."

"Councillors are elected to

represent the community and not be apologists for the failings of the Administration. The power balance has to be reversed and the elected Councillors need to be in charge of the Administration. So even though the election date was changed, we quickly updated the advertisement inserted the new date and continued to run it during the Olympics as we want people to think about and be informed when the election comes around."

Following the screening of the Choose Wisely Commercial, there has been a scramble to announce Groups around Taree, all planning to run at the December 4 elections, and rather curiously, all advocating to be 'Independents'. (Perhaps a topic to investigate another time.)

MidCoast Councillor Peter Epov, who is an actual independent, has not yet formally announced that he is running at the MidCoast Council Elections, was also concerned at the delay in the


election date:, saying-

"Whilst it is very disappointing that the election has been delayed, the health, safety and wellbeing of our community has to come first. The way things are evolving there is a strong possibility that the Delta variant may spread to us, and it only takes one person to create an outbreak."

"Hopefully this delay will give people some extra time to fully digest the significance of the next Council election, get to know the candidates that are running, as well as their capabilities, and to Choose Wisely!"

(The Manning Community News also hopes that residents will use the additional time to better understand who to vote for at the Council elections as the voting procedure can be complicated, and perhaps, also discern whom not to vote for! Ed.)

The Choose Wisely TV Commercial was headed up by Michelle Larin, Old Bar resident, and a talented infrastructure and projects lawyer, who formerly worked at MidCoast Council as the Legal and Property Manager.



Michelle Larin

On December 4
Don't Vote for Councillors who gave you:

The \$50 Million Masters Office Centralisation at the expense of local roads

Michelle Larin lives in Old Bar. She is a practising infrastructure and projects lawyer, with a decade of experience advising government bodies, statutory utilities and private developers on construction matters, including the procurement and delivery of infrastructure projects.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Could greed and meanness cost council millions?

Said Mr Martin, ‘MidCoast Assist came to the Union saying they believe that council has been charging clients the full amount available under the NDIS yet they’ve only been paying our members the on call allowance. ‘So we went Council and said, Look, there’s an easy fix for this – we can negotiate an enterprise agreement and make sure it’s all fairly and squarely plotted out so there’s no comeback on council or the clients. But the GM and Council came back to us and said we’re not having an enterprise agreement whatsoever. Now, I have not spoken to the GM but his HR representatives who made it quite clear they will not enter into negotiations for an enterprise agreement, whereas we offered a low cost option that sorts it out and fixes the problem once and for all. But Council won’t play ball with us. They’ve made threats

they’ll just shut the service down.’ The claim by the USU in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission is on behalf of 40 current employees. However in total, there could be up to 70 current and former employees who are owed back payments reaching back as far as 2015. ‘To my knowledge no other council has been taking advantage of this scheme and charging the maximum sleepover charge,’ said Mr Martin. ‘I’ve been in this job 23 years and I look after councils from Gosford to Tweed Heads and out to Cobar and this is the first time this has come up. It’s been going on since Great Lakes Council days. It doesn’t matter where it started, we have an obligation to fix it. This has come to the industrial commission twice in the last few months. As soon as it was brought to our attention we jumped on it when we believed

there’d been a breach of the award. So we went to council who told us basically to jump in the lake so we filed it in the industrial relations commission. And now it’s got to the point that if we don’t give up and go away Council have threatened to shut down MidCoast Assist. The council is aggressive, which seems to be the nature of the human resources sector, as I’ve dealt with them before.’ Mr Martin takes a personal interest in the case given he has a mentally disabled brother in a home, ‘and I know how the funding works and what he has to pay. The worst part is that the clients rely on MidCoast Assist for their daily activities, assistance and care.’ He adds, ‘Ultimately the buck stops with the General Manager, but a lot of work needs to go into negotiations for an enterprise agreement. They negotiated one when MidCoast Water was amalgamated with council, but this time I feel they’re hoping we’ll drop off but we’re not going to do that! The worst part is the clients are being charged the full amount allowable yet council is not prepared to pay the correct amount of money to the union employees!’ The Industrial Commission have told the parties to go away and sort it out.



‘Which I don’t think will be sorted given Council’s present attitude,’ says Mr Martin. ‘Which will leave a lot of people in the lurch.’ Those experienced in these matters estimate that an Enterprise Agreement might have cost Council around perhaps \$900,000. Adds Mr Martin, ‘We go back to the Commission in September and hopefully have it resolved, if not we’ll be pursuing it to the maximum – which could amount to millions of dollars owed.’ He points out that there’s specific awards and allowances for staff qualified in nursing, disability care and other areas. Adds Mr Martin, ‘We were originally only talking to Council about the overnight allowance but as they’re being so pig headed its blown out to claim for all these other allowances.’ MidCoast Assist MidCoast Assist employs over 200 people on a combination of a full, part time and casual basis. A quick look at some figures reveals what could be an ugly scenario - Going on Council’s figures on their website, MidCoast Council’s 2021/22 Budget Summary for MidCoast Assist, published on June 2021, projects revenue of \$8,683,946 and surplus of \$1,262,628, of which Council will absorb \$1,144,803 as internal charges.


Leaving a modest net surplus of around \$100,000. **Well that won’t fix a lot of roads. . . .** The ball is in Council’s corner it seems. Being kicked down the hall from HR to the GM’s door.

(We contacted the General Manager for a comment on an issue that affects over 200 staff and hundreds of aged and disability clients but it seems beneath him to bother so we received the following - Thank you for your enquiry to the General Manager regarding an Industrial Relations Commission matter relating to MidCoast Assist.


Unfortunately, we are not in a position to provide the information you have requested given that it relates to a staffing matter which is currently before the Industrial Relations Commission. It should be noted that any staff member or staff group has the right to pursue matters in the Commission. If I can assist with anything further please let me know.

Kind regards,
Marcelle Boyling
Manager Engagement, Communication and Education







WELCOME TO MIDCOAST ASSIST
Our team of friendly professionals has been providing a wide range of personalised support services to the local community for over 20 years.




Ageing Services




Disability Services




About MidCoast Assist



What's On?



Our staff



Contact us

A Little Bit About Rhubarb



Botanical name: Rheum rhabarbarum

Potential height: up to 1 metre

Best eaten in: an apple and rhubarb crumble with lots of custard!

So, if you haven't guessed already, I'm a bit of a fan of rhubarb (well desserts in general) but rhubarb crumble is one of my favourites. And with spring and warm days approaching it's the perfect chance to get one in for your own crumble or whatever recipe you enjoy it in too.

While it may be easy to eat it isn't always easy to grow. So I'd thought I'd use the opportunity to run through a few tips for success:

Prep- Plant rhubarb from June to September either on the edge of your vegie patch or in a separate garden bed or container where it can happily live undisturbed. I find afternoon shade is best when summer comes along. Full blazing sun on a 40-degree day can set them back and tends to make them shabby.

Where to grow- Rhubarb can be grown in the ground or in a container but for best results plant 90 centimetres apart.

Feed- Feed your rhubarb with a liquid nitrogen fertiliser every four to five weeks from early spring through to autumn to maximise your yield. It's not a 'must-do' but if you harvest a lot regularly then it's definitely beneficial.

Water- Rhubarb will grow best with regular watering, but good drainage is important as it hates wet feet. Water deeply during hot periods to encourage stem growth.

Protect- Rhubarb is a relatively hardy edible to grow but can be affected by aphids, whitefly and caterpillars. Check foliage regularly and squash or squirt off aphids with a sharp jet of water and remove caterpillars. If needed, try using an organic insecticide such as pyrethrum according to instructions which is safe to use of edibles and controls



aphids and whitefly.

Harvest- Harvest during spring and summer and pick from the outside stems first. Remove stems cleanly with a quick downwards and sideways action. To keep the plant producing stems always leave the

younger stems in the centre of the plant. If any flowering stems appear cut off at the base and feed with a liquid nitrogen fertiliser to encourage more foliage and stem growth.

And finally, a note of caution- **Toxicity-** The large leaves are beautiful

but shouldn't be included on the menu as they contain high concentrations of oxalic acid which is poisonous.

We've got some lovely crimson stemmed stock in now which seems to be taking advantage of the beautiful weather and

are powering away. Best get in quick if you're looking for one though- I just bought a bigger crumble tin! Happy gardening, Caitlin
Wingham Nursery & Florist
winghamnursery-andflorist.com.au



Shameless Scotty Strikes Out In Pub Test

The momentum is building to make integrity and accountability in government a major, defining issue at the next federal election. It is an important issue that goes to the very heart of the sustainability of our democracy.

Scott Morrison is shameless in denying any wrongdoing in the allocation of billions of dollars for blatant political purposes, to keep or win favour in key seats - sports, car park, regional and a host of other rorts - in his terms “nothing to be seen here”.

Yet, clearly, none of this would pass the “pub test”, being called out as pork barrelling - even as theft, fraud or corruption - in the use of public monies.

Moreover, with so many households and businesses struggling in recent years to make ends meet, concern has mounted as to how this money could have been allocated better to support them.

Or to reform/solve some of the big social issues that have been simply left to drift, in some cases for decades - issues such as child, aged and disability care, domestic violence and many others.

Not surprisingly, Morrison’s denials, failure to accept responsibility, or the need to be accountable have generally worn thin with a public that has become increasingly disgusted with each revelation of such largesse by the Auditor-General, or as admitted in questioning at Senate estimates hearings.

While initially Morrison attempted to stone wall the issue, acting as if beyond reproach, he has more recently tried to play it down, even to the point of having his Finance Minister Simon Birmingham - who is otherwise empowered to police government spending and finances - out in the media attempting to “normalise” this spending by claiming it is essential to democracy.

That they were election commitments, that pork barrelling has been a feature of all governments since time immemorial and other diversionary, distorting statements.

As a marketing type, Morrison cynically relies on people having short memories and takes the view, very Trumpian, that if you keep repeating something, over, and over, and over - no matter how inaccurate - people will be dulled into finally accepting it.

Morrison has also played politics with the idea of a national integrity and anti-corruption commission.

Sure, he committed to it about 1000 days ago and, sure, he has released an exposure draft of the enabling legislation, but all the latter did was expose just how disingenuous he is about genuine responsibility and accountability.

As drafted it was little better than a protection racket for ministers and their staff, and would not have been applicable to the rorts and related corruption mentioned above.

Morrison has also refused to bring on a parliamentary debate on the Integrity Bill proposed by independent Helen Haines.

However, this week Morrison was clearly pushed on the back foot by Labor announcing a commitment to establish a “powerful, transparent, and independent national anti-corruption commission” if successful at the next election.

This commission would “operate as a standing Royal Commission into serious and systemic corruption - by ministers and politicians and their personal staff, public servants, statutory office holders, government agencies, and other public officials.

It would also have the power to “follow the money”, to investigate private individuals and companies involved in such corruption.

Of course, the proof of the pudding depends on Labor winning government.

And how well such a proposal weathers caucus and other internal ALP processes, as well as how much substance survives in the new parliament.

However, it is an issue that could define Labor in a political system that has an enormous trust deficit with the public.

It would certainly be worth making it a major election issue, and fighting for it.

Of course, successive governments have been much more adept at cover-ups than accepting responsibility and being held to account.

Recall the Howard government’s wheat board scandal paying bribes to Saddam Hussein for wheat sales.

Just as conspicuously, the Howard government’s spying on the government of our then poor neighbour, Timor Leste, under cover of aid assistance, to gain advantage for key corporate mates in oil and gas negotiations in the Timor Sea, has never seen the PM or his foreign minister held to account for what was probably criminal activity in both countries.

Not to mention subsequent benefits that flowed to some from those corporate mates.

Indeed, the cover-up continues with the legal proceedings against the potential whistleblower and his lawyer being sustained, often in secret, for years after the 2004 bugging, while the guilty ones continue to enjoy their freedom.

To our Pentecostal PM, I refer Numbers 32:23: “Be sure your sin will find you out” - and this may just happen at the next election.

John Hewson is a professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU, and a former Liberal opposition leader.

So You Think You Know What’s Good For You?

Dr Noman Swan
Hachette Rrp \$39.99



This a book one hears as much as reads! Dr Swan’s gentle Glaswegian brogue is very familiar to us these days from his daily Coronacasts on ABC’s Radio National as well as his journalism and media appearances.

And typically his book is readable, relatable and refreshing. A handy reference too. It’s promoted as the “ultimate health guide from Australia’s most trusted

doctor” and it is down to earth, practical with often amusing anecdotes. One feels one knows him as a friend as much as a doctor with his no BS asides and advice. The index is excellent and the book covers almost every small and out there health worry. He doesn’t pontificate or make us feel guilty, and no, we don’t have to be resilient, brave and positive all the time. It’s okay to be vulnerable, fed up and downright shitty on occasion too.

From sex to salt to stress and social media, it seems he hasn’t missed a subject. It’s current, relatable, and readable.

It’s not like visiting the doctor at all, but sitting yarning with a friend over a wee dram or two of the good stuff.

DM

Dr NORMAN SWAN

So you think you know What’s Good For You?



**The ultimate health guide
from Australia’s most trusted doctor**

The Winter Road

True Crime Turns Into An Absorbing Non Fiction Read



Kate Holden
Black Ink Rrp
\$32.99

Kate Holden dedicates this book, based on true events, in part to... “the dispossessed, to the dismayed and to the defenders...”

Well count me among the distressed, dismayed and a defender where I can be when it comes to indiscriminate and illegal land clearing. This book cuts very close to home in the electorate of Lyne where MidCoast Council rules. And where we are losing prime koala habitat, breathtaking coastal land, and where there is illegal clearing, including murder if you count the demise of Michael McGurk in 2009 who allegedly had a hand in a land development at North Hawks Nest as well as nefarious Sydney dealings. The Hawks Nest deal subsequently stalled after McGurks murder.

But now the war over desecration and preservation continues as property prices soar.

I asked Kate to fill us in a little about her book which, with its lengthy and helpful Bibliography and notes, is a wonderful insightful read of more than a murder but also of the dispossessed, the psy-

chology, history and landscape as well as the motives of men for money. It culminates in a deliberate death, the result of a long duel between a land owner and a dedicated environmental officer. While it ended for Glen Turner in 2014, his murderer, landowner Ian Turnbull, died from heart disease in prison less than a year after being convicted.

But a war rages on in backrooms, kitchens, paddocks and plush city offices between some developers, realtors, farmers, councils and environmental warriors over loss of creatures’ habitat,

old growth forest, trees and native flora and fauna, along with prime agricultural land going under highrise luxury units and ugly crammed together, suburban housing estates. Profits from scrubby, seemingly forgotten blocks of land, can enrich the greedy in allegedly illegal and corrupt deals done in councils, backrooms, at the kitchen table or out on a road.

Is it happening in our backyard? Will MidCoast Council’s recent and rather imprudent decision to adopt the ‘Urban Release Areas Report’ which proposes widespread development areas right across the entire local government area, and refer it to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for endorsement, lead to the creation of a billionaire developers playground? One shudders to think what may happen around Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens, and North Arm Cove.

Time will tell.
DM.

(Here Kate outlines the bones of her insightful, compassionate and illuminating book.)

....

It is just over seven years since Glen Turner, a NSW environmental compliance officer, drove down Talga Lane with his colleague

Robert Strange and pulled their work vehicle to the side in order to take photos of what they strongly suspected was the last of the illegal landclearing by the Turnbull family of Croppa Creek, near Moree. That cold July twilight Turner didn’t have Ian Turnbull on his mind, and was on an expedition to examine a completely different case, but he knew that part of Croppa Creek well, as he’d been there half a dozen times a few years previously to investigate Ian, his son Grant and grandson Cory. He’d been looking at their activities on two wooded blocks in the Brigalow Belt, also the middle of the Golden Triangle, some of the richest agricultural land in the continent. Turner had watched, frustrated, as two years of departmental investigation had seen the Turnbulls face court, conviction and fines, but continue to defiantly push protected native vegetation until the last of the endangered ecological communities of mixed brigalow, belah and box woodlands were pushed. They were pushed, then raked, stacked and burned. It was the burning beacons of those last trees that caught Turner’s eye that night and made him pull over. Forty minutes later he was dead.

Ian Turnbull was the elderly patriarch of a wealthy land-developing family, starting his business in the 1960s—on the rising tide of industrial farming and pathological devotion to pesticides and herbicides—with grazing, but changing, through the purchase and conversion of nearly a dozen properties in the area, into broadacre cropping. Broadacre is big in the northwest of NSW, with vast blocks devoted to monoculture—wheat, barley, chickpeas and other grains—in a landscape that looks like brushed carpet. It used to be the traditional open woody grasslands of the Bigambul/Kamilaroi people, but those traditional owners were largely destroyed or moved off in the frontier wars of the 1840s, and though First Nations people remain a significant presence in the district the traces of their millennia of responsible custody have largely been removed through self-mulching soil, laser irrigation and nearly two centuries of colonial activity. The Turnbulls were not untypical of their community. They lived outside a small, prosperous agricultural settlement, they did local good works, they made lots

and lots of money through conversion, and they worked in a culture that felt itself virtuous through its codes of shared silence, its remoteness from urban know-it-alls, its conservative patriotic traditions and its staging of the great Australian narrative: making the land pay its way.

When I came to write *The Winter Road* about the killing of Glen Turner and the landclearing of the Turnbulls I immediately saw that this was a story with deep roots: the harvest, as it were, of something cultivated and sown long ago. The origins of the conflict between the men lie in Europe, in the ecology of wet, fertile Britain, the Enlightenment culture of improvement that was brought with the First Fleet, and the imperative, if the Colony were to have legitimacy, to declare the continent vacant or unused, the land *terra nullius*. From the outset non-Indigenous occupation of Australia has meant working the land, because Indigenous ‘non-use’ of the land was what made settlement legally possible. Improvement of the land meant making it work in the way that Europe works: growing European crops, rustling with European species, moving in European seasons. More, a man could have property here and if he had property he had rights. Fortunes were made under the explosion of land-grabbing squatting and then selection: politics was always part of the story. The land didn’t cooperate of course: ill-advised agriculture brought on erosion, biodiversity loss, salination, infertile soil, drought conditions and despair.

It’s a peculiarity of Australian culture that we feel more valiant the worse we’ve had to suffer. In the perplexity of experience and heartbreak on the land we made our heroes, the ‘battlers’ wiping sweat from their brows as they endlessly chopped trees, cleared scrub, tamed the land and forced it to produce what we expected. Just to raise a crop of wheat is an immense victory here, and a town like Croppa Creek is proud of its shining expanses of valuable produce.

Ian Turnbull was made of that culture, and when the two last forested blocks came up for sale he knew that the soil, nitrogen-rich below its shield of brigalow, would make a fortune. In the northwest land sells for thousands and thou-

sands of dollars a hectare; he could set up his grandson on one block, and help out his son Grant on the other. Everyone knew, however, that permission to clear would be hard to get, for brigalow is a threatened species. The Turnbolls began to clear even before the exchange of contracts, and despite warnings, cautions and inspections by the authorities, they continued. They continued to clear despite questions in the Senate, despite ecological testimony about the biodiversity on those blocks – despite the evidence that koalas, threatened and now protected, were present in the trees that were being felled by dozers throughout 2012 and 13.

In the end Turner and his colleagues did get the Turnbolls into the Land and Environment Court of NSW, and they were found guilty of illegal clearing. They appealed; they were given reasonable fines and remediation directions, and they appealed the conditions of those orders. No remediation was done. Instead the Turnbolls ploughed it all over, pulverised the surviving groundcovers, sprayed and sowed. There was only a little scrub left by then.

Glen Turner was just one hardworking member of a beleaguered department and the two men hadn't spoken for two

years but Turnbull decided it was his fault when, in July 2014, he received notice of a further prosecution. When an employee came through on the short-circuit radio saying Glen Turner was in the area watching that last bit of scrub burn, Turnbull wordlessly got into his ute, drove, paused to take out his .22, and went to find the two government men. Within an hour he was on the staff radio himself: 'Scott? It's me, Ian. I've just shot Glen Turner. I think he's dead.'

Turnbull pleaded manslaughter, claiming Turner had persecuted him and claiming to have been disordered of mind. He was convicted in 2016 of murder, sentenced to 35 years' prison, and died in his bed within the year, aged 81. The Turnbull estate is yet to pay out for the damages awarded to Robert Strange and Turner's family, while the two properties have recently been sold for millions of dollars, unremediated. On the anniversary of Turner's death people are encouraged to plant a tree.

Kate Holden.

This article was written on unceded Dharug country of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to elders of this country, and acknowledge their continuing connections here. Always was and always will be Aboriginal land. KH.



“China Blonde” A Memoir



Nicole Webb
\$29.95 rrp

Nicole, a former news presenter on Sky TV moved to China with her hotelier husband and small daughter in 2014 and stayed for three years.

This is a lighthearted take on China... which seems to bring out the anecdotes, high and low, in anyone who spends any time there.

Nicole is currently writing a second book set in Hong Kong where she and her husband lived for three years from 2010 before moving to China.

Events may have overtaken the setting of her books, but interesting to read how a foreign country can be seen through differing lens.

www.nicolewebbonline.com

Signed copies available online
Also available from Booktopia
and all good bookshops.

Facebook - Mint Mocha Musings
Twitter - @Nicoledwebb
Instagram - Mint Mocha Musings



Real Kultcha

Well, here we are boys and girls, it's August and we're still looking fine hereabouts - COVID wise. You should also know this is the first year I'm not going to Fiji due to COVID-19.

Mind you, I usually don't go because I'm poor! And how about that ding-a-ling the police caught asleep in his car just south of Forster! He was from somewhere in Sydney and should still have been there! What was he doing up here? He was bored and went for a drive. Yep, some mothers do have 'em, they move amongst us and they also breed! No wonder Our Glad is tearing her hair out! Which part of STAY SIT do those idiots have trouble processing?

What's been happening in the wonderful world of sport? Well, first off I should tie up a couple of loose ends regarding how The Cockroaches went - or to be truthful, didn't go. All was fine at my end: the big screen TV was working, the Esky and popcorn were FETHed, the headphones had new batteries and the heater was on. Cue The Cockroaches. I did say several months ago that when their backs are to the wall The Canetoads grow another leg and that happened again. It was a good game, we lifted the trophy but it should have been three zip. Next year.

And now because of two or three blokes who were moving some furniture from somewhere to somewhere else (and that included going to Melbourne and Adelaide), COVID-19 is off and running again. One news report said the blokes knew they were infected but still went. I can't believe somebody would be that stoopid but the result now seems to be we're all in lockdown again and the two major football codes have decamped to I don't know where! Mind you, I really don't need to know where they are because that's above my pay scale. That's what V'landys and McLachlan are paid their huge salaries to do. Me, I just have to sit in front of the TV and watch - unless of course, Collingwood is playing and then I do something more interesting, like floss the cat or polish the white side-walls on the car's fan belt! The big news of course, is the Tokyo Olympics have taken place, a year late, under huge threats from COVID, with the locals apparently dead against them even occurring. And just before they started one of our team was busted for taking drugs! He was an equestrian, hadn't then left for Japan but he allegedly commented it was just some smack he took socially. And that makes it all right does it, you ding-bat? And his horse was already in Japan! Yep, some mothers do have 'em!

By the time you get to read this

gem of English literature the Olympics will be over but I think I can speak for all of us and say our team has done us proud. At the time of writing we are sitting fourth on the medal tally and that means simply, we're punching way, way above our weight!

I've noticed also at these Olympics, the medals are presented to the athletes on a tray and they pick them up and put them around their own necks. Yep, that's another COVID solution for these games.

This year our media has also toned down it's jingoistic rhetoric and aren't blathering on about, and actually counting, the number of medals they say we're going to win. It's taken them a while to realise what they say doesn't actually mean it will happen and all it does is put unwanted pressure on the athletes. Mind you, I saw a press interview with heavies from the US swim team and one lady dribbled out loud that she'd be surprised (or words to that effect) if she didn't win all the medals available! That's the way we used to sound and it was MEGA UGLY. I think she won a bronze. Our swim team though, has also done brilliantly and are now the greatest team we've ever had. And to top it off, Brisbane has been granted the 2032 Olympics. Can't wait.

The Oz team overall had some withdrawals and surprise, surprise, Nick Kyrgios was first on that list. He didn't go to Tokyo because there'd be no crowds and he says he doesn't play his best without a crowd to play to. Oh please!. Another was female basketballer Liz Cambage. She's pulled out because of the pressure and the fact she'd have to live in a COVID bubble without her own support team. She told reporters she's " been having breakdowns in the car park, like non-stop panic attacks (and) hyperventilating ". Another to pull out was men's basketballer Ben Simmons. He had a terrible conclusion to his NBA season and decided to focus on his skills rather than go to Tokyo and that's a pity because he was missed.

The Galahs are somewhere in the world at the moment (please don't tell me - I'd rather not know) playing Bangladesh and it looks as if they couldn't win a raffle if they had the only ticket! They're pathetic though they did pick up a hat-trick! That may have put back my call-up but I'll keep you informed.

Talk at you next month,

The Hillside Critic



Your care is central at the HealthHub

TWO LOCATIONS

HealthHub Taree

15 Butterworth Lane, Taree

02 6552 5533

HealthHub Harrington

4, 1-5 Caledonia Street, Harrington

02 6556 1855

**24/7
care**



Antiques and Collectables

Collect the past and invest for your family's future. Enjoy a great hobby that lasts a lifetime. Collecting brings you joy, knowledge and an understanding of how far our society has come and where we have come from.

I hope you are keeping well and staying safe. Jen and I are looking forward to receiving our second Covid injection soon. It is inspiring to see the community caring for each other with the use of masks, sanitising and checking in at all venues. We really do care about each other!

Remember to visit our wonderful local Museum, in Wingham. The committee and volunteer team do a great job displaying past wares of the Manning and fantastic items of historical interest. Also remember some of our local businesses are doing it tough, at the moment and need our support.

The Tokyo Olympics have given a welcome distraction to the health warnings and restrictions of Covid. These young representatives are inspiring Australians, not only from a point of view of what they have achieved but the wonderful displays of sportsmanship, comradery and sheer determination that they project. We are lucky that the parents and coaches of these wonderful athletes are instilling the skills of life rather than just winning into them.

Kyle Chalmers was a great example. I loved the way he embraced and congratulated Dressler of the USA



straight after their 100m Freestyle final and then, in his interview, confirming his love for his family, especially his grandparents and his desire to be with them. If young people of today are being taught these skills Australia's future will be in good hands.

Mikimoto K kichi (25 January 1858 – 21 September 1954) was a Japanese entrepreneur who is credited with creating the first cultured pearl and subsequently starting the cultured pearl industry with the establishment of his luxury pearl company Mikimoto.

On April 18, 1985, the Japan Patent Office selected him as one of Ten Japanese Great Inventors.

The company was ranked as one

of the world's most luxurious brands by Women's Wear Daily Magazine and Mikimoto was considered one of the best Japanese financial leaders of the 20th century. He is also known as the founder of Mikimoto Pharmaceuticals, a company specialising in beauty products containing pearl calcium. Mikimoto Pearl Island is named after him. In addition, the «Phoenix Mikimoto Crown» used by Miss Universe winners as well as the pageant crown used by Miss International is credited to his work.

Mikimoto's father was a shop owner. He was the eldest son. At age 11, Mikimoto's father fell ill. He left school at the age of 13 and sold vegetables to support his family. Seeing the pearl divers of Ise unloading their treasures at the shore in his childhood started his fascination with pearls. At the age of 20, Mikimoto noticed the many flaws of pearls as he judged a pearl exhibition in 1878. This began Mikimoto's search for the development of the perfect pearl.

In 1888, Mikimoto started his first pearl oyster farm at the Shinmei inlet on Ago Bay with his wife and partner Ume. On 11 July 1893 he was able to create hemispherical cultured pearls.

The pearls were made by seeding the oyster with a small amount of moth-

er of pearl. He introduced his pearls at a marine products exposition in Norway in 1897 and began an export business. Mikimoto was now making spherical pearls that were indistinguishable from the highest quality natural ones and sales continued to rise.

On 21 September 1954, Mikimoto died at the age of 96. Mikimoto's personal memorabilia are displayed at Mikimoto Pearl Island Memorial Hall, a museum in Toba, Japan. His companies pearl jewellery continues to be prized by people all around the world.

Here are some of my regular local haunts for general antiques, they might supply a treasure for you. Clancy's Secondhand near MRD Hospital in High St, Taree. Barry at Isadora's Antiques – at the Valley Fair in Victoria St, Taree, Col Second Hand in Commerce St Taree, Sue at Delinquent Funk – in Isabella St and Dave and my new shop (Antiques & Old Wares) also in Isabella St, in Wingham. Call in and say hello. Happy hunting!

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

**Phone Rex – 0427 880 546.
Take care & stay safe!**

You gotta be keen in winter!

Beach fishing during the cooler months brings rewards if you are prepared to challenge the elements.

Chilly winds accompanied by heavy rain do manage to dampen the enthusiasm, while rough seas mean our beaches are off limits to most. Still there are those who cannot be put off no matter what the conditions.

The Marklew boys, Charlie and Harry, from Soldiers Point don't know it's cold as they spend their week-ends fishing, while most of us are wrapped in a blanket in front of

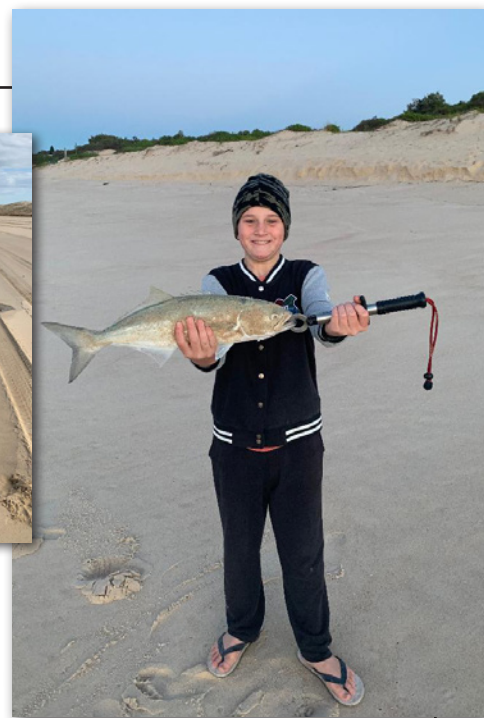
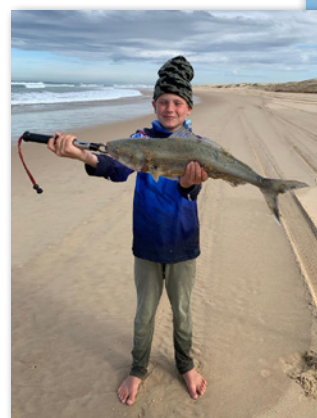
the heater.

On their most recent beach fishing adventure the boys tangled with thumping salmon and cracker tailor. Tossing a pilchard just behind the shore break the boys had real battles on their hands when the tailor and salmon took off.

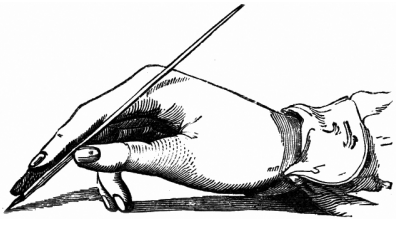
How lucky we are to have some of the best fishing beaches along the entire coastline with bream, whiting, mullet, tailor and salmon gathering!

If you're young, fit and keen – get out there and good luck!

By the way - the investigation by EPA and DPI Fisheries into beach worm deaths on Yagon Beach in June have found no evidence of pesticide contamination. The conclusion was that it was a natural event caused by a combination of beach erosion and fresh groundwater outflows. The findings completely clear the involvement of NPWS and their spraying of Bitou Bush.



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



Your Say...

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

Dear Editor,

I have become so aware of Australia's virulent anti-Chinese campaign that I have taken to checking articles in the press. Last month's "The fleet that empties our oceans" by Reese Halter in this paper is a case in point.

The article stated that "China's fishing armada operates more hours than the next 10 biggest nations combined." What does that mean? And is it true?

In 2020 statista.com produced these figures for countries fishing, in terms of catch.

Top 10 fishing nations worldwide in 2018 (in million metric tons): China 14.65, Indonesia 7.23, Peru 7.17, India 5.32, Russia 5.11, USA 4.74, Vietnam 3.35, Japan 3.13, Norway 2.49, Chile 2.12

So, in terms of catch, yes, China is at the top of the list but it takes around 25% of the top 10 countries, not the 10 times as much as inferred by the article. Why was the article so weighted against China? Why did it only deal with Chinese fishing vessels?

I am in no way questioning the problem of overfishing in the world however it does not help to give such a distorted view of the problem. Australian racism towards the Chinese has a long history. Perhaps it's time we did acknowledge that we are indeed part of Asia and that we are well placed to benefit from China's emergence as an economic superpower.

Christine Olsen
Brunswick Heads 2483

To the Editor,

For a couple of months I have been walking along the Manning River enjoying the ambiance and admiring all the free 'merchandise' available.

I feel somewhat guilty having kept this 'shopping' experience to myself. The 'shop' is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

There is a down side: the supply is not consistent. So many items left thoughtfully spread out! - Face masks, clothing including shoes, bedding and towels. Other articles are takeaway containers for

anything Kentucky Fried Chicken might sell: pizzas, sausage rolls, slushies. Drinks are often freely available: bottles of water, soft drinks. I once found a full tobacco pouch. Money and lolly wrappers are often arranged together.

I must, however, issue a warning that some items left are not recommended for reuse - eg condoms, tampons, plastic bags full of dog poo and the little plastic bags commonly used by drug dealers. Since I have mentioned the word "poo" do not look longingly at the loo paper

which is stained brown and most frequently seen beside an undiagnosable mound. I know loo paper

often runs out in shops, but I stress do not reuse any stained brown.

If you happen to have children with you please do not encourage them to examine what looks like very large furry caterpillars. I remember as a child the brown furry caterpillars trundling around in long columns, but these large furry riverside 'caterpillars' are actually disowned dog poo.

By taking advantage of the free shopping you will be doing your bit to help our environment and thus save our precious planet.

Trish Congreve
Taree

Dear Editor -

The latest IPCC report on the world's climate is the loudest wakeup call we will get before it's too late. The safe 'guardrail' of 1.5 degrees in global heating set at the Paris talks will be reached within ten years. After that, temperatures go ever higher, bringing more severe heatwaves, droughts and bushfires, or in a wet pattern more high intensity rainfall leading to disastrous floods.

It's happening now in the northern summer, we've seen it here on the north coast in the past two years, and there is much more to come. There is now no doubt climate change is caused by human

activity, burning coal oil and gas, and destroying forests. The report confirms that record-breaking extreme weather is virtually impossible without the influence of climate change.

Some changes are now irreversible. Rising sea levels, melting glaciers, ocean acidification and the loss of coral reefs. The UN Secretary General calls it a 'Code Red' warning for humanity. So, how much longer are voters going to support state and federal governments making the problem worse?

Australia is the world's largest exporter of gas and the third largest exporter of fossil fuels. Coalition governments are approving and funding vast new coal and gas projects, yet they have very few ef-

fective emission reduction efforts.

I cannot help wondering why these governments listen to medical science experts while ignoring climate science experts. The IPCC report is written by 234 scientists, reviewing 14 thousand research papers. No doubt campaign donations from the coal and gas industries and winning seats in coal mining areas account for much of this climate policy criminality.

All politicians should put our safety and security uppermost. That's the number one priority of governments in a democracy. Yet they continue to ignore these warnings at our peril.

Harry Creamer,
Port Macquarie

Your Local Silk Flower Specialist



FLORASENSIA

EVERLASTING FLORAL CREATIONS

Call Elaine on
0404 474940



❖ Weddings
❖ Special Events
❖ Great Gift Ideas
❖ Vintage Designs



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

Publisher and Editor DI MORRISSEY

Printed by Spotpress, Sydney

Published by The Manning Community News Pty. Ltd. Mondrook NSW

Distribution BORIS JANJIC AND FRIENDS

Online edition: www.manningcommunitynews.com

The Manning Community News is a member of the Country Press Association of NSW

The Manning Community News is an independent newspaper run by volunteers. It has no affiliation with any organisation, religious or political group.

To advertise or contact The Manning Community News email editor@manningcommunitynews.com