

# The Manning Community News

NOV / DEC 2022

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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



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Ellie and  
Frankie!

## THERE ARE NO LAWS PROTECTING KOALAS

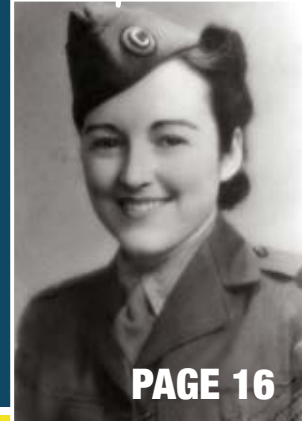
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## THROUGH HER EYES:

Australian  
Women  
Correspondents  
from Hiroshima  
to Ukraine.

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# OH DEAR... HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

It appears that students, teachers at the Wingham Brush School, the people at the Post Office, passers-by, let alone the council workers at the Wingham Library, had no idea that the merry scraping, water pressure removal of layers of old paint, scattering dust and scales of paint residue hither, thither and yon, was spreading dangerous and potentially deadly lead poisoned paint.

Someone must have finally figured it out as the old building was suddenly shrouded, planked up and patched in silver band-aids to stop flakes of possibly lead paint becoming airborne.

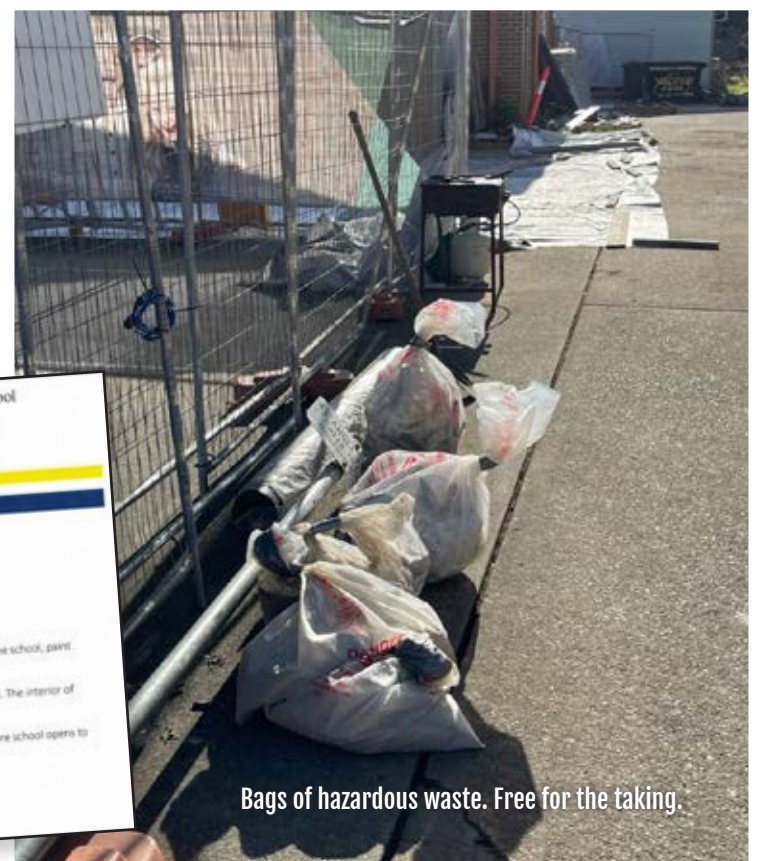
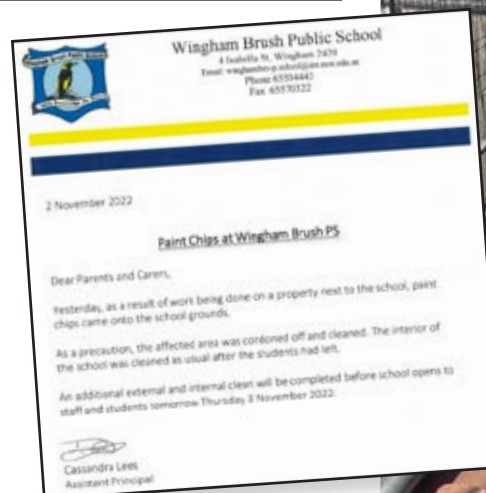
However there was no urgent message to the community, teachers, students and parents that children, as well as adults in the vicinity, could have been exposed to a highly deadly substance.

Eventually someone must have informed Council of this major public health hazard. However, true to form, it seems they hunkered down in denial over yet another monstrous and dangerous stuff-up.

Visitors to the Post Office and walking past might have twigged something was afoot at the appearance of barricades and bulging multi-wrapped bags labelled, 'Toxic, Poison,

*Dangerous, Can cause cancer, do not puncture*' left standing around. (Possible temptation for curious, malevolent or dishonest youth to carry away and toss in someone's front yard!)

Said school Principal Kylie Seaman, 'We didn't even know the cleaning of the Library was going to be done. We've known all the way along about the extension at the back but this whole thing was a surprise. I'm working with council's project manager and he lets me know where they're up to, but the cleaning just started and we weren't informed,' said Mrs Seaman sounding very cross, adding, 'When we saw what was happening and a member of the community pointed it out to us that it could be a problem, I straight away called in our Depart-



Bags of hazardous waste. Free for the taking.

ment of Education team to clean up and take samples to test. A specialist came from Newcastle and they swabbed everything down and cleaned and so we sent a message home to the parents that DOE were cleaning and that it is safe for the kids to go back into those rooms. I closed the canteen and a classroom as I didn't want students walking around to as the fences were down.'

Council kept silent and failed to immediately issue a public statement regarding the incident. Under the law they are required to inform various agencies including WorkSafe NSW, the Environmental Protection Agency, the NSW Health Department, and the NSW Department of Education.

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## LEAD POISONING

Lead paint contamination, especially for young children is as serious, if not more so, than asbestos inhalation. Some council workmen were seen shirtless and without the specific apparatus and PPE gear.

Council's failure to issue a public statement regarding the incident is a dreadful indictment of rushing to cover asses before warning the public. (Think Bight Cemetery fiasco. Years later still unfixed and no-one held accountable. One has a horrible feeling – could the same bloke be responsible? Who tells the workmen what to do? With whom does the buck stop?)

Wingham Councillor Peter Epov was shocked when he heard via the Wingham grapevine what had happened -

*"I am stunned that the Wingham community was not advised of this incident. I am seeking urgent information from the General Manager. My principal concern at this time is for the workers who were directed to undertake the high-pressure cleaning and I hope that they were all wearing the appropriate PPE gear; and that the appropriate testing of the lead levels in their blood has now been undertaken, and I am also particularly concerned for the children at Wingham Brush School who may have either been directly or indirectly affected."*

*Questions of responsibility; what all this will now cost Council, and further delays to the library project will be addressed at the appropriate time."*

## LIBRARY FACELIFT

The renovation and the expansion of the Wingham Library was undertaken by Council's 'Open Spaces' section which is under the 'Liveable Communities Division.' This is the same division responsible for the debacle at the Bight Cemetery (which is still unresolved after 3 years) along with the Taree Hockey fields where Council had to stump up approximately over \$400,000 to pay for 'unanticipated' earthworks, which some informed sources attribute to poor project planning and scoping and the Hockey Association ended up paying some of that extra cost.

## PROJECT DELAYS & BUDGET BLOWOUTS

Unbeknownst to the public the troubled Wingham Library project has been plagued with delays, including significant cost blow outs since it was first announced in June 2020. The project was initiated because of a

government grant of \$500,000 which was to be matched with \$400,000 from Council's Section 94 Contributions.

In early 2021, Council announced that it was working through a tender process for the library project and that the successful builder would start in early March (2021) with the expectation that the library would be closed for 3 months whilst the work was being completed.

A successful tenderer was appointed yet no work was carried out as it was discovered the council designs did not meet current building codes. Then some nine months later, around November 2021, Council re-tendered the entire project.

In 2022, no work was carried out until an announcement was made that the Wingham Library would be closing on 24 June for a period of 4 months in order to complete the works and the budget for the project was now to be \$1,000,000. (Some estimate that figure could now double.)

It's unlikely that the library will re-open this year.

At the Council Meeting of 7 November, a further \$104,000 was approved for the Wingham Library Project but no reference to, nor was there a report pertaining to, the lead paint contamination which occurred at the end of October.

## HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

The protocols around working heritage and historic buildings are not only well known, but are very clearly documented though a myriad of legislation and publications and clearly defined protocols.

Council employs Asset Managers who are responsible for the maintenance of 'our' assets and the preservation of an Asset Register. That Register should clearly identify the issues and risks associated with all Council properties.

When any work is to be undertaken on any Council Asset, an Asset Manager should brief the Project Manager on the status of the asset

and any potential risks.

In this instance any competent Project Manager should also understand that the heritage Wingham School of Arts Building, housing the library, was built in 1907, so inevitably there was always going to be a high concentration and some exposure to lead based paint used prior to 1970 where the lead concentration could have been up to 50%.

## REGULATIONS

WorkSafe NSW is very clear through published material and the NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 regarding working safely with lead-based paints:

*"A lead process carried out at a workplace is constituted by "using a power tool, including abrasive blasting and high pressure water jets, to remove a surface coated with paint containing more than 1% by dry weight of lead and handling waste containing lead resulting from the removal".*

The "requisite practice" means that before any such work is to be carried out, a site-specific "Safe Work Method Statement" needs to be developed, after which all workers on that task are to be briefed on the work and then be required to sign the 'Statement' confirming their understanding before the work is commenced. **Did this happen?**

## MARTIN BRIDGE

Anyone traversing the Martin Bridge in Taree over the past two years would have seen the white cocoons and ventilation system that were progressively placed around sections of the bridge to quarantine the possibility of any lead paint dust escaping. Could there have been any clearer warning sign or notice to people working in the building game to be aware of lead paint and other toxic pollutants.

The Wingham Public Library is a

lovely gracious building one of many in the town which sadly have been pulled down. And replaced with what? No doubt knowing the previous loss of heritage buildings, the community was thrilled to see the Library get a make-over – even if it was going to cost a bundle. Some did wonder why rooms upstairs in the library are being done up when they are not open to the public and rarely used. Unfathomably the stairs to this underutilised private space are being replaced with a lift.

What's the "makeover" of the Wingham Library going to cost now!

But the major issue. . . apart from the horror of anyone being diagnosed with lead poisoning, is how the whole matter has been handled by council. Yet again.

Said Kylie Seaman, 'When we were told by our DOE people that the school was clear and the soil tests were ok we sent a second message home to the parents that DOE said that it is safe for the kids to go back into those rooms. However they are ripping up the basketball court as a precaution.'

And was there any lead contamination?

'We have gone by what the DOE have told us, that we're clear. If Council find anything in their tests then it's up to them to disclose it,' said Mrs Seaman tartly.

Good on Mrs Seaman for being proactive! (She doesn't seem to want to have much truck with Council by the sound of it!)

## TRANSPARENCY

How gullible does Council think we are? And as we've all learned, it all comes out in the end no matter how hard the council tries to keep a lid on things.

Wouldn't it be better if Council was upfront and honest and go to the community and say, - "look, we stuffed up here, this is what happened and

*why, and so this is what we're doing about it - like holding the person/people responsible to account – and we're really sorry and will make sure it never happens again."*

People in positions of authority who don't do their job properly should be moved on, retrained, apologise and amends made quickly, swiftly and openly.

Dream on, I hear you say.

DM





# THERE ARE NO LAWS PROTECTING KOALAS

On 29 October when I attended the NSW Koala Conference, forebodingly entitled “The Vanishing”, I experienced a range of complex emotions. Whilst a sense of applied hope must be adopted communally to give energy and endurance to the essential recovery of koalas in NSW, a pervasive sense of frustration and despair was the strongest lingering impression.

The Conference, held at Coffs Harbour, was convened by long-standing and respected former Liberal Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Catherine Cusack, whose high ethical standards meant she famously crossed the floor and clashed with parliamentary colleagues on issues relating to the environment, human rights, and the governmental response to the north coast floods.

Over 180 people, from diverse backgrounds and interests, including several from our local MidCoast Council area, took part in the conference. There was also a large online audience. Over 20 speakers provided engaging, challenging, and thought-provoking presentations across themes relating to the scientific evidence of the koala crisis, regional reports from koala risk hotspots, koala politics, the Aboriginal perspective and practical koala recovery actions.

## GREED AND MISMANAGEMENT

Independent researcher, Dr Steve Phillips, has been at the forefront of koala population and biological research and monitoring for over four decades. Dr Phillips confirmed that habitat loss and modification is the prevailing threat, with other threats being synergistic to this root cause.



Photo Boris Janjic (in his front garden!)

His presentation traced the extent of government mismanagement of koalas in NSW and the destructive force of greed in native forest logging, agriculture, and development. He highlighted how deliberate political interference and obfuscation has polarised and hamstrung conservation. Interestingly, Dr Phillips recognised explicitly the presence of a highly significant koala population in our own Tinonee area.

Impactful presentations by Dr Phillips, Dr Kara Youngentob and Professor Mark Krockengerber reinforced that koalas are “landscape” species. Effective protection relies on preserving or restoring the quality of habitat that meets the needs of the complex social networks of koala populations. MidCoast Council’s “Koala Safe Spaces” concept therefore has substantial merit. It remains

to be seen if this can be delivered on the ground in the context of NSW politics.

An “around the grounds” look at koala populations in centres such as Port Macquarie, Campbelltown and Gunnedah gave pause to reflect that nothing can be taken for granted in koala conservation. The combined forces of stress, disease and climate change has wrecked the population of koalas across the Liverpool Plains. Here, the koala was so numerous and apparently so robust, that Gunnedah proclaimed itself as the koala capital. That was in 2010! And now, only 12 years later, the population there may be functionally extinct; it has declined so much, so fast.

## BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

The salient Welcome to Country by Gumbaynggirr Elder, Uncle

Micklo Jarrett, was a sublime frame to a recognition that the destruction of koalas is coincident with the destruction of Aboriginal knowledge and their dispossession of Country. Nathan Brennan from the Gumbaynggirr Good Koala Country Plan spoke passionately about Indigenous led koala recovery. Catherine Cusack called for a new paradigm of custodianship and care and the relinquishment of a 230-year pattern of power, control, and exploitation over nature in Australia. This

is the pattern that

has led to our biodiversity crisis, of which the koala typifies. And if we cannot preserve the koala, a unique Australian icon, what hope is there for all nature and wildlife, and indeed, ourselves?

Candid insights into the NSW State politics of koalas and the insidious NSW coalition “koala wars” induced perhaps the highest states of despair and frustration. Koala legislation, despite the government rhetoric, were described as “complex, contradictory, confusing, shambolic laws that actually facilitate the continued loss of koalas and their habitat”. Laws are not protecting koalas! And all in attendance recognised that the koala cannot be preserved, let alone doubled (as is the NSW Government



# ELLIE'S NEW FRIEND

Boris's granddaughter Ellie has a new pal. They live on an equestrian centre in the Hunter Valley.

**E**llie is nearly three and was pretty excited when they found a baby magpie that had mostly likely fallen from its nest. Or, as Ellie's dad Jeremy suggested, maybe mum pushed the bird out as he/she seemed a bit of a silly runt.

Ellie insisted they look after it. Not knowing its gender they called it Frankie.

Frankie adopted Ellie immediately, never letting her out of sight. But became very sulky when Ellie set off to playschool. Frankie waits and watches for her to come home and instantly flies to her shoulder.

They play together on a swing and have made up games to play. Frankie also likes to hang out with Ellie in the stables. Ellie feeds him worms and meat and special tidbits. Sometimes he steals some of her toast or fruit.

If hungry through the day Frankie flies around the house to find Ellie or her Mum and pecks at the door or window to be let in.

Frankie sleeps in a box in the stables, though has

had a few sleepovers in Ellie's pretty bedroom.

Frankie is growing up and eats heaps. Three or four times a day and if Ellie isn't around there's a knock at the door or window for Kat, Ellie's Mum, to hand out the food.

Frankie is taking longer flights around the property now, but always comes home to Ellie. She understands Frankie might leave home one day to set out on his/her own adventures. Just like she will one day.

In the meantime a little girl and a squawky maggie are the best of pals.  
**DM**





# IT'S A CON JOB!

## AUKUS is a fig leaf for US plans to base its forces in Australia

**AUKUS, the security partnership formed by Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, is many things to many people and organizations.**

Conceptually, it is a mess. The right-wing media in Australia refer to the AUKUS Agreement. Yet there is no agreement covering the many things in the public domain claimed to be a part of AUKUS.

The only agreement relates to the exchange of information on nuclear propulsion technology for submarines. This agreement was hastily put together to provide cover for the notion of AUKUS.

By any yardstick, AUKUS is a con job. The talk of senior UK, US and Australian defense officials implies that Australia will build/purchase nuclear submarines from UK/US sources to be ready by 2040 at the earliest. Politicians from all the three countries parrot these statements. Notwithstanding, submarine experts from the UK and the US have said over recent days that there is no capacity to make nuclear submarines for Australia, and they are way behind schedule with their own plans. These experts say their shipbuilding yards do not have the capacity to build their own submarines, let alone Australian submarines.

In addition, were it to go ahead Australia would break the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The convoluted arguments put forward to try and get around the problem have cut no ice with the international community, the United Nations and Australia's neighbors, including New Zealand and Indonesia. Other Pacific neighbors have not raised the issue yet, preferring to keep their powder dry for their lobbying to convince Australia of the need for urgent climate change actions.

Expertise to build and service the submarines would need to be imported from the US. Australia does not have the skills or technological base to do complex nuclear related tasks itself.

How were proposals allowed to get to this point without input from those charged with manufacture? Clearly the idea of Australia acquiring nuclear submarines was a political

smokescreen and remains so in the face of a compliant Western media. The smokescreen was to hide the fact that the US wishes to base nuclear submarines in Australia.

The remarkable thing is the extent to which senior members of the Australian defense establishment and political class have been prepared to go along with what is clearly a fiction. Australian naval personnel are to receive training on UK and US nuclear submarines and presumably what the US has in mind will be joint crewing arrangements to give a form of legitimacy to talk of an Australian nuclear submarine capability.

Both the US and Australia have talked of future interoperability of their armed forces. In recent times this has morphed into integration. All this is bandied about under the loose umbrella of AUKUS. None of this has been put before the Australian parliament or put to the Australian people.

So, at this stage what do we know about AUKUS?

We know that it is being driven hard by the US. We know that the UK, apart from sharing intelligence, is pretty much a sleeping partner. Its involvement was driven by the Boris Johnson government, which was desperate to secure its own trade deal with the US. It is hard to imagine the UK extending itself and operating east of the Suez for any length of time. If for no other reason than it can't afford to. The UK is broke.

The US thinks it is being very clever and cunning in hiding its plans for Australia behind the faux submarine deal. What it appears to have in mind is using Australia, mainly the north of Australia, to intimidate and confront China.

It wants access to the facilities in North Australia and it wants many of these facilities upgraded, such as the Tindal air force base in the Northern Territory. The US Marines have been given the former First Armoured Regiment barracks in Darwin. If it isn't already happening the US wants the Fremantle naval base, HMAS Stirling upgraded to facilitate US nuclear submarines. They also want a submarine base built on the east coast of Australia.

lia.

All of this is proposed in terms of joint operations, but of course all operations will be US dominated, which means US control and command. The US will want to monitor, if not control, the air space of northern Australia and the ocean in a wide arc north of Australia. This will be achieved from a command center in or near Darwin, which would be known as a joint command centre. It is surprising how quickly all this has come about.

The US plans and proposals would significantly undermine Australian sovereignty. The US took advantage of the ignorance of some Australian politicians to push through its plans. The surprising thing is how quickly and readily the new Australian Labor Government embraced the proposals. This can probably be sheeted home to the fact that the incoming government kept most of the key foreign policy and defense advisers from the previous Morrison government.

The really worrying thing is there have been no formal discussions related to the many matters being bandied about in the media as being AUKUS arrangements and nothing related to the matters outlined above has been tabled in the Australian Parliament.

An atmosphere of hysteria related to China has been created and fed by the US and sympathetic media outlets which has enabled and allowed the US to get what it wants from Australia in terms of an anti-China base for future operations supported by a naive government and public service and several prominent anti-China "think tanks", all under the auspices of an arrangement which exists in name and gossip only. AUKUS is a dangerous new religion preparing for a crusade.

*The author is a retired Australian diplomat, political commentator and author who has served with Australian outposts in Africa and Asia, among other places. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

**Bruce Haigh**

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target), while its' habitat is being lawfully and unlawfully cleared and developed and logged on an industrial scale. Deliberately insipid land clearing laws and absent or toothless regulators facilitate the chronic destruction of habitat and prevent any chance of koala recovery. Doubling the NSW koala population is unachievable when the NSW Government has not yet addressed, and seems unwilling to address, the principal cause of decline – the loss of habitat.

All the regional partnerships, dollars for tree planting and genuine efforts of well-intentioned Council environmental staff, regional koala project officers and local volunteers will not protect koalas in the current context of pervasive and destructive land clearing laws and destructive forest practices across NSW.

### THE NATIONALS DON'T SEEM TO CARE

The NSW Government has boasted that it has the goal of doubling the koala population of the state by 2050. It now seems clear that when this announcement was made it was little more than a thought bubble uttered for naked political purposes. The recent attempt by the Government, initiated by the always anti-environment National Party, to loosen controls on the harvesting of native forests on private land is another example of the fact that it is not really serious about protecting koalas. Thankfully there was sufficient opposition in the Parliament to defeat this ill-thought-out proposal.

The perception of hope that was generated from the conference related to the feeling amongst participants that "enough is enough". Previous experience has shown that a mobilised community can effect positive change. Relevant examples include the end of rainforest logging in the 1970's, the stopping of the Franklin Dam in the 1980's and the refusal of plans for coal seam gas and Rocky Hill coal mining in the Gloucester area.

There is still hope that a mobilised community can pressure the NSW Government to conserve koalas.

On a more positive note, the Gloucester Environment Group has a Koalaways program where volunteers plant koala friendly trees on private properties in the area. This has proved to be very popular with many landowners and there is presently a waiting list. This activity would not be possible without the enthusiastic encouragement and support of the MidCoast Council and staff for which the Environment Group and local koalas are grateful. Interested property owners can get on board by contacting Di Montague on 0419 880 804.

### John Watts

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

# COUNCIL CRUSHES A DREAM BUSINESS

Karen Gilbert and her husband Ian bought 100 beautiful acres outside Tinonee in 2018 planning to earn a living off the land.

**M**idCoast Council turned their dream into a nightmare.

Explains Karen, "We started with beef cattle but in 2019 the drought forced us to sell most of the herd as we could not afford to feed them. We then discovered YouCamp.

This was a new concept set up for farmers. It was an incentive to earn additional income off unused land where you allow people to camp in tents or caravans on your property. It was like the AirBnB for campers.

We did really well in our first 12 months. People loved it and our little campsite surrounded by the creek grew from 2 to 10 firepits. We named our campsite The Meadow at Bluebell Hill.

In 2020 YouCamp got bought out by Hipcamp and bookings increased. In our first year of running The Meadow we earned a Hipcamp Award for Best Off Grid Campsite in NSW. We came 3rd place!

Last year 2021 we won 2nd Place (out of 1500 campsites in NSW). We welcomed over 5000 visitors who came in swags, tents, RVs, caravans and converted buses. Everyone was self-sufficient as we had no amenities.

People would come and go and we never received a single complaint. It

was proving a really popular business and we were the biggest and best Hipcamp in the MidCoast Council jurisdiction. At the last count there are over 150 Hipcamps within the MCC boundary.

In January 2021 a MCC compliance officer came knocking. Apparently the MCC knew about Hipcamps operating but they did not approve. The compliance officer told us to get a DA or shut up shop. When I argued there were hundreds operating locally, he replied that the same fate would apply to all Hipcamps and AirBnB's in this area.

In early March 2021 we attended a DAP meeting with staff from MCC Environment, Water/Waste, Roads. We told them we were not providing any amenities. It was just a 5-acre grassy meadow where people brought their own water and dealt with their own waste - this is known as Primitive/Off Grid camping. What part of that needed a DA? There was no development!

Council told us in the circumstances we wouldn't have to do much more as we had covered most of what was needed but could we do a Statement of Environmental Effects, get a bush fire report done and a site map showing entry/exit etc. They were positive

about it all. Said it would be approved. They supported our initiative. We came away feeling relieved.

Over the next 8 months, I spent thousands on a Bush Fire Assessment, a Town Planner to help me with the DA and an engineer to draw up a site map. We also invested \$20,000 on regrading and gravelling the main laneway to The Meadow so it could cope with heavy traffic. We submitted all the paperwork and looked forward to the approval.

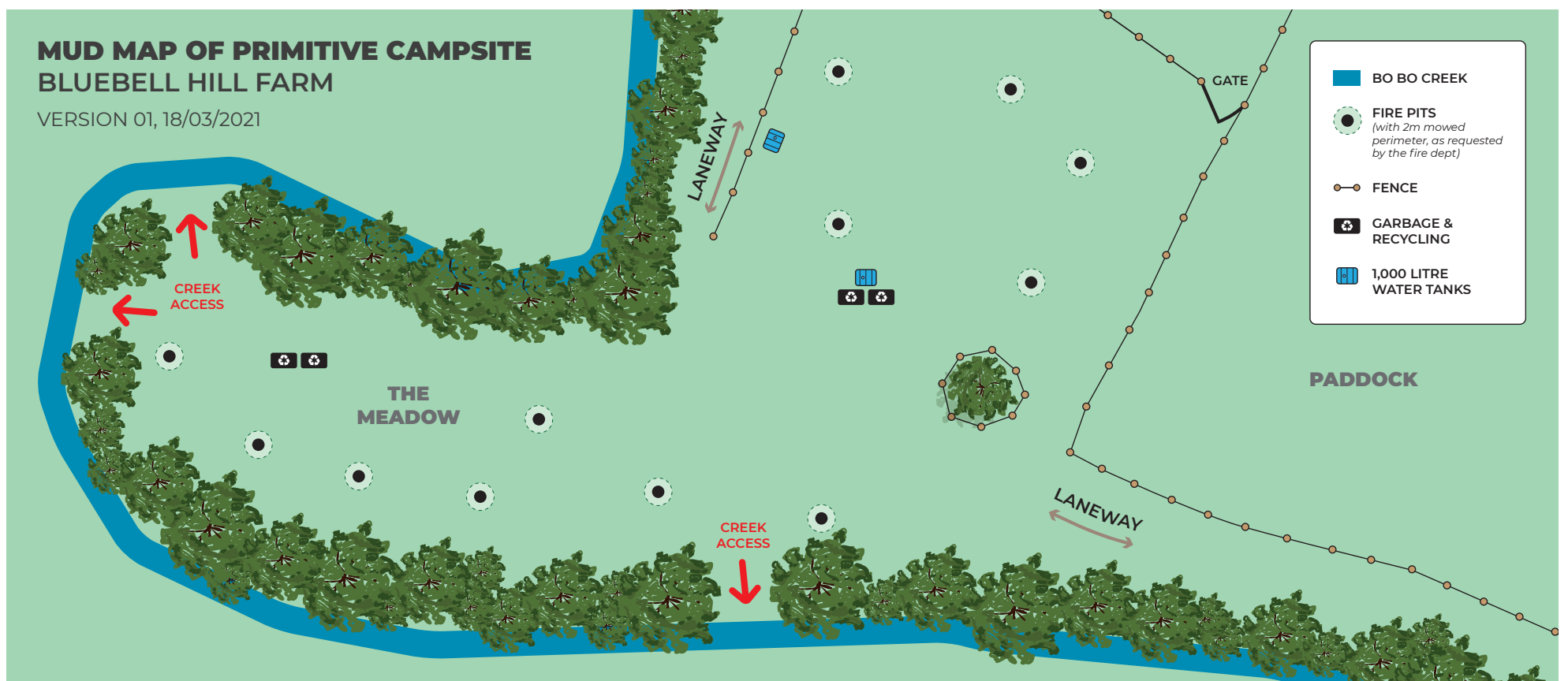
Then in October 2021 things changed. All of a sudden, a Flood Engineer got involved. He had not been there at the DAP meeting, had never been out to see us and had never been mentioned to us. He wrote a letter which stated in his opinion we couldn't have camping in The Meadow in case of flash flooding and people getting trapped or washed away.

We immediately responded that this was a scenario that would/could never happen and arranged another meeting at Council. We went through everything again. We told the Council Reps that during wet weather or when we observed the creek rising, we closed the campsite and stopped taking bookings. We never allowed people out to The Meadow when it was heavy rainfall as we didn't want

them to destroy our beautiful lawns or to get bogged. Also there was a gate which we closed to stop people going out the back. No-one would be out there without us knowing. We lived on site. We had everything under control and during the 1 in 100 year flood in March 2021, we were closed well before the flood happened, so no-one was on site to get washed away!

Our point was this...wet weather always meant the campsite was closed. There was no danger to anyone. But the Flood Engineer's response was the same - that flash flooding could occur in the middle of the night and wash people away! We replied that we actively followed the BOM, local SES reports and NSW weather alerts. We kept ourselves informed and were aware of rises in the creek as we had livestock down by the river flat so we needed to know if the cattle had to be moved. We were not in the practice of allowing people out to the campsite if the rains were persistent. We would ask people to leave if the ground started to get waterlogged or we would simply cancel their bookings in advance. Since we started we had never had campers

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onsite in extreme weather conditions. It was in our interests to keep everyone safe.

In the meantime, I started checking on other local campsites by rivers and creeks and found Bretti Reserve, Camp Cobark, Dawsons Caravan Park, Knorrit Flat (all MCC approved) plus dozens of Hipcamps advertising that they were located beside creeks and rivers. All were happily running their campsites even though flooding was an obvious high risk. In the case of Bretti Reserve and Dawsons River campers had to be evacuated.

I felt like we were being made an example of and that the council flood engineer (who had admitted he was brand new to the job, and had contacted us in his first week) had something to prove. He told us if we moved everything above 30mAHd (right up on the hill) we could be approved. I replied we had just spent \$20K on a laneway to The Meadow and had no money to build another laneway up the hill plus being on a hill, noise would carry over the valley, there were no trees up there for shade, it was always windy and people liked camping down near the creek.

So the endless back and forth of emails began. He would not budge. We experienced 3 floods from 2021 to 2022 and not once was anyone out the back in the campsite. Not once did anyone get stuck out there. Not once did any caravans or tents get washed away. It was bloody ridiculous and everyone I spoke to agreed with us. And what really got to me was that this flood guy "expert" never ever set foot on the farm, never saw it, never came out here to talk it through with us, never even spoke to us in person.

In June 2022 I received an email from Council saying we now needed an escape laneway which would have to be inspected by another engineer to check its soil type/gradient/traffic suitability/blah blah blah.

This was the final straw. We figured

we were never going to get approval. Despite the fact that MCC repeatedly said they supported Agritourism and proudly boasted that they were looking at ways to support farmers doing it tough. MCC were clearly playing the long game in the hope we would concede. They were coming up with more and more brick walls.

We had spent all our money (the same amount that we had earned from Hipcamp over 3 years was spent on the laneway and the DA). So we made a decision. We would close.

MCC has destroyed one of the best Hipcamps in their area. We had over 300 5-star reviews, a 5 Star Google Rating and actively promoted local businesses in Wingham, Tinonee and Taree. We were asked to host campers for the Wingham Acoustic Festival and by MCC themselves to host Blaze Aid (oh the irony!) We hosted 3 weddings, had farm day visits in school holidays and were a favourite destination of local aged care groups and disability groups such as Valley Industries.

#### NOW NO DA REQUIRED

And to top it all off NSW Government have finally woken up. From Dec 22, Primary Industry owners with over 15 hectares of land can become Hipcamp Hosts **without a DA**. Hipcamp are currently working in conjunction with the NSW Government to promote Agritourism. Sadly, too late for us.

What hurts the most is that MCC would have known this change was coming. They could have told us. They could have given us a break! They just didn't care.

We have sold to a farmer who will run cattle on the glorious property we so loved and cared for.

We will move far away from the rule of MidCoast Council and consider our options."

**Karen Gilbert**  
formerly of Bluebell Hill Farm,  
Burrell Creek



## Your medical 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**



# IT ALL COMES OUT IN THE WASH!

Not-for-profit Orange Sky has been operating within the Mid North Coast region for five years supporting struggling locals. They are a charity that provides people experiencing homelessness, and those doing it tough, with free laundry services and most importantly, genuine and non-judgemental conversation and connection.

**O**range Sky has been operating within the Mid North Coast region for five years supporting and helping out locals. Recently, the Mid North Coast region celebrated the installation of four Orange Sky laundry pods.

A laundry pod has two washers, two clothes dryers and six orange chairs. Just like their mobile laundry and shower service, it is run by Orange Sky volunteers and operates on a weekly shift schedule.

In addition to services in Taree and Wingham, Orange Sky are currently operating four laundry pods in locations across the Mid North Coast including: Laurieton and Kempsey, and one laundry truck 'Rosco' in Port Macquarie.

With this many services running, we are calling on Taree and Wingham locals to sign up to volunteer to help us operate these assets for those experiencing homelessness and people doing it tough all across the Mid North Coast.

Please contact - <https://airtable.com/shr2pMydOMsD7aPLf>



## A PEACEFUL MISTY MORNING ON THE MANNING AS A MEMBER OF THE TAREE ROWING CLUB CRUISES BY.



Captured by Les Eastaway



# “RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE” ANOTHER WORD FOR “GREENWASHING”?

**Don't be fooled. Burning forest biomass is not a renewable energy source.**

**D**on't be fooled. Burning forest biomass is not a renewable energy source.

When a native forest is logged there is quite a large quantity of material remaining, and the previous federal government took the view that the burning of such material to generate electricity should be regarded as using a renewable energy source.

When a power station uses a renewable energy source to generate electricity it receives a thing called a Large-scale Generation Certificate (LSGC).

Ever since the use of forest biomass was allowed as a renewable energy source the issue has been controversial.

The present federal government recently sought submissions from the public on the issue of the use of native forest biomass to produce renewable energy and the eligibility of power stations generating electricity from native forest biomass to create LGC's through the Renewable Energy Target (RET). It asked for comment on a number of specific questions.

Submissions were not sought on the issue of whether native forest logging itself should be permitted.

The Gloucester Environment Group sent a submission to the Government as follows:

## **GLOUCESTER ENVIRONMENT GROUP (GEG) SUBMISSION**

In answer to the Government's specific questions for consultation –

- **Should the eligibility of native forest biomass be removed?**

**Yes.**

Native Forest Biomass should not be viewed as a “renewable resource”. The burning of native forest biomass undermines both Australia's climate goals and the biodiversity of our native forests.

- **If it should be retained, do the REE Regulations adequately ensure, and provide**

**the public confidence, that electricity generation from native forest biomass is from ecologically sustainable sources?**

**No.**

The recently published research Paper “Burning Forest Biomass for Energy” advises “a major shift to using forest biomass burning for energy comes with grave risks of highly perverse outcomes, including increased CO2 emissions and negative impacts on forest ecosystem integrity”.

There is an urgent need to regenerate what is left of our native forests. Our natural environment is in crisis. Biomass after felling provides habitat for fauna, retains sediment, protects water quality, and stabilises soil fertility.

Native forests serve great environmental benefits in terms of carbon sequestration and protection of ecosystems. Logging debris from native forests should not be removed.

At the time of writing this submission, a petition has been presented to the NSW State Parliament, signed by over 20,000 citizens, that seeks to (amongst other demands) ban the use of native forest materials as biomass fuel.

- **If it should be retained, how could the RET Regulations be amended to provide greater certainty and public confidence that native forest biomass comes from ecologically sustainable sources?**

GEG opposes the forest biomass industry in any form in Australia. The industry is not ecologically sustainable.

How many times has Government (State or Federal) had to address and intervene with environmental and social breaches by industry, after the community has brought that particular breach to their attention? Time and again we see vested, polluting industries flouting their conditions of consent. The

cost to the community is huge. This must change.

GEG is well aware that proponents for major infrastructure projects present business models that are supposedly “good for the community”. The nature of “commercial in confidence” meetings with the government, which exclude the community's consideration of the proponent's contractual arrangements, restricts open transparency of the proponent's project, effectively denying community participation in decision making. This must change.

The consultation paper notes, one power station has “sought and received accreditation”. Our concern is that the Government is currently relying on the power station operator to self-regulate, and that the biomass industry as a whole has the same expectation.

If native forest biomass should be retained in the RET, the Government must categorically show, based on independent and scientifically sound judgement, that the burning of forest biomass reduces carbon emissions, that environmental offsets can be guaranteed and that the establishment of standards and guidelines can be regulated independently of industry representation.

- **Are there proposals for new native forest biomass power stations that are likely to be eligible under the RET and have potential adverse impacts?**

The consultation paper notes, Sub regulation (2) only imposes the condition that native forest biomass cannot be primarily harvested for use in energy production, not that logging and timber industries associated with the collection of forest biomass will be restricted. Last year, Justin Field, NSW MP, stated in the NSW Parliament that there are “increasing efforts” to open up NSW's forests for energy production.

- **If the Government removes the eligibility of native forest**

**biomass under the RET, what transitional provisions could provide appropriate support to affected registered power stations?**

The consultation paper notes the Government wishes to limit any impact on existing projects proportionate to relevant costs, benefits, risks and opportunities.

However, the external, unqualified costs of the industry to the community include, social and health impacts from burning fuel, environmental impacts, transportation, and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions at a time of climate emergency.

The consultation paper notes, only one co-generation power station is currently accredited to use native forest biomass and does not use native forest biomass to create LGCs.

We see little need for a transition plan for a native forest biomass industry that is not economically viable without Government subsidies and incentives and that is not currently well established.

We do see the need for the Government to legislate against the potential expansion of the native forest logging industry which enables the progression a native forest biomass industry.

## **CONCLUSION**

GEG maintains that any power station that relies on native forest biomass will cause environmental harm and therefore should not be eligible under the RET.

GEG also recognises the real threat that the use of biomass may encourage the expansion of logging in native forests.

GEG supports the disqualification of native forest biomass as an eligible fuel source for renewable energy credits under the Renewable Energy Target legislation.

**John Watts**

President Gloucester Environment Group.



# NEW LIFE IN AN OLD STORE.

## *ALL IT TAKES IS IMAGINATION, HARD YAKKA AND CAREFUL BUDGETING.*

The recent makeover of Hannam Vale General store makes us wonder what else is waiting to be transformed with hard yakka and imagination?



**G**ary Elton and Adi Putra have almost finished the make-over of the General Store in Hannam Vale, turning it into a charming café and mini store in a few months. There is still a lot more work to be done, but locals and visitors were anxious for them to open, even unfinished, so it has opened for business.

How many other older places are there, crying out for a bit of imagination and hard work to transform them into a today destination yet retain the nostalgia of the old days? Just look around and see what we're losing and what could be done with some of the old homes and sheds and shops in rural settings.

Gary and Adi have made a name for themselves building stylish and imaginative small resorts, homes and businesses on the island of Koh Samui (among the first to do so), Bangkok, Bali and Cambodia where for many years they financially assisted secondary students.

On one of their frequent visits to Siem Reap in Cambodia they were troubled to learn that locals were consuming vegetables loaded with toxic chemicals.

It was an easy decision to establish a hydroponic farm. Happy and Co Farm grew into a large enterprise supplying fresh vegetables year round to restaurants and supermarkets in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

Gary was also a pioneer of environmental aesthetic architecture in

Byron Bay and Greece.

Adi recently established a charming small "compound village resort" in Ubud in Bali. Gary and Adi, who is Balinese but an Aussie resident, moved back to Australia when Covid broke out.

After living overseas for many years, with rare family visits, Gary winces when he visits places like Taree which have little if any aesthetic appeal and shakes his head at the loss of heritage buildings in Wingham and what it could still be.

There is a growing yearning for simpler, stylish and healthier ways to live and to visit in regional areas.

Byron Bay was wonderful in the years Gary lived there and he says it's disheartening to see the town go off the rails with pretentious wannabes populating overpriced properties.

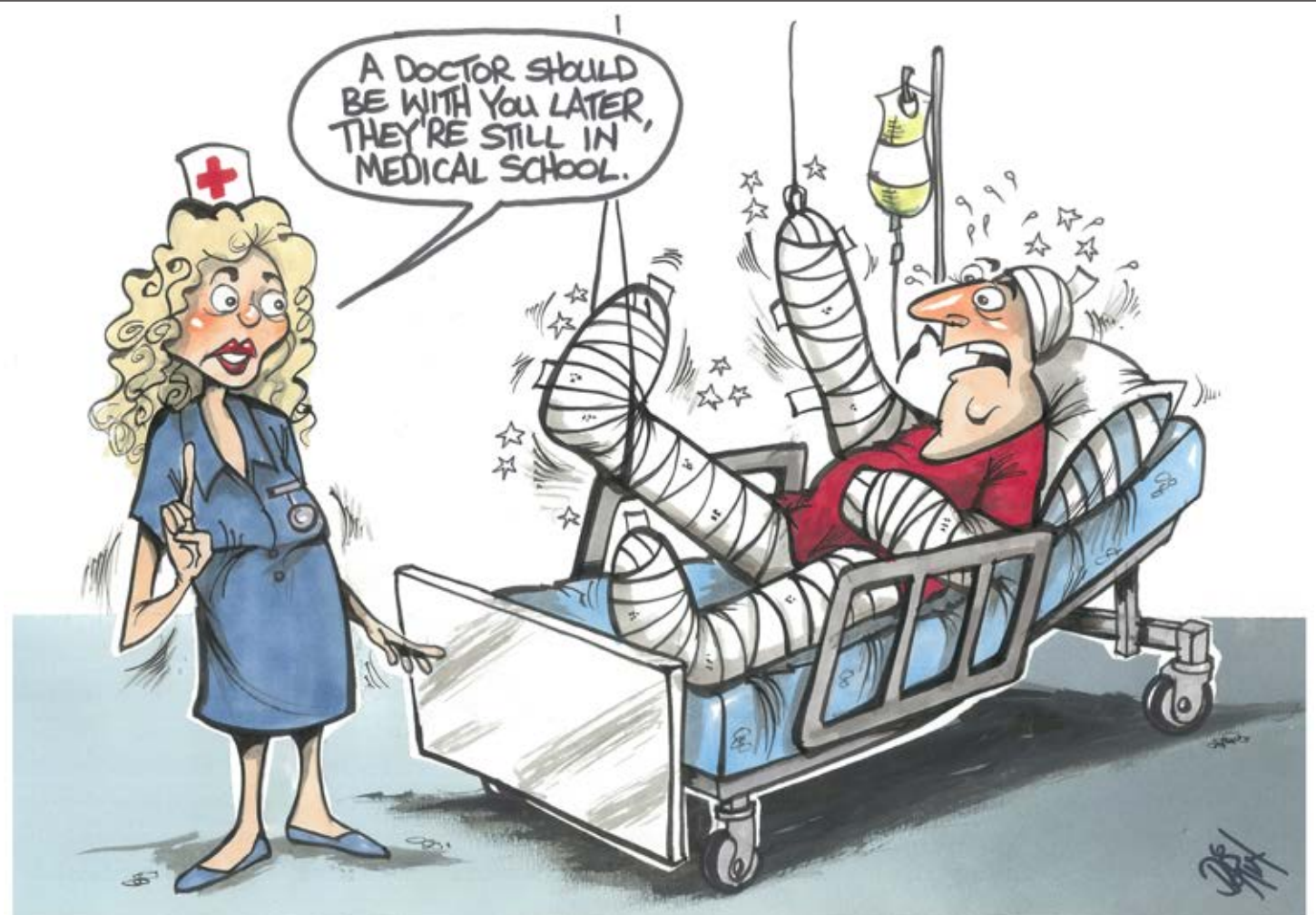
We have been through demonic times recently and have fears for our, and our children's future.

For those who can remember a simpler, less frenetic way of life and

families leaving the city lifestyle, there are regional places like the Manning Valley that could foster a slower pace of life, in green and healthy surrounds, where simplicity replaces must-haves and where imaginative cottages and homes, well designed towns and villages could offer a very different ethos to glass towers and cheek-by-jowl, treeless housing estates.

We need more imaginative development from the likes of Gary and Adi.

DM





# NEW LADDERS FOR OLD.

Outside a bric-a-brac shop something caught my eye amongst the stuff spilling onto the footpath. 'Funky vintage ladder \$165.' On closer look, it was pretty retro and a bit bent in the frame, narrow-based with smooth steps. I wondered whether it was on sale for climbing or decor.



Norm McKeough, Peter Watts and Denis McKeough in the 1990's

**Everybody has stories of older people toppling from ladders. Injuries sustained from even a minor fall can be surprisingly severe. A well-loved TV personality Molly Meldrum made upsetting headlines when he suffered a head injury from a ladder fall while decorating the family Christmas tree.**

Toddlers tumble over all the time. It can look disastrous, but nearly always, they bounce, maybe cry, then up again. Their young bodies seem to be geared for trial and error, in training for life as bipedal beings.

I have a very fit-for-age friend K, who regularly attends a seniors' circuit training class at Sydney University gym. Sparrow, a former Wallaby player aged over eighty, is the trainer. He has excellent results in improving health and fitness in his dedicated group of retired academ-

ics, who share a common history of sedentary work. Sparrow's faithful wear workout t-shirts with these points of guidance printed large:

- Do your squats
- Get set to lift
- Seniors don't climb ladders

I asked Sparrow about the last point, but he was adamant and reckons the body becomes much more brittle with ageing. Indeed those ladder accidents are a significant cause for hospital admission. The statistics are alarming and support his caution. In 2002, 3,374 Australian men over 60 were hospitalised for ladder falls. In 2012, the number was 4,945. 80% of these occurred at home. With the bulge in the boomer population, the figures are likely to get worse. (<http://seniorau.com.au/5628-ladders-risky-for-older-men>)

It just takes one wrong step from independence to disabled. Mostly these accidents are avoidable. In his

book 'Being Mortal', Dr Atul Gawande explores the balance between safety and independence for seniors who live in residential care. In any duty of care scenario, safety always trumps. For seniors who live in their own houses, the pressures are different. Gutters get full of leaves, a high-up light bulb needs changing. What to do? A tradesman's visit takes a good slice out of the pension.

K's concerned family had removed her home ladder. I asked her how she managed the light bulb issue. 'Oh, I just stand on a chair.' Her casual attitude is scary but understandable. Chairs are everywhere, and it's so convenient and quick to climb onto one for that just-out-of-reach little job. Let's remember that the design of a chair is for sitting, not for standing on. A careless decision for quick convenience can have life-changing consequences in the blink of an eye.

In the quest for awareness, could there be a safer approach for those determined to maintain independence? A search came up with one- 'a foldable non-slip, four-step, lightweight, approved, one-metre high stepladder with dual handrails' for \$70. That feels like an upgrade on the funky vintage ladder.

One other point. If the foot slips, a solid handhold can save the day. A Christmas tree looks lovely but offers no support in the fall, nothing for our prehensile monkey hands to grab and hold. The sailor's traditional wisdom says, 'One hand for yourself, and one for the ship'.

Climbing is not against the law, so it's up to individuals and families to future-proof our elders against injury from slipping, tripping or toppling, and the danger is not just with ladders. A person's cognition, strength, balance and flexibility could be more vital than chronological age for capability. For instance, can they typically balance on one leg? A history of fits, faints or funny turns is more likely a contraindication to all forms of climbing. It can be complex, so sage professional advice is vital in such decisions. Prevention of injury from falls is a big key to healthy longevity.

The anatomy of any fall has three components- the initiating incident, the descent, and the impact.

The initiating incident may come from wonky equipment or slippery shoes. Maybe it's a health issue- an

unstable knee gives way, or a giddy spell craning the neck to inspect the ceiling.

Parachutists joke that descent is no problem. It's the impact that matters. More commonly, the descent is sudden and without warning. It's surprising when drunk people fall over, their relaxed floppiness can often protect them from injury. A constructive spin on this oddity is to consider the protective benefits of practice in martial arts and other forms of yoga. Anyone with this background has training that includes rolling, rounding the body and relaxing. For example, the old Chinese art of Qi-Gong is a safe, effective method of maintaining body health, and it's never too late to start. Regular practice makes the body more resilient and less prone to impact injury.

The Arthritis Association recommends Tai Chi for elder health.

Whatever the answer, no one could argue with Sparrow about the need to keep fit. He often says, 'You can never do too many squats.' In other words, caring for the body through regular practice is the best investment in the self, climber or not.

Closer to home, an older retired country doctor told me he still climbs. He has become more careful and no longer climbs onto the roof. He won't climb at all if he is home alone. He considers it essential to have someone who can hold the ladder and pass things up. If worse comes to worst, they can call 000.

On one occasion, he described slipping on the back stairs of his house, making such a clatter that his daughter came out to check, alarmed by the commotion. He had already checked out his arms and legs, and his neck moved ok. 'Just bring me a mirror,' he called to the confused girl. 'Why a mirror, Dad?' she asked, quite used to his eccentricity. 'Your mother will insist that I see a doctor,' he explained, 'and I want to be able to tell her that I have.'

## David Miller Brunswick Heads

David Miller has been a long-time GP in the Northern Rivers. Since retirement, his interest has shifted from disease to health in ageing.



# PLAN B. THE PLANTS THAT WILL SAVE US.



In this uncertain world, over the past 2-3 years, we have experienced events in our lives that we thought were only possible in Block Buster movies.

**M**ost people, the world over, have experienced some difficulty within their lives. And we are all desperately trying to adapt and take back a semblance of control.

Drought, flood, bushfires, loss of bees, super-storms, volcanic eruptions, mouse plagues....and let's not forget the pandemic.... they've all left their mark..

We've often laughed at those people who label themselves as 'Doomsday Preppers' as they pack their Bug-out bags, store mountains of food and build shelters for the Apocalypse they worry may be coming.

But you know what? I think they may be onto something.....

We've all witnessed the recent pandemonium in regards to toilet paper shortages, the shortages of certain foods and massive crop losses due to damaging weather events. Now we see shortages in regular medicines and building supplies, just to name a few.

Whether or not you believe in Covid 19 or Global warming, it's becoming obvious, that without our daily staples and all the products that we take for granted, we may become, what we've striven all our lives not to become.....vulnerable..

So it got me thinking. How would we cope, much less survive without access to our everyday medical prescriptions, our rich source of essential foods, clean, safe water, affordable electricity and shelter, just for example?

The answer is...we would not be happy campers.

We're so used to buying any fruit or vegetable we want whether it's in season or not, using the internet to quench our every desire or question

at the click of a button. We take for granted our beautiful clean water and relatively, clean fresh air. Things which are mere pipe dreams for many third world countries, even at this moment in time.

What would you use for toilet paper if it became unavailable? What would you use for deodorant?

How would you store your food without electricity? The lists go on and on...

I think the answer lies in our gardens. Rain and soil will always be there, as will the sun...hopefully!

## AN ANSWER

Could you make room in your garden to grow plants that may save your life? Herbal medicines have been used since the dawn of time...in fact they were the precursors of the medications we all use today.

Could you learn to save seeds and also the best way to store them for future planting? Learn how to build an underground earth cellar to store meat and vegetables? How to dry or preserve fruit?

Our grandmothers' old cook

books are full of some fantastic ideas on preserving food. And there was nothing artificial in any of them!

I'm not telling you to pack a Bug-out bag or to start building an underground shelter, I'll leave that to the Doomsday preppers, they can arm you with that stuff.

But....Plants will save us... they have for centuries.

What's important to you when you first wake each morning?

Your first coffee...a hot shower and your favourite body wash...that first cigarette...a quick toilet visit with that beautiful soft toilet paper?

Here's just a small list of plants that you can grow that are very useful.....just in case!

## TOILET PAPER SUBSTITUTES:

Mullein leaves/ herb. Banana leaves. Corn husks. Maple leaves. Lambs ears, Stacey's byzantina. Old mans beard/ Spanish moss. Dombeya spectabilis.

Sounds ridiculous right? Maybe.... but you won't be laughing when there's no other alternative available.

## TOBACCO SUBSTITUTES:

Calendula, Mullein and Lemon balm.

Be sure to do your research in this area please. I do not recommend smoking to anyone. These are simply available plants and alternatives, but are nicotine free.

**COFFEE SUBSTITUTES:** Roasted Dandelion roots..harvest after two years growth in autumn and roast before drinking.

**CHICORY** root roasted...great taste but sadly caffeine free. Have some Lemon Balm tea handy for that lack- of-caffeine-headache coming your way too!

**CAMELLIA SINENSIS:** green tea leaves....dry and powder the whole

leaf. You'll be drinking the entire mix, not just a tea made from the leaves. 2tsp of powder to one cup of hot water, whisk until it froths, then drink. Contains caffeine...Thank heaven!

You could also grow your own **COFFEA ARABICA** beans, but remember they need a constant year-round climate of around 25 degrees C. Above and below these temperatures, will slow their growth and effect the ripening process and also the flavour of your coffee.

**SOAP AND SHAMPOO SUBSTITUTE: SOAPWORT** root. 1 tbs of ground root to 1 cup of water, boil covered for 30 mins. Strain. Use 1 tsp per cup of water for soap or shampoo.

**LAUNDRY LIQUID SOAP:** Gather 75 ENGLISH IVY leaves, pick the larger and older ones and chop. Add 4 cups of water and bring to boil. Simmer 20 mins. Remove from heat and steep for 3 hours. Strain the leaves and compost. Store in the refrigerator. Use ¾ cup per medium washing load. Do not drink as it is





## NEWLY OPENED

### Hannam Vale Store & Cafe

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DINNER ( FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS ),  
BOTTLE SHOP

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#### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

toxic, wash pots and utensils very well after use.

#### MOISTURISERS: ALOE VERA.

Avoid the yellow juice near the skin, use clear gel only. Add some essential oil for a soft fragrance.

**ROSEHIP** oil. Allow your rose bushes to flower but do not de-head them so that the rose hips will form. Harvest once they have dried on the bush. Crush and Cover with oil, coconut, olive or almond oil or home made sunflower oil. Heat in double boiler for up to 10 hours on low heat.

Cool and strain into jars.

**CALENDULA** oil. Harvest the flowers early in the morning to preserve their precious oil. Check for insects and then cram the flowers into a jar and cover with oil. Sit on a sunny windowsill and let it infuse for a minimum of 3 weeks and up to a couple of months, turning daily. Strain through muslin and bottle.

**WORMWOOD:** Keep your chickens worm-free by letting them occasionally graze on the leaves. Use dried leaves for their bedding, it keeps the mites and other insects at bay organically.

**STEVIA:** Make your own sweetener by picking and drying some leaves just as the flowers are beginning to bud. Dry approximately ½ cup of leaves and add to 2 cups of water and

steep for 24 hours. Strain and then cook over low heat, reducing it to a syrup. Bottle into a sterilised jar and cap. Will keep for one year in the fridge. Remember...1tsp equals 1 cup of sugar!

**ARROWROOT FLOUR:** Harvest tennis ball sized tubers, peel and chop into small pieces. Mince it with water and then add it to a bucket of clean water. Continue squeezing the pulp as the flour residue sinks to the bottom. Remove the pith and pulp from the top.

When the water becomes clear, strain it off, leaving the flour at the bottom. Spread on trays in the sun to dry thoroughly.

Arrowroot is used in natural deodorants combined with baking soda, coconut oil and essential oils.

So there you have it... a few staples and must haves that we cannot go without. Nothing is too hard if we apply ourselves to the matter at hand and gain a little knowledge along the way....

It's called .....RESILIENCE!

**Tanya Sawyer.**

Find us on facebook....

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# HEARD ON MACCA.

On Sunday morning on ABC Radio "Australia All Over" there was a call from a fellow wondering why, with all the terrible floods everywhere and townsfolk mainly rescuing themselves or helped and saved by neighbours . . . why aren't towns under threat being supplied defence force "Ducks" and Larcs...the old amphibian vehicles?

**A**nother caller said these had all been sold off or dumped. Newer, better, fancier ones are being made and will be ready in a year or three. Seems pretty shortsighted to get rid of useful amphibious machines and then have nothing to replace them for years.

Like the ubiquitous AUKUS nuclear submarines which, if we must

have them, could have been bought off the shelf. By the time we get them at massive cost, underwater spotting drones will be able to locate the subs in no time.

The military needs practical women running the joint. Women are less likely to also have us in the middle of a war too.

Just saying.



# REVIEW OF BLACK LIVES, WHITE LAW (CLOCKED UP AND LOCKED OUT IN AUSTRALIA)



**Russell Marks**

**Published by La Trobe University Press 2022**

**RRP \$34.99**

**T**his is one of those books that leaves you feeling a wide range of emotions. However, the main feeling I had as I finished reading this exceptional book was some degree of shame at the extent of my ignorance about the true nature of the interaction of Aboriginal people and Australia's legal system and its human impact.

This was despite the fact that I was a practising lawyer for 44 years. I was of course aware, in a general sense, of the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody but was astounded to be reminded that it was 30 years since the Commission published its damning report. I was even more astounded to learn how much worse things had become since the Royal Commission made its findings and recommendations.

Author Russell Marks is a criminal defence lawyer who has worked for Aboriginal legal services in the Northern Territory and Victoria, and from the start of the book he pulls no punches. Often, when we read statistics about Aboriginal incarceration rates or deaths in custody, it is easy to tut tut, nod agreement, and then move on. But Marks gives the reader no way out, and in the introduction he hits the reader right between the eyes when he tells us about a young Aboriginal man by the name of Aaron who Marks represented in court on his first day as a duty lawyer in Katherine, NT.

Aaron was not new to the court system and had spent time in prison and in an alcohol rehabilitation facility. In the Northern Territory the police have the extraordinary power to subject a person to something called an alcohol protection order (APO). This has the effect of criminalising alcohol dependency and are primarily used against Aboriginal people.

Aaron is in court on this occasion simply because he was arrested for being drunk and allegedly in breach of an APO. He had been drinking in the context of grief resulting from the death of a member of his community. Aaron had 3 months left of a suspended prison sentence and 'because he got noticed by a passing police patrol while he was drunk', the judge sent him to prison for a total of over eight months.

After being confronted with Aaron's sorry tale the reader then learns that the over representation of First Nations People has doubled since the royal commission. We are told that:

If you're an Indigenous man, you are now more than fifteen times more likely to be locked up than a man who isn't indigenous.

Indigenous women are twenty-one times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous women.

Marks then explains that:

My subject is Australia's system of criminal justice: the system of laws and courts and police and prisons that we use to control behaviour we proscribe as 'criminal'. I'm interested in the ways in which that system interacts with First Nations people and communities.

The book guides us through the history of the criminal justice system of Settler Australia—a term used throughout the book. How it was introduced and how it has grown from non-existence in 1788 into the system we have today, and how it has impacted our First Nations peoples.

The book examines the thorny question of how Britain claimed sovereignty over the land mass we now call Australia and points out that it was never done in accordance with the laws of the time. There were only two ways that James Cook was authorised to take possession of the land. The first was where the land was uninhabited, which it clearly was not, and the second was 'with the consent of the Natives', which Cook did not even attempt to obtain.

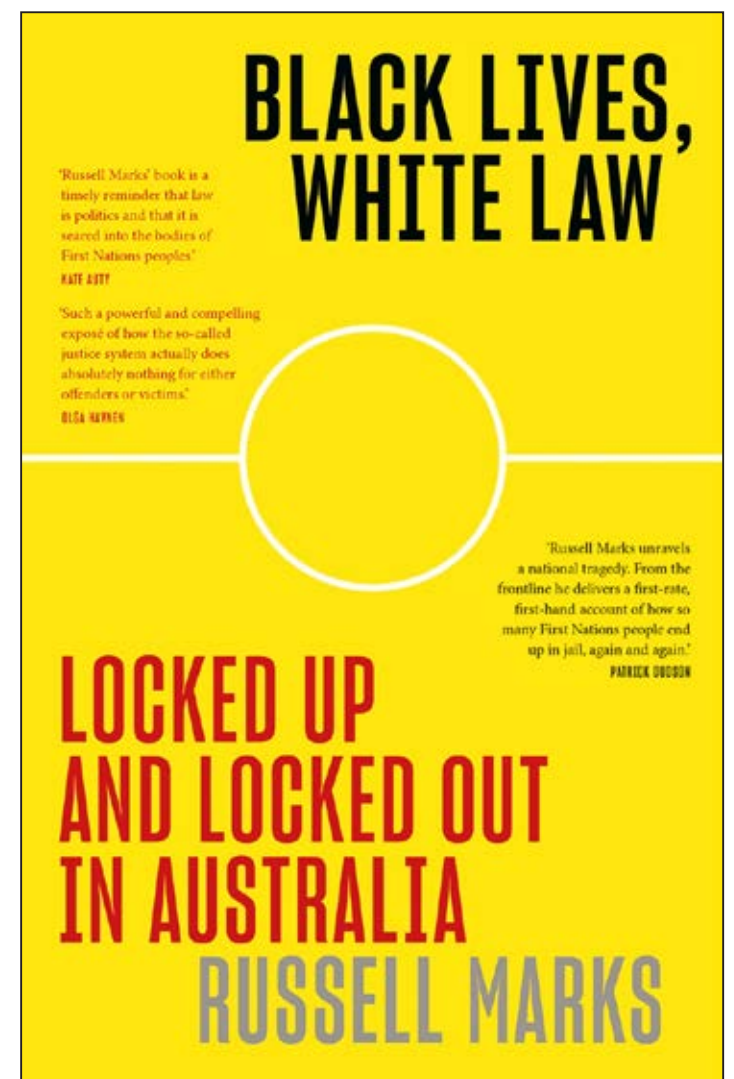
Through an analysis of various court cases Marks demonstrates the extent of rationalisation and mental gymnastics the courts have gone through over the years to justify the unjustifiable on the issue of sovereignty.

The failure of the courts to recognise pre-existing Aboriginal sovereignty has led the courts also to a situation where they could not acknowledge pre-existing Aboriginal laws and customs.

Marks takes us on a journey through the brutality of colonisation and demonstrates how, the so called fair and impartial British justice system was anything but fair and impartial when it came to the treatment of our First Nations people. Many were slaughtered by white settlers with no action generally being taken against the offenders.

Statistics often tell only part of any story but although this book does provide plenty of statistics and figures, the reason I think it will have such an impact on most readers, is the skilful way the issues discussed are powerfully illustrated with actual case studies. It strongly personalises and humanises the issues.

Marks explains that throughout Australia's history there have been some attempts to integrate Aboriginal laws and customs into the justice system and to provide greater self-determination, and he explains how such attempts have often been met with a backlash from some in the community, particularly those with vested interests. One example he gives is the disastrous Howard Government 'intervention' into Aboriginal communities with



the Government declaring that self-determination had failed when it had never really been tried. The intervention was clearly a case of government thinking that it knows best.

The book points out how prison sentences have so often been used as a solution to social problems and how prison is often the worst of solutions. Nonetheless, harsher prison sentences continue to be called for by politicians and others despite the clear evidence that they do not work and are counterproductive.

Marks does not shy away from dealing with difficult issues such as violence by Aboriginal men against Aboriginal women and anti-social behaviour by Aboriginal children.

The final chapter of the book is titled 'A New Beginning' where he examines issues raised by the Uluru Statement from the Heart such as recognition, voice, treaty, and truth and looks to alternatives, although he candidly acknowledges that he doesn't have all the answers. What he does make clear is that the present system is not working and invites us to use an open mind to seriously consider alternatives.

The concluding two paragraphs are:

When Indigenous people talk about justice, I don't hear people saying there's only one way. Invariably, they're demanding to be heard, to be seen, to be recognised as sovereign peoples who have the right to justice on their own unceded

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



# THE CRIMINAL CLASS

## - MEMOIR OF A PRISON TEACHER'



Paul MacNamara

Big Sky Publishing. RRP \$29.99

**T**his memoir is based on Paul MacNamara's experiences during seven years as an educator in some of Australia's toughest correctional centres, including Sydney's Silverwater Jail and the notorious Grafton Gaol.

All the characters and events are based on real people and actual experiences from MacNamara's time teaching in prisons. He was compelled to write the book when he realised from telling a few yarns in social settings that people were fascinated by his line of work.

*"Whenever anybody found out that I worked in a jail their curiosity was immediately aroused. People wanted to know what it was like being in direct contact with murderers and rapists and always wanted to know more about my job. I thought I should start documenting the stories I had and once I began it just poured out and when I re-read it, I thought it was entertaining but would also generate discussion," said MacNamara.*

He knew that his view was set apart from the perspectives of the law enforcers and the criminals.

*"As a teacher working in correctional centres, I realised that I was an observer of the system; the guards didn't see me as one of them nor did the inmates, and I wasn't bound by the normal set of allegiances so in effect I was an outsider on the inside. I had access to these incredible stories that were tragic, amusing, entertaining and thought provoking.*

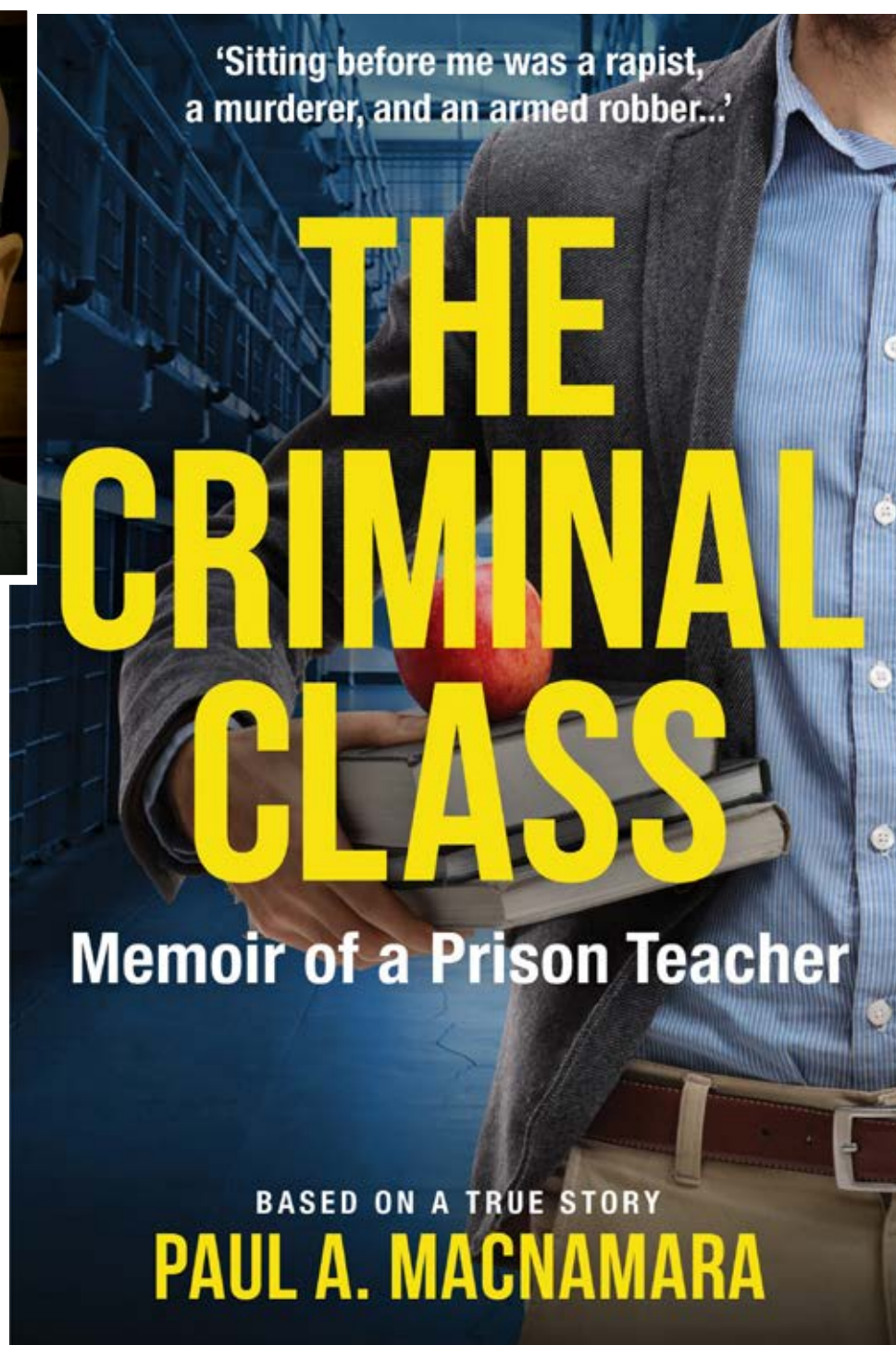


The outcome is a captivating page-turner that deals with issues including justice, recidivism, functional literacy, bureaucracy, punishment and rehabilitation, and reflects on the causes and the costs of crime.

MacNamara observed that for inmates, being in jail *"is a bizarre experience, a whole other existence. In this strangeness you encounter things that make you shake your head, shake your fist, cry your heart out, laugh your head off and blow your mind. And I felt compelled to write it down; to capture its un-reality."*

The first-time novelist was a horticulturalist for ten years until crook knees forced him to pursue a different career.

Available in bookstores and as an e-book and an audio book - <https://www.bigskypublishing.com.au/books/the-criminal-class/>.



### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

country. They're saying black lives matter.

How about we begin again, from that point?

This is a book that I would urge all Australians, particularly non-Indigenous Australians, to read and do so in a way where all preconceived ideas are put to one side. It is highly recommended.

### John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet. Personal stories of nine inspiring women who cherish Earth.* and *'The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas'.* John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group and a member of the committee of Energise Gloucester.





# THROUGH HER EYES: AUSTRALIAN WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS FROM HIROSHIMA TO UKRAINE.



Edited by Melissa Roberts and Trevor Watson.

Hardie Grant Books. Rrp. \$34.99



Lorraine Stumm

**R**eadings *Through Her Eyes*, is both exhilarating and horrifying. Exhilarating in the sense that you cannot help becoming caught up in the stories each correspondent recounts; horrifying as you visualise the danger and hardships they had to endure.

It is a collection of personal experiences by Australian women foreign correspondents who have witnessed world events ... from the devastation of the city of Hiroshima in Japan in August 1945 to outrageous constant bombing of civilian targets in Ukraine in 2022.

It is as much an adventure story of courage and risk-taking, as it is of sheer luck where one wrong step may have cost many of these brave women their lives.

They come from different back-

grounds throughout Australia, but all share one thing. They have an intense love of story telling and of exposing unfair and barbaric behaviour. Through the decades their stories and others like them constantly need retelling.

Their memories of their experiences prove they are as spirited, fearless and truthful as their male counterpart. They also bring an important feminine perspective; heartfelt explanations as to why such events are being played out and the huge price women and children pay during war time and through political upheavals.

My interest in this extraordinary book lies in the simple fact that one of those included is my mother Lorraine Stumm, a war correspondent in the South Pacific during World War 11, writing for the London Daily Mirror and attached to the US Command.

Australian women were often refused accreditation by the Australian army, the reason given - they lacked stamina and an ability to report accurately under difficult conditions.

Indeed, these stories more than show how she and her counterparts in this collection were, and are, extremely capable of chronicling world events.

I am extremely proud of my mother's reporting achievements in New Guinea, the Philippines and Japan.

Reading her story alongside the twenty-eight other outstanding journalists, I realise how

stubborn and fearless she was in her determination to bring the stories of the men and women in the war zones to her readers.

The odd thing is that she never planned to become a war correspondent. Reporting stories was what she loved and fought to obtain in London as a young woman. It was as she says, "a quirk of history" she ended up writing stories in often dangerous circumstances.

She used to tell me as she got older that what she saw while working in a war, she could not unsee. Hiroshima particularly haunted her until the day she died.

Originally her plan was simply to use her journalistic experience to remain close to her Australian RAF husband whom she had married in Brisbane just 6 weeks before he was called up to serve in Singapore.

Arriving in Singapore to take up a job as a reporter on the Malaya Tribune, she settled down to enjoy what she describes in her autobiography - *I Saw Too Much* - as an idyllic married life, reporting on local issues and giving birth to her first and only child - me. She had no plans to go into active war zones, even though she was covering daily press conferences in Singapore as the Japanese

closed in.

She managed to escape from Singapore just before it fell to the Japanese invasion in early in 1942, arriving in Darwin to learn her husband had been evacuated with his RAF squadron to India.

She made plans to board one of three ships making a run across the Indian Ocean to Colombo, in Ceylon, (now Sri Lanka) to join him. This was despite being warned that ships were being bombed in the Indian Ocean particularly during 1943-1944. She also defied her mother who wanted her to leave her baby daughter behind.

Lorraine joined her newspaper colleague George (*My Brother Jack*) Johnson on board, who assured her if the ship was sunk, he would grab the baby if she would grab the life jackets.

It was madness but they made it and Lorraine once again took a job with the British Ministry of Information in Delhi where she was working when a telegram arrived in March 1943 only six weeks after starting work telling her of her husband's death while on active service.

Returning to her family in Brisbane, she gradually picked up her life when she was asked by the London Daily Mirror, her former employer, to become their accredited war correspondent at General MacArthur's HQ in Brisbane.

She insists it was not courage, "just doing her job", when she asked to be sent to report in the war zones in Palau, the Philippines, New Guinea and later Japan at the signing of the surrender in 1945.

Her work as a war correspondent is set out very clearly in Melissa Roberts' account of her life in this splendid book. I know my mother would be honoured to have her time as a correspondent told alongside the stories of these brave and resourceful young women



Lorraine Stumm, a mentor of Di at a Di Morrissey book launch



Lorraine Stumm and Cary Cooper

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

who risked their lives, as she did, to cover wars and revolutions; to tell of the horrors and bloodshed that were, and are, still taking place.

The book, *Through Her Eyes*, is set out in three distinct categories of reporting. The first part, *Breaking News*, covers largely world affairs in such places as Ukraine, China and Afghanistan, by the journalists whose names are perhaps better known today than that of my mother. The most chilling in this section for me is Cate Cadell's China term (2014 to 2021) where she spells out the prowess of the shrewd technocrat and President, Xi Jinping, who has within a few short years transformed China's internet into what she calls the world's biggest digital laboratory for authoritarian governance.

There is also a special piece from Monica Attard covering her six tumultuous years, 1989-1995 in Russia including her contacts in Russia who now tell her of Putin's resolve to continue the war in Ukraine.

Part two, *Making History*, leads with Lorraine's story

*I Saw Too Much* and covers stories from young women journalists at critical moments in history in Beirut, Pakistan, Syria, Gaza, Cambodia and New York.

One such story is Ruth Pollard's riveting dispatches for the Sydney Morning Herald which recounts her harrowing time on the frontline as she dodged bullets in the Syrian war during 2012.

Asked what it is like to cover war as a woman, Pollard answers, "for women in wartime conditions, our days revolve around the most basic needs; a safe place to go to the toilet, transport, a trusted driver, a supply of water and somewhere secure to sleep. Getting food is of secondary importance compared to filing our stories on time."

Part three, *Being a Correspondent*, concludes the book with a wide range of distinguished women journalists on the myriad predicaments facing them as they ply their trade in "hot spots" such as Jerusalem, Delhi, Liberia, the Middle East, Malaysia and Manila.

Sue-Lin Wong tells of being called a "race traitor" while covering Hong Kong rallies in 2014; while Prue Clarke paints a picture of justice and luck in Liberia, West Africa where after fourteen years of civil war she says has resulted in child soldiers, cannibalism, sex slaves, rape and violence against women and children happening on a scale rarely seen before.

The conclusion I reached after I finished reading such a timely and important collection of stories was that this type of reporting is far from romantic and definitely not for the faint hearted. It needs to be told.

**Sheridan Stumm**

Rainbow Flat.

(Lorraine Stumm was a pivotal and inspiring influence on myself as a teenager, encouraging me to take up journalism as an honourable profession which needed "good women." DM)

# DINNER

## BY NAGI MAEHASHI



Macmillan Australia  
RRP \$44.99  
Photography by Nagi Maehashi

**1** 50 dinner recipes. Fail-proof. Delicious. Addictive. The food you want to cook, eat and share, night after night. Through her phenomenally popular online food site, RecipeTin Eats, Nagi Maehashi talks to millions of people a year who tell her about the food they love.



BIGGER THINGS

## MUSHROOM LASAGNE

*This is my pick of the chapter. It's that good!*

**6** SERVES: 8-10 NORMAL PEOPLE, OR 1 NAGI + 1 DOZER | PREP: 45 MINUTES + 30 MINUTES RESTING | COOK: 70 MINUTES

Here's a mushroom lasagne that plays no second fiddle to beef lasagne! It still has everything we love about the classic: a deeply savoury ragu, creamy béchamel and edge-to-edge bubbling cheese, all in the right proportions to the pasta for the perfect bite. It's the ideal comfort food for a mixed group of carnivores and vegetarians – nobody is going to miss the meat I can promise you!

375 g fresh lasagne sheets<sup>1</sup>  
24 slices (375 g) Swiss cheese<sup>2</sup>  
1 cup (100 g) shredded\* mozzarella  
½ cup (50 g) shredded parmesan\*, using a box grater

### MUSHROOM RAGU

40 g dried porcini mushrooms<sup>3</sup>  
1½ cups (375 ml) chardonnay wine\*\*  
1 kg white button mushrooms, cleaned<sup>4</sup> and stems trimmed  
¼ cup (60 ml) extra-virgin olive oil  
25 g unsalted butter  
3 garlic cloves\*, finely minced  
1 large brown onion, finely diced  
1 large carrot, peeled and grated using a box grater<sup>5</sup>  
2 celery stalks, grated using a box grater<sup>6</sup>  
3½ tbsp (65 g) tomato paste  
1 tbsp finely chopped fresh oregano<sup>7</sup>  
1½ tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary<sup>8</sup>  
2½ tbsp (25 g) plain flour  
1 cup (250 ml) low-salt vegetable or chicken stock\*  
400 g can crushed tomatoes  
2 fresh bay leaves\*  
2½ tsp cooking salt\*  
1 tsp black pepper

### BÉCHAMEL SAUCE

100 g unsalted butter  
⅔ cup (100 g) plain flour  
4 cups (1 litre) hot milk  
1 tsp cooking salt\*  
⅓ tsp white pepper  
⅓ tsp ground nutmeg

**Soak porcini mushrooms** – Soak the dried porcini mushrooms in the wine for 30 minutes. Remove the porcini mushrooms (reserve the wine), squeeze out the excess wine (reserve this too), then finely chop the mushrooms. Set aside.

**Blitz mushrooms** – Cut the white button mushrooms into quarters (large ones into eighths). Pulse 4-5 times in a food processor, scraping the sides as needed, until finely chopped into 3 mm pieces.

**Mushroom ragu** – Heat the olive oil and melt the butter in a large heavy-based pot over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, onion, carrot and celery, then cook for 3 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the white mushrooms, oregano and rosemary, then cook for 6 minutes until the water comes out of the mushrooms and begins to evaporate. Add the porcini mushrooms and reserved white wine. Stir, bring to the boil, then leave to simmer rapidly for 3 minutes until the wine is mostly evaporated.

**Simmer** – Mix in the flour and stir for 1 minute. Add the stock and boil for 5 minutes to partially reduce the mixture. Add the tomatoes, bay leaves, salt and pepper, bring to the boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 15 minutes until it reduces to a thick ragu.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan-forced).

**Béchamel sauce** – Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low, add the flour and stir it into the butter (this is called a roux). Cook, stirring regularly, for 5 minutes. Don't let the roux brown – we want a white sauce! Switch to a whisk. While whisking constantly, slowly pour in half the milk. Once the roux dissolves into the milk, you will notice it thickens rather quickly. Pour in the remaining milk, then add the salt, pepper and nutmeg and whisk until lump-free. Cook for 8 minutes, stirring regularly with a wooden spoon, until the sauce coats the back of the wooden spoon thickly. Remove from the stove and leave, uncovered, to cool to room temperature. It will be spreadable like soft butter, which makes it easy to spread on the lasagne layers.

**Assemble** – Smear a bit of ragu across the base of a 22 x 33 x 7 cm baking dish. Cover the base with lasagne sheets, cutting the sheets to fit, as needed. Spread with one-quarter of the mushroom ragu, ¾ cup (185 ml) of the béchamel sauce (using a spatula), then cover with 6 slices of Swiss cheese. Repeat three more times (a total of five lasagne sheet layers with four layers of ragu). Finish by spreading the last lasagne sheet with the remaining béchamel sauce and sprinkle with the mozzarella then the parmesan.

**Cook lasagne** – Bake in the oven for 35 minutes until the cheese is melted and has some golden spots.

**Serve** – Rest for 30 minutes before cutting and serving with a side salad of baby spinach leaves and finely sliced red onion tossed with Italian Dressing (page 333).

See Notes overleaf.







# ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collect for enjoyment, collect for knowledge, collect for the potential of future windfalls, collect to share and most of all collect because it is a wonderful hobby that lasts a lifetime.



A collection of uranium glass under Ultra Violet light.

**A**t this time of the year, I enjoy the story of the **three Kings (the three Wise Men) who visited Jesus at the manger, after His Christmas birth. The Kings background and story is an interesting one. Often when history is researched it is more curious than fiction.**

The **Magi**, also referred to as the **Three Wise Men** or **Three Kings**, were a group of distinguished foreigners who visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Their names are said to be Melchior a Persian scholar, and King of Persia, Caspar an Indian scholar and King of India, and Balthazar, a Babylonian scholar and King of Arabia. The Three Wise Men (Kings) are part of the nativity celebrations of Christmas and are an important part of Christian tradition.

One of my favourite carols at Christmas is 'Joy to the World'. In these times of turmoil where the news is full of doom and gloom, we need to give joy and receive it. It all starts with us. 'From little things big things grow'. Enjoy your family, your friends and your acquaintances, not

only at Christmas but always.

I read a quote recently that is worth sharing –

'The most bitter tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone.'

Have a wonderful Christmas season!

**Uranium glass** is glass which has had uranium added to the mix before melting occurs. The proportion usually varies from trace levels to about 2% uranium by weight, although some 20th-century pieces were made with up to 25% uranium.

First identified in 1789 by a German chemist, uranium was soon being added to decorative glass for its fluorescent effect. James Powell's Whitefriars glass company in London, England, was one of the first to market the glowing glass, but other manufacturers soon realised its sales potential and Uranium glass was produced across Europe and later North America.

Uranium glass was once made into tableware and household items, but fell out of widespread use when the availability of uranium to most industries was sharply curtailed

during the Cold War in the 1940s to 1990s. Most such objects are now considered antiques or retro-era collectibles, although there has been a minor revival in art glassware. Modern uranium glass is now mainly limited to small objects like beads or marbles as scientific or decorative novelties.

The normal colour of uranium glass ranges from yellow to green depending on the oxidation state and concentration of the metal ions, although this may be altered by the addition of other elements as glass colorants. Uranium glass also fluoresces bright green under ultraviolet light. Most pieces of uranium glass are considered to be harmless and only negligibly radioactive.

The use of uranium glass dates back to at least 79 AD, the date of a mosaic containing yellow glass with 1% uranium oxide found in a Roman villa near the Bay of Naples, Italy, by R. T. Gunther of the University of Oxford in 1912.

A display of uranium glass in a blackened cabinet under a fluorescent ultra violet light is spectacular.

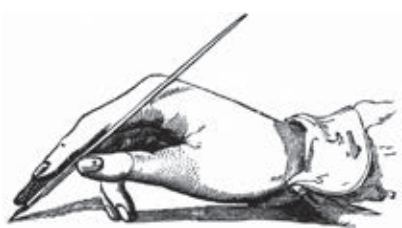
Don't forget to visit and support

our local antique haunts. In Taree, Barry at Isadoras in Victoria Street, Anna and Rob at Clancy's in High Street and Col's Second Hand in Commerce Street are all good places to drop in regularly and see what's new. They are all friendly people and don't mind a chat. In Wingham check out the wares with Sue at Delinquent Funk and Dave and I at Wingham Antiques and Old Wares both in Isabella Street. By checking in regularly you get some interesting buys as the interesting things that come into the shops don't last. They are snaffled up quickly.

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

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





# YOUR SAY

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

Dear Editor,

**I**n a column in the SMH Waleed Aly rightly identifies that we will not vote for a Republic and abolish the current alliance we have with the British monarchy if we don't agree on what to replace it with. I wholeheartedly agree with him, that is why I think tricky John Howard when PM was able to successfully divide the vote so that we turned away from becoming a republic years ago.

At the time we watched while other former Commonwealth countries were busy severing ties with the British monarchy. There is no longer any sentimental excuse to say we have to wait until Queen Elizabeth 11 dies. At last we can act like grown-ups and discuss who would be a good representative as a figurehead for our nation.

Waleed puts forward a First Nations Elder. To me that is an excellent suggestion, after all this person could swear to have no political alliance, would be able to demonstrate a strong bond with country and have a history longer than the born-to-rule British family thrush upon us when we were a struggling penal colony.

Of course there will be citizens who will say it must be some worthy white person from the echelons of society to represent us. Why? It is a ceremonial position and we have already tried Governor Generals - some good and some dismal.

It's time to consider someone born here with a genuine affection for Australia, therefore acknowledging its thousands of years of human settlement, dispelling the myth that we are a young country, which is nonsense. It would also be a healing gesture because of the appalling way First Nations have been treated. Also we have some outstanding people to choose from on our doorstep with high education qualifications if that is what is demanded.

**Sherry Stumm**

Rainbow Flat (Biripi country)

Dear Editor,

**I**love the English language, always have done since starting to read at four. I've written a lot of books, edited and published a lot more, given speeches and the language of Shakespeare, Churchill and others still delights me. So I hate the infestations that affect it.

I detested the plague of "like" that rose from the California Valley Girls like the Covid infection rising from the food markets of China. (Note the correct use of "like.") Mercifully, that horror seems to be

declining.

But even worse, is the "than what" disease. As in, "She grew taller than what I expected." Or, "He scored more runs than what we forecast." What is wrong with "She grew taller than I expected"? Or "He scored more runs than we forecast"? Why the gratuitous excess verbiage? It seems to have grown in recent years and it's ugly. I wish people would speak the language properly.

Bah, humbug. I'm going for my nap.

**Michael Davies**

Wingham

## A Di Morrissey book under the tree is a Christmas tradition



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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](http://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.  
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This newspaper is printed on paper approved by the Forest Stewardship Council from sustainable forests using a vegetable dye ink.