

# The Manning Community News

OCT / NOV 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)

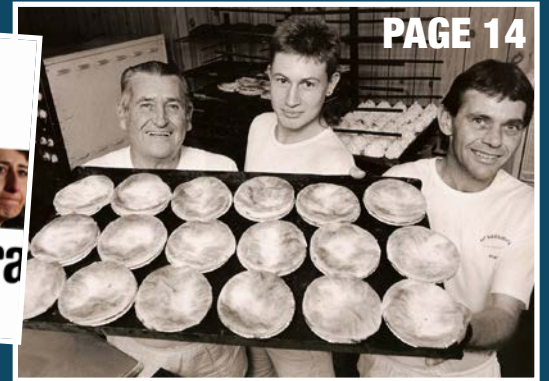


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By Alexandra Smith **PAGE 20**

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**The Secret**  
Alexandra Smith



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

# SUPPORT THIS NEWSPAPER. KEEP US GOING!

In this time of threatened and diminishing independent media, The Manning Community News hangs in there to bring readers local, national and international news, features and entertainment.

It is read all over the country on line [www.manningcommunitynews.com](http://www.manningcommunitynews.com) and in widely circulated print editions and has an influential readership.

**I** started this paper seven years ago because I saw a lack of local information being published. I am a former international journalist and editor, radio and TV presenter.

I was encouraged by local support to publish an informative newspaper that supports local business as well as breaks news stories.

The paper needs advertising to keep going. It is a free community newspaper distributed to shops, cafes, businesses and professionals from Port Macquarie to Hawks Nest. I do it without staff, except for the layout and the volunteers who distrib-

ute the paper far and wide.

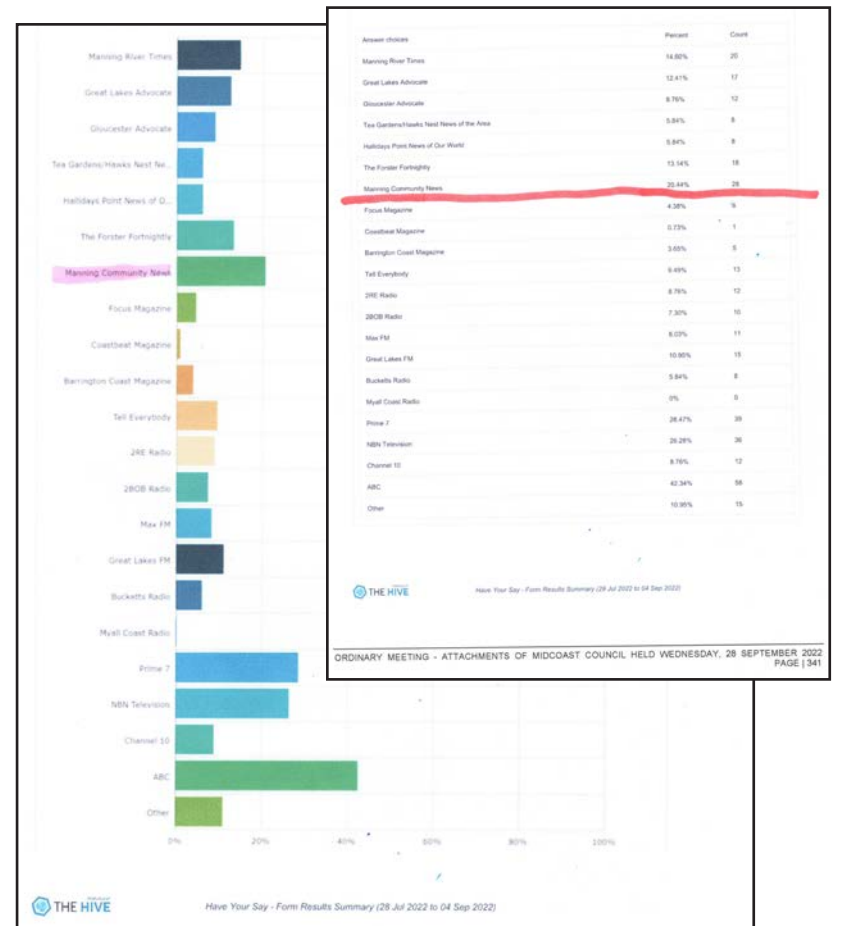
I have stood up to bullying, threats, law-suits and the paper being banned in some quarters.

Please give me your support. My readers are loyal and if they support this paper, they'll support you.

The only way I can keep going is with your help.

Please, donate or advertise.  
Thank you.

**Di Morrissey AM**  
**Publisher/Editor**



Images from MCC Website

# THE BIGHT CEMETERY

Council's plan to prepare a beautification plan for The Bight Cemetery after completion of the repairs is in disarray. Again. Or rather, still ongoing.

Since the disastrous and still somewhat secretive slashing down to the ground of the magnificent old cypress trees shading and providing privacy to the once beautiful Bight Cemetery, little has been done. The upheaval over the smashed headstone repairs continues, and as for the unnecessary removal of the trees, the community's preference remains for the replanting of golden cypress pines along the front of the Cemetery but outside the fence to avoid any root damage to monuments. This would be in keeping with the Heritage of the Cemetery. Other suggestions include a memorial where unknown (location) burials in The

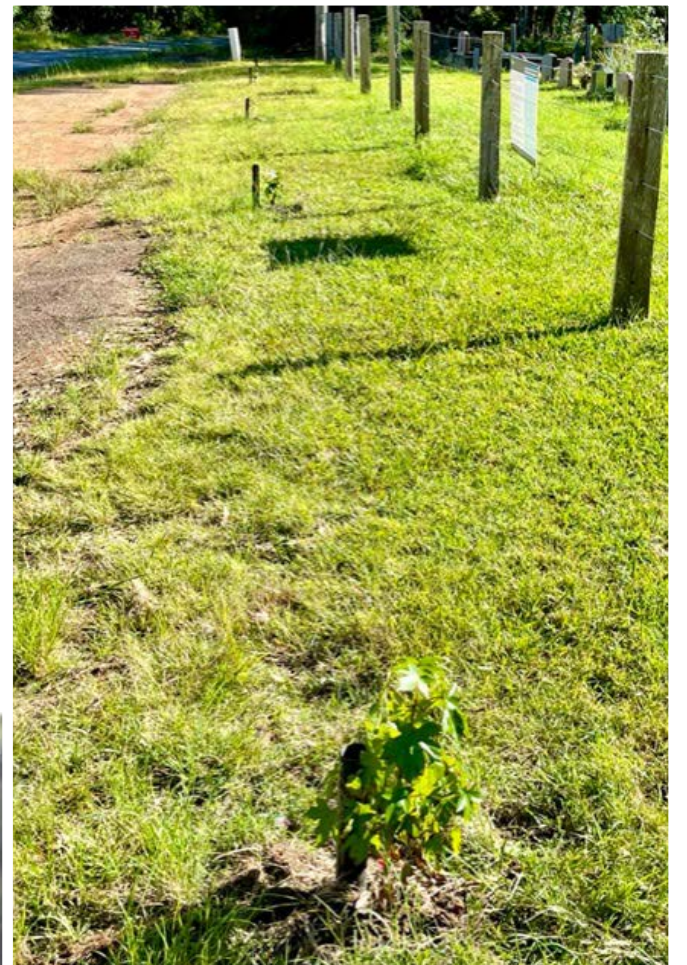
**Bight cemetery can be memorialised.**

As the years drag on, why the planting of replacement Golden Cypress trees could not be undertaken in parallel with the repairs one will never know. Heaven forbid Council could do two things at once.

Some local went to the trouble of planting trees, but they have been pulled out.

It brings tears to my eyes each time I drive past into Wingham. How the ancestors must be thrashing in their graves over council's desecration and lack of care.

DM



Some kind local planted trees. They have been removed.



How beautiful was the old Bight cemetery. Criminal to slash these trees to the ground for no good reason!

# OUR BANKS ARE A DYING BREED, CAN THEY BE RESUSCITATED?

In case you didn't notice, the final report from the Taskforce into Regional Banking was snuck out on Friday evening October 7 before a long weekend by the Government despite the report being a Coalition document overseen by two shadow ministers (Michael Sukkar and Perin Davey) whose current portfolios have nothing to do with treasury, finance, business or regional Australia.

**T**he final report contains nothing that will save a single bank, with the executive summary's admission that it received more than 400 submissions "on ways of maintaining and improving banking services" illustrating that the entire exercise was, as the Financial Sector Union described it in 2021, just a "cruel stunt".

The seven recommendations are an insult to the intelligence of regional Australians, with the report sharing insights on the issue of regional bank closures that read like a Playschool episode:

- *banks can do more to communicate and consult with individuals and communities when closing a regional branch*
- *when branches do close, alternatives like Bank@Post can assist to maintain banking services*
- *it is important to maintain access to cash, which is crucial for many in regional Australia*
- *people experiencing vulnerability face particular challenges and need support in accessing banking services*

This rest of the content could be

from a chairman's message for any of the major banks' annual reports over the last 20 years.

It regurgitates without challenge the claim banks constantly make every time they close a branch that over-the-counter transactions have declined. Had the Financial Sector Union been given a seat at the table as it requested but was denied, they would have told the MPs that bank staff have been on performance targets to move customers away from teller service and on to ATMs for years.

Reduced opening hours have also impacted on customers' ability to even get in the door of their local banks.

On the face of it, recommended changes to the Australian Banking Association's branch closure protocol make sense, unless you already know the contents of the document and its history.

The taskforce merely repeats what the previous regional banking inquiries - Money too Far Away (1999) and Money Matters in the Bush (2004) - put in place but was largely ignored by the banks due to an "if viable" caveat being inserted by the Howard Government at a later date.

By releasing this report, the

Albanese Government has only drawn attention to Labor's alternative recommendation 30 from the 2004 inquiry stating it would be prepared to re-regulate the banking industry if the banks did not implement and meet community service obligations under the protocol.

Since then, regional Australia has lost another 1000 branches so it could hardly be claimed that the banks have shown any sort of social conscience.

Rather than the taskforce's wishy-washy recommendations one and two, there should have been a calling-to-account of the banks for their complete disregard for the Money Matters in the Bush report.

The taskforce also appears to be unaware - probably due to the lightning speed at which it conducted this inquiry to score a few points in the run-up to the federal election - that the branch closure protocol is a legally enforceable document.

What it also could have recommended is that the document be redrawn as a proper contract by independent lawyers and taken out of the hands of the banks, who have self-managed the behaviour standard since it was implemented.

Recommendation four, which covers access to cash, gets to the heart of why communities need banks and is another missed opportunity.

Like the two regional banking inquiries before it, this report suggests beefing up post office banking, falling short of creating a new government bank because the taskforce - let's again remember that it was mainly made up of banking representatives - held "significant competitive neutrality concerns".

Just to translate that into plain English, the banks are worried a government bank would be more popular than their own branches and they would lose customers, a concern banks have expressed to banking inquiries on this subject right back to 1985.

This section also makes the bold statement that remote Indigenous communities alone should have access to fee-free ATMs.

What about people in the 587 towns that once had one or more major banks that now have no form of bank at all?

Recommendation seven, to review the APRA points of presence data, should trigger alarm bells for regional Australians.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Phrases such as “to better understand and plan the transition away from branches” reveal the major banks’ true agenda and have been published as a fait accompli by this taskforce.

This recommendation will actually help the Government and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) out with a little problem they now have in relation to errors in the “Authorised deposit-taking points of presence” data, some going back years.

APRA chairman Wayne Byres was backed into a corner at the last Senate Estimates over the misclassification of bank “branches” in the database and the Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, has also since confirmed that bank sites that do not provide face-to-face cash services do not have a place in the government branch lists.

With another 148 “branches” that do not meet that criteria now identified across both metropolitan and regional APRA branch lists, and even more in the planning stages as banks move away from teller service, the corrections are going to play havoc with banking service level statistics – unless the Government follows recommendation seven and shakes the whole classification system up by introducing new service channels to the database.

## WHAT NOW?

It is no surprise that this report has missed the mark by a long shot.

Unlike the Money Matters in the Bush inquiry (2004) that held 13 public hearings in six states and territories and took 18 months to complete, there were just 54 days between the announcement that the Coalition was forming a taskforce to look at the issue of regional bank closures and the close of public submissions.

The taskforce held just one public forum at Red Cliffs in Victoria (Mallee/Nationals) and two “by invitation” meetings at Orange in NSW (Calare/Nationals) and Mildura, which is 14km from Red Cliffs and also in the Mallee electorate.

There is currently an open parliamentary petition calling for an immediate moratorium on regional bank closures, the launch of a new inquiry to pick up from where Money too Far Away (1999) and Money Matters in the Bush (2004) left matters and to pulp any reports that come from the Coalition’s regional banking taskforce.

The Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, must respond when it is tabled.

Regional Australia is down to just 1011 major banks – a figure

the taskforce was in possession of, or close to it, but chose not to reveal in preference to a much broader and rosier number provided by APRA, possibly due to an undeclared conflict of interest by Senator Davey.

## NEW INQUIRY NEEDED

A new inquiry would hopefully give regional Australians a fair go at saving their last banks and even, hopefully, getting some new ones.

With the executive summary’s admission that it received more than 400 submissions “on ways of maintaining and improving banking services” illustrating that the entire exercise was, as the Financial Sector Union described it in 2021, just a “cruel stunt”.

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## NO BANKS AT ALL

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One of the reasons the Albanese Government has just released an Opposition report in such a shady way may have suddenly become clear.

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hopefully, getting some new ones.  
**Dale Webster**  
**The Regional (online)**  
  
*(Online banking is not popular with an older demographic. There is a loyal following in country areas of Credit Unions*

*and smaller Regional Banks which is growing. However the odds are if a small bank starts to grow into a bigger bank, the Big Four Banks will most likely pounce, making an offer that can't be refused. We shall see. Ed.)*

HOW WE FARE . . .

Bank Closures in the Lyne Electorate

Category	State	Location	Postcode	Federal electorate	Held by
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Bulahdelah	2423	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Comboyne	2429	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Dungog	2420	Lyne	NATIONALS
Has two or more big four banks/other options	NSW	Forster	2428	Lyne	NATIONALS
Has two or more big four banks/other options	NSW	Gloucester	2422	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Gresford	2311	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Kendall	2439	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Krambach	2429	Lyne	NATIONALS
Has two or more big four banks/other options	NSW	Laurieton	2443	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Nabiac	2312	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	North Haven	2443	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Paterson	2421	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Stroud	2425	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	SA	Swan Reach	5354	Lyne	NATIONALS
Has two or more big four banks/other options	NSW	Taree	2430	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Tea Gardens	2324	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Tuncurry	2428	Lyne	NATIONALS
Has two or more big four banks/other options	NSW	Wauchope	2446	Lyne	NATIONALS
Lost only/all big four bank(s)	NSW	Wingham	2429	Lyne	NATIONALS

Councillor Peter Epov  
Seeking Volunteer Researchers!

*MidCoast Councillor Peter Epov is currently seeking volunteer researchers to assist him with a number of projects and investigations.*

Persons interested should have some basic computer skills.  
For further details please email: [peterac@bigpond.com](mailto:peterac@bigpond.com).





**IT'S TIME** for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.  
[UluruStatement.org](http://UluruStatement.org)

# IT'S CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Karen Warneken from Lake Cathie was diagnosed with breast cancer 11 months ago, aged 44.

**S**he has been away from her work as she goes through her cancer journey. She is a registered nurse and teaches Aged Care at Newman Senior Technical College in Port Macquarie. She says it is a fantastic year 11 and 12 campus that offers vocational courses in addition to Aged Care, such as Early Childhood Education and Care,

Hospitality, Automotive, construction, IT and many others.

Adds Karen, 'It is an amazing school. Our students all work in industry 1 day a week giving them the opportunity to try a range of career choices whilst still in school. The numbers in my course have grown over the years. Each year now has around 40 students studying Aged Care. Many of our students are

employed in local nursing homes as trainees which is fantastic experience.

I have worked in Aged care over the years as well as in a range of other nursing areas such as day surgery, recovery and on medical and surgical wards. Nursing is a fantastic career that gives many opportunities. I'm so looking forward to returning to work in the new year.'

Karen decided to write her way

through her treatment and has hit the 30,000 word mark in her memoir which she hopes to be published called "Wake Me Up When It's Over".

She shares below some of her thoughts in a small revealing extract.

**If you are a cancer patient and having a hard time, do reach out to Lifeline 13 11 14**

## VERSIONS OF ME.

(Extract from "Wake Me When It's Over" a work in progress.)

In life there are always two sides to every story and more than one version of a person. It just depends on where you are situated within that story to determine what version you get.

As a cancer patient I present several versions. The version that most people see. The version where people say "Oh my od, you are so strong", "You're an inspiration", "You look great", "You rock a bald head".

I think we try to present that positive image to most people for two reasons.

1. The more positivity we put out, the more positive we actually feel – so that's a definite bonus. If we present as beaten down, a burned out image all the time, then this is what we will start to feel – and that's not what we want. We need to keep hope and faith and remain positive – so that is an important version.
2. Secondly, we want people to remember us as "normal". Having cancer in no way allows us to continue a "normal life" but I want people to still see me as ME, not the girl with cancer. I think so many people are uncomfortable with a person with a life limiting illness – they don't know how to communicate or stay in touch (more on this later!)
3. So. If we present ourselves as normal we can try to maintain a few relationships.

The second version is truer. The version only a few see – yes everyone gets glimpses of this me, but only a select few are privy to the fear and turmoil that lies within. This is the girl who cries, sits in silence, disappears into oneself. I can count on one hand those privy to this heartbreaking version. And those few are there for a

reason. Not to console or tell me everything will be alright (although they do of course). They are there because they don't judge or question. They just let me get it out – to rant, to cry about how scared I am that I'm going to die. This version is petrified, irrational at times. It can't be consoled. These people are my tribe. They hear me. They see me. They are there for me if and when I need them without question. But they are few, and as the months linger, they become fewer.

Now that I really analyse these versions of myself I think there is also a third version. This one is only seen by my husband, Jason. I don't know how he handles being the only one who gets this particular woman. Nights of screaming, punching, literally clawing at his face, crying for hours uncontrollably, screaming at the ocean, yelling instructions at him about how to do Christmas, birthdays, lunches, special occasions for the boys if I die. Will he remember to cover the boys' bedroom floors with balloons for their birthday? Does he know where the boys' Christmas stockings are? Will he sing and dance around with them like a crazy person just for fun and laughs like I do?

True fear is like a darkness that consumes you. The nights are always the longest. When the house is quiet and you can hear a frog outside the window, someone snoring softly, the waves of the ocean. This is the time when fear and grief overwhelm. When breath is taken away and the sensation of drowning is imminent. The heartbeat increases, a sheen of

sweat appears on your brow, the body shakes as you try to hold tears inside, but it doesn't always work. A moan escapes, a sniffle follows and when the dam breaks, it's on; A full on waterfall of fear. He is the only one who sees on a daily basis the fear in my eyes and heart. This all-consuming, overwhelming disbelief of how fu...d life is at the moment. He is my rock, my strength, my light in the dark. He leads me back from the cliff edge to fight another day. This is the third version of me.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Karen shares some very useful information – Hints and tips after diagnosis – things I wish I knew:

- Don't Google anything!!! This will send you down the rabbit hole – I can almost guarantee that.
- Take someone to every appointment – I found I grasped onto the one negative fact and my husband would take in all the other information to feed back to me and remind me of afterwards.
- Write down all the questions you want answered.
- Ask for information on your treatment to be printed so you can look over it again afterwards.
- Be proactive in making your appointments – if one place says no appointments, try somewhere else. You need to know all the facts so you can make a plan.
- Having a Port a Cath made chemo treatments easy and stress free – definitely discuss having one.
- Answer phone calls when you feel up to it – this time is for you to come to terms with things – don't feel bad if you don't answer calls - if they are friends they will understand.
- Be truthful to yourself and those around you about the journey ahead – yep it's a shit show but make plans and accept help.
- Stay active – exercise is great for both physical and mental health.
- Seek out a psychologist or counsellor early into the journey – this is something I didn't do until about 5 months into my illness but should have done sooner.
- Investigate what financial options you have – for example do you have Income Protection? Paperwork can be long and tiresome so do this as soon as possible as once treatment starts and you feel exhausted it can seem like to high a mountain to climb.
- Keep track of and celebrate the milestones along the way.
- Listen to your body and rest when needed.
- There are some great FaceBook support groups – these ladies understand what you're going through and we can support each other in times of worry or stress BUT don't become consumed with the negative posts - remember people often don't post when they are feeling great so keep that in mind - there is a lot to be positive about!!!
- Find out if your treatment centre has a breast care nurse to help support you.

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We wish Karen well as she returns to work next year. We certainly need those dedicated Aged Care workers! A big thank you to you all.

DM

# ROADS – TOO LITTLE – TOO LATE?

**Rutted roads, who has the biggest pothole, Council should pay for damage to our cars, it's only time before a death is caused by the shocking and shameful condition of our roads.**

**M**idCoast Council's recent announcement of \$7.5 Million commitment towards regional roads, whilst a welcome injection toward the single most important issue within the community, is regrettably just a drop in the ocean in the context of an estimated \$500 million infrastructure backlog and falls far too short for what is actually required to address the problem.

Many locals are now questioning Council's priorities and the role being played by the newly elected Council. Perhaps Council should be spending less on administration - like the budgeted commitment for a \$15 Million software upgrade - and more on priorities that really count to the community.

In a recent Media Release, Council has identified work to be carried out on over 22 roads, stating: *"The repairs will involve stabilising the road surface and resealing."*

That is, until the next downpour.

Unfortunately, spread across more than 22 roads that \$7.5 Million will not stretch too far by a long shot these days, and the proposed works will only end up being small patched up sections whilst other parts of those will roads continue to deteriorate.

The real question is whether Council will actually deliver these promised works on time

and within the calendar year as promised or will they simply join the ever expanding list of capital works that are deferred into successive years?

Sections of the following roads will receive attention:

Oxley Street, Taree  
Wherrol Flat Road  
Lansdowne Road  
Central Lansdowne Road  
Upper Lansdowne Road  
Hannam Vale Road  
Wallanbah Road, Gloucester  
Wynter/Manning Streets Taree roundabout  
High/Pulteney Streets Taree roundabout  
Warwiba Road Old Bar  
South Heron Road Old Bar  
Kolinda Drive Old Bar  
Bulga Road  
Bowman Farm Road Gloucester  
Several roads in North Arm Cove  
Red Head Road  
First Ridge Road, Smiths Lake  
Mermaid Avenue, Hawks Nest  
Booral Road, Bulahdelah  
Willina Road, Coolongolook  
Myall Street, Tea Gardens

We're watching. But please don't inundate us with photos of your desperate road issues. We know...we know. ... !



Warwiba Road Old Bar roads program

# BROKEN PROMISES

At the MidCoast Council Meeting of 7 September it was revealed that once again, for the fifth successive year, Council has failed to complete promised Capital Works projects on time as committed in the 2021/22 Budget.

**N**early \$50 Million in capital works projects had to be “re-voted or carried forward” into the 2022/3 Financial Year. Meaning that they had not been completed to schedule and we suspect not to budget. These projects represent 20% of Councils entire 2021/22 Budget.

## PROUD BOAST

The Council Report proudly boasted that there was a reduction in the dollar value of projects ‘re-voted’ or ‘carried forward’:

*“The total amount of all ‘Re-votes’ and ‘Carry Forward’ items as indicated in Attachment 1 is \$49,975,420.00.*

*By way of comparison, during the 2021-2022 financial year \$53,205,167 was carried forward from the 2020-2021 budget.”*

What an extra-ordinary admission, our Council has managed to reduce the number of the projects that they failed to deliver in the previous year by \$3 Million.

“Attachment 1” to the Council Report showed the 215 projects had not been completed by the end of the financial year including over \$18M for road works.

## A RECORD OF FAILURE

Financial Year	Re-Vote	Carried Forward	Total Incomplete
2017/18	\$10,499,347	\$38,710,401	<b>\$49,209,748</b>
2018/19	<i>Not made available</i>	<i>Not made available</i>	<b>\$46,376,670</b>
2019/20	\$2,821,992	\$27,692,680	<b>\$30,515,672</b>
2020/21	\$4,213,338	\$48,991,829	<b>\$53,205,167</b>
2021/22	\$2,541,589.00	\$47,433,831	<b>\$49,975,420</b>

## THE CONSEQUENCES

The failure to complete Projects on time over the past 5 years is a demonstration of poor long-term planning and execution of projects. There are significant long term budget impacts when projects aren’t delivered on time, leading into an environment of higher inflation when the costs to deliver what should have been done in the past, are now required to be delivered in a higher cost environment. This results in there being insufficient funds to deliver to other projects and services as Council has to rob Peter to pay Paul.

At present, it appears the only ‘Performance Measure’ to monitor the delivery of projects is to look at the large list of what hasn’t been delivered, well after the event.

It is our elected Councillors who are ultimately responsible to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are set in place so that Council is able to deliver projects on time, to budget and to the required quality expected by the Community.

As an illustration, there was \$77.5 Million in depreciation across Council’s Infrastructure, Property, Plant and Equipment. Approximately \$56 Million of that was in Roads, Bridges, Water and the Sewer Network. A “Project Program” delivering this order of projects year on year is required just to keep pace with the deterioration of existing infrastructure alone, then on top of this there is a requirement for additional investment in order to improve the infrastructure network. Failing to keep pace with “maintaining the infrastructure network” inevitably results in an “Infrastructure Death Spiral.

And, if you want to understand what that looks like, just drive the roads and look at the bridges and culverts following any heavy rain event in the MidCoast LGA. This is infrastructure that has either not been

properly “constructed for purpose”, or that has not been maintained correctly and is at breaking point.

## MORE BROKEN PROMISES

Each Council is required by law to have a Four-Year Delivery Program and an Annual Operational Plan, these two documents are intended to list the commitments that a Council makes to its residents and ratepayers.

Section 406 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides that Councils must comply with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines, which state that:

*“4.9 The general manager must ensure that progress reports are provided to the council, with respect to the principal activities detailed in the Delivery Program, at least every 6 months.”*

The recent review of Council’s Delivery Program and Operational Plan for 2021/22 showed that of the 308 promised and committed actions to the community only 216 or 70% had been completed, with 28 having been withdrawn by Council’s Administration without clear explanation (or Councils formal consent) and 63 having not been completed at all.

Yet in the same year there was an increase of 76.77% in expenditure on Council’s Governance and Administration **from \$31.451 Million in 2019/20 to \$55.596 Million** in the 2020/21 Year.

Councillor Peter Epov, submitted a formal ‘Question with Notice’ in relation to this issue at the 7 September Council meeting and the response was:

*“As such, further analysis will need to be undertaken to provide an appropriately detailed response to questions two and three. Currently, Council finance staff resources are focussed on the preparation of the draft Financial Statements for the Audit Office of NSW. A more detailed response will be provided to a future Ordinary Meeting of Council following analysis of the OLG data once resources are available following the production of the draft financial statements.”*

The Council Report did not include a list of which actions had been withdrawn (by the Administration) nor which actions had not been completed, one has to trawl through the entire 133 page attachment to the Report.

## YOUR COUNCIL – THE STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NSW

The NSW Office of Local Government has recently released the 2020/21 “Your Council – The State of Local Government in NSW” profile and performance data which is a comparison of how all Councils throughout NSW are performing. MidCoast Council is listed as having:

- The 8th highest “Deficit before Capital Grants” (of \$20.931 Million), of all Councils in NSW.
- The 10th highest Governance and Administration costs in NSW; (**increased by 76.77%, from \$31.451 Million in 2019/20 to \$55.596 Million in 2020/21**) with only Newcastle and eight major Sydney Metropolitan Councils having higher Governance and Administration Costs.
- The Governance & Administration Expenditure per capita (per property / household) has risen to \$588.97 from \$335.16 in 2019/20 (with 2018/19 figure being \$323.58 per household).

As a comparison in 2014/15 the Greater Taree City Council only spent \$10.111 Million on Governance and Administration or \$206.50 per household).

## 2022/23 MCC BUDGET BACKFLIP

With the 2022/23 MidCoast Council Budget barely several months old at the 28 September Council Meeting the Monthly Budget Variation Report for the month of July (2023), which should have been presented in August, recommended to Council major adjustments within the Capital Works Program that were adopted only a few months earlier. Over 50 significant variations totalling many millions of dollars were proposed by the Administration and subsequently adopted by the elected Council.

The changes included major reductions to the Water and Sewer Capital Works Program.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Cr Peter Epov is one of the few Councillors who consistently submits ‘Questions with Notice’, questions which by law then must be responded to at the next Council Meeting.

At the 24 August Council Meeting Cr Epov asked the Question:

## BULLYING, HARASSMENT, INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS AND ABUSE

*“Is there a culture of bullying,*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

harassment, inappropriate relationships and abuse within MidCoast Council, and does the General Manager agree with my proposal to establish a review totally "independent" of all executive staff members, which should be conducted on a confidential (and if necessary anonymous basis) of the workplace culture within MidCoast Council, specifically in relation to alleged bullying, harassment, inappropriate relationships and abuse?"

The Response from the General Manager was:

"There is no evidence of a culture of bullying, harassment, inappropriate relationships and abuse within MidCoast Council nor is the General Manager aware of any such culture. As such, there is no need for an independent review. All staff, across the Local Government sector including MidCoast Council staff have a range of mechanisms to report bullying and/or harassment incidents which include a suite of policies and procedures (including Code of Conduct and Public Interest Disclosures).

In addition, staff can seek union support and third-party agency referrals. All of these options are available to staff on an anonymous basis where required. Staff are encouraged to use these frameworks where appropriate and have been provided with the appropriate awareness training.

Council is committed to providing a safe, flexible and respectful environment for its staff that is free from all forms of discrimination,

bullying and harassment and has a suite of policy and procedures to support this."

This week we have learnt from several sources that Council's General Manager has written to all Council staff saying:

"Shortly we will be sending out invites for all staff to attend mandatory Sexual Harassment training. This training will help increase your awareness with 2 online training modules offered – one for staff in non-managerial positions. You will be automatically enrolled into the module that best suits your position and the training will take no more than 20 minutes. I encourage staff to set aside time to complete the training as soon as possible."

The Manning Community News has been frequently approached and informed by past and current employees that there is a toxic culture within the Council, if you have any information you wish to share on a strictly confidential basis, please contact the Editor.

### ONLY ONE COUNCILLOR VOTES AGAINST PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT.

At the 7 September Meeting of MidCoast Council, Confidential Report 17.3 related to a reviewed of the performance of the General Manager and the establishment of a Performance Agreement for the next 12 months.

Cr Peter Epov was the only Councillor present to vote against the General Manager's Performance Agreement

Moved by Cr J Miller and Seconded Cr D West.

The vote was -

For: - Cr A Tickle, Cr J Miller, Cr C Pontin, Cr P Sandilands, Cr D West, Cr K Smith, Cr D Smith, Cr P Howard

Against: - Cr P Epov

As usual with MidCoast Council, the entire matter was unnecessarily shrouded in secrecy, by the application of a confidentiality provision within the Local Government Act.

It appears when any matter is contentious and or perhaps sensitive or even reputationally damaging to Council it conveniently disappears under the provisions of the Local Government Act.

Or a Councillor may try to put a glowing spin on how good council is in the local press.

We're all a bit smarter than that, I reckon.

So much for open Government, transparency and ultimately accountability.

Given the state of Council's finances; the roads and other infrastructure, the habitual failure to deliver capital projects on time and to budget (as demonstrated by the carry-over of nearly \$40 million dollars of projects each year, for the past 5 years), it would seem to be of some considerable public interest for the community to be aware of the performance objectives or KPI's that "our newly elected" Councillors would be setting down for the General Manager for the next 12 months.

It is in the context of 'accountability' that our Councillors have to demonstrate that they are intelligently creating the appropriate setting with very clear directives, and implementing a system of checks and balances to ensure that Council

performs, and delivers what it has promised and what is required and expected by the community.

We asked Cr Epov why he didn't vote for the performance agreement.

"As the Mayor has determined this subject is confidential, I can't publicly discuss any of the details. I did make a very direct and comprehensive statement in the five minutes that was allotted to me on the entire matter.

What I am able to say is that over 11,000 people voted for my group, I was elected to represent the community, to try and bring about change and reform, not to be an apologist nor a cheerleader for the Administration.

After 5 years of being an amalgamated Council one would have hoped to have seen a great deal of progress, efficiency, and improved delivery of services. At least some metrics to demonstrate that all that amalgamation chaos was all worth it. The actual data shows that we are going backwards, Council is spending more and more on Administration, delivering less and will be looking to further reduce services in the future.

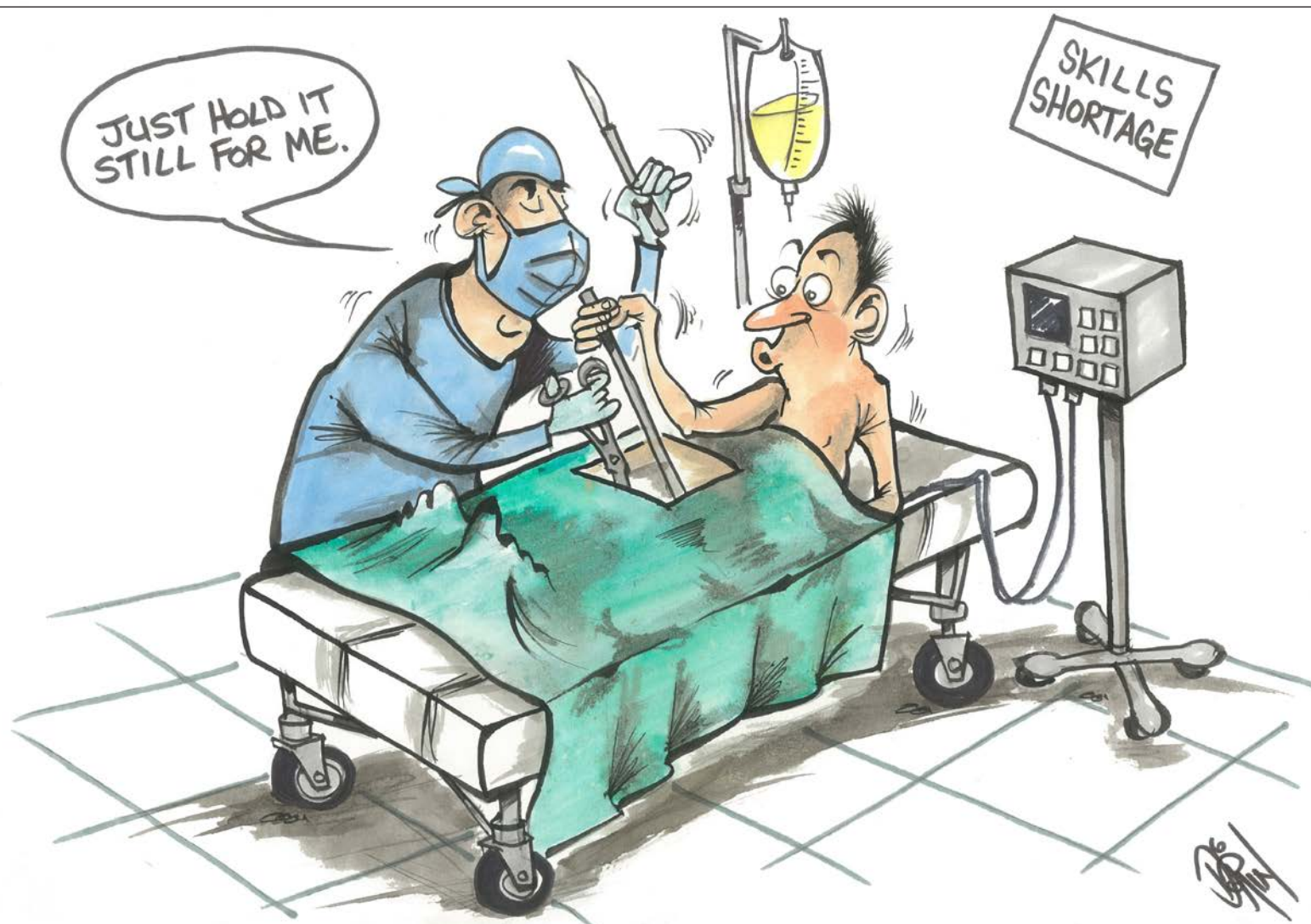
Those Councillors who voted for the new Performance Agreement, now own it! The onus is on them to ensure that it is delivered!"

In February Cr Epov proposed a comprehensive Notice of Motion pertaining to the review and performance of the General Manager. That Motion was voted down 7 votes to 4.

We press on, despite the darkening financial clouds on the horizon.

DM.

(Compiled from various sources who wish to remain anonymous. If anyone has a complaint about harassment in their workplace please contact Lifeline 13 11 14)



# ETERNALLY ARTHUR.

It was a simple message. . . . *Eternity*

Written in copperplate script in chalk on Sydney streets for decades into the late 1960s this one word became a legend.



**F**or years the author remained a Sydney enigma, until he agreed to be unmasked in the 1950s and his message shared.

Arthur Stace was down and out when he went into the Baptist Tabernacle building in Burton Street Sydney for a cup of tea and a rock cake and heard evangelist John Ridley preach and was inspired to spread the word – “Eternity” . . . that the deeds we do exist for eternity. Arthur wrote the word all over Sydney for thirty five years, every day, sometimes writing it up to one hundred times.

Now a fascinating film about Stace and those who have been inspired by “Eternity” as a symbol, has been made by documentary filmmaker/Producer Richard Attieh. **“Written in Chalk – the Echo of Arthur Stace”** reveals the whole story through the eyes of many people inspired by Arthur and the *Eternity* sign enigma.

And who will forget the sign Eternity lit up across the Harbour Bridge on New Years Eve 2000.

Two local women, hitherto unknown to each other but linked by Arthur’s “Eternity” symbol, appear in the film.

Joy Cooksey, once Secretary of the Taree Art Society, now living in Harrington, grew up in Sydney and reminisced -

“Each weekday my school friends and I caught the 5 minutes to 8am train to Wynyard, then the escalator to the York Street entrance. We then walked past St Phillips Church, through the subway and then along Bradfield Highway to school.

Every morning there would be a new ETERNITY, in copperplate writing on the footpath. Written in white chalk, the new version replaced the disappearing work of the previous day which had been rubbed away by the soles of Sydney-siders’ shoes. There was always much speculation as to the who, how, when and why, but it wasn’t till years later that we discovered that it was done by an Arthur Stace, a vagrant, living rough around Sydney, saved from starvation by church workers at Broadway, and who showed his gratitude by

his writings. They could be found all over the city.

At school, we did once sneak into a forbidden out of bounds area (now the Cahill Expressway) and found old clothes and food containers. As his writings were close by, this may have been one of his dwelling places.

I lived in Scone for many years working as a teacher but I always longed to paint. We moved to Harrington and while at an art workshop, the tutor, the late Patrick Carroll, asked us to think about the shapes and patterns of a city.

I chose Sydney’s lovely old buildings, but it wasn’t until I added an Arthur Stace ‘Eternity’, written along the side of my work, that I felt my painting was complete. In my mind, it seems his writing has almost lasted an eternity. Sydney’s modern-day

graffiti artists could learn from the elegance of Arthur Stace’s work. And its message.’ And adds Joy with a smile, ‘My old school in Sydney discouraged art because it wasn’t a matriculation subject. Anyway, I did art for the leaving certificate. The school no longer exists. It is now an art gallery! Poetic Justice I like to think!’

Loretta Alexander from Pam-poolah saw Joy’s painting on exhibition and says it “drew her to it.” It wasn’t until she went back to it and looked at the painting more closely that she saw the “Eternity” written on it, and knew she had to buy it.

Joy and Loretta both tell their story in the documentary which the producers are hoping will also be screened in local cinemas in NSW.



Joy Cooksey Harrington artist



Loretta Alexander, and Joy’s “Eternity” painting she loved and had to have

# IT WON'T BE SO EASY TO SUE

An article on Crikey.com headlined 'Trump is a confirmed unhinged traitor. And Murdoch is his unindicted co-conspirator', is at the centre of what will proved to be both a contentious and a precedent setting court case.

**The case will test a new threshold for defamation and a new defence, added to our defamation laws in most states in late 2021.**

So hard questions to be answered include - Did the publication cause serious harm to the plaintiff, or is the offence trivial, a matter of offended feeling, spite or misguided understanding of the law, and, second, was it in the Public Interest that the matter be reported, though potentially damaging.

The case had its first day in court on Friday September 23 '22 and both parties appear determined that the case will go to trial.

Apart from testing the new defence against defamation, the case has other interesting features. Patriarch Rupert Murdoch, does not sue for defamation, so the plaintiff, Murdoch Junior, Lachlan, is piloting a new strategy.

## NO PUBLICITY IS BAD PUBLICITY

Rupert has long held that no publicity is bad publicity, a catch cry of media moguls of the past, but he might also hold that to sue in defamation, bring matters to court, might bring to wider attention to an issue you would prefer left undisturbed. Certainly any good defamation lawyer will counsel a client on the consequences of proceeding to court and, especially, of losing the case.

The opinion piece at the centre of the action, by Bernard Keene, was first published in June 22, but withdrawn after correspondence from News Corporation's solicitor. It was re-published in August following further demands from Murdoch Junior for an apology and compensation.

But then Crikey upped the anti. An open letter in The New York Times, signed by Eric Beecher, chairman of Crikey's publisher, Private Media, and Crikey editor-in-chief Peter Fray, challenged Murdoch to sue it over the article "so that we can test this important issue of freedom of public interest journalism". Included was all previous correspondence with Murdoch's lawyers.

Lachlan obliged.

## CRIQUEY'S DEFENCE

Eric Beecher, from Crikey, says the

headline 'clearly refers to Rupert Murdoch' because the name 'Murdoch' is used as shorthand by the media and the rest of the world'. In my experience this is true.

Lachlan is the chief executive and co-chair of Fox Corporation, which has a number of subsidiaries including the Trump-friendly Fox News.

At present, Lachlan is positioned to be the patriarch on Rupert's death, with brother James who is on the outer, and sister Elizabeth quietly wait in the wings. The decision to sue may be a move by Lachlan to put his stamp on the empire and stake his claim as patriarch-in-waiting. It may also signal some reassessment by Murdoch Senior of his past reluctance to sue.

This saga is one to watch as the Crikey David takes on the Murdoch Goliath.

## FOR THE REST OF US

But for the rest of us, the new defamation laws have imposed this new test of significant harm. The courts will have the discretion to throw out cases that are, in essence, trivial. It would also seem to impose a duty on lawyers to counsel clients not to proceed to court if they think the case won't make it over the serious threshold.

It also means that, if you already have a bit of a dodgy public reputation, you are likely to have difficulties taking a case to court unless you can demonstrate that very significant harm has been caused to your reputation.

Other changes mean that web site owners will have additional protection from being sued over third party postings on their web sites. They won't be free of responsibility but prompt removal of allegedly offending material will count.

## TIKTOK

On another front, TikTok is to be investigated by the Australian government. Its concerns are very similar to US President Trump's call for US control of data about US users held on TikTok: national security.

TikTok is a hugely popular social media site, especially with the under 30 year olds. It is popular because it offers content that is just right for

you, even if you didn't really know it before. TikTok can do that because it has built up a detailed profile of your likes and dislikes, wants and needs, as expressed in your viewing habits. The more you view, the more it knows you. Neat, yeah! And it is owned by a Chinese company.

And that's the security concern: a vast national social data base, in private foreign hands. That concern should apply, of course, irrespective of the nationality of the hands, but China's recent aggressive and expansionist foreign policy stances have fuelled the security concern.

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Knowledge is power is not a new idea. An army may march on its stomach as Napoleon Bonaparte may have said, but superior intelligence, knowledge, is vital for victory. Influencing opinion, morale, in an opposing force is important.

There is another old saying in advertising circles: Of every four dollars spent, three are wasted. The problem is 'which three'? But the more you know about the target individuals or groups then the easier it is to tailor messages and reduce advertising wastage. And that is the nub of security concerns. Social media know you, perhaps, better than you know yourself and know how to reach inside your head.

## DIRECT TARGETING

There was trial run of this targeting using social media data in the 2016 US presidential campaign. A UK firm, Cambridge Analytica, obtained Facebook data via a US academic. The profiles enabled the Trump campaign to target uncommitted voters to support Trump. President Trump's victory cannot be ascribed solely to Cambridge Analytica's work, but it helped, and it demonstrated in the field, the potential of voter profiling and decision shaping.

TikTok is owned by Chinese company ByteDance and in 2020 the app had been downloaded 2 billion times. Under Article 7 of China's National Intelligence Law, Chinese companies must allow the Chinese government access to its data, data accumulated on all its users in any country. This was

the US concern, and now Australia is acknowledging a similar concern.

While TikTok says Australian data is stored in Singapore or the USA, the reality is data knows no national boundaries.

Home Affairs Minister Claire O'Neill has asked her department to investigate TikTok, especially its data practices but no deadline to report to the Minister seems set.

## AND THEN THERE IS OPTUS...

It seems there are a couple of things not quite clear in this unfolding saga. There is a lot more to come. But a couple of things stand out.

First, no reports. Yet a torrent of scams in the wake of the hack of the Optus data base, with one 19 year old man arrested in Sydney and charged with online blackmail. Two, Optus did not just require the usual folio of documents to establish the identity of new customers, they kept copies of things like driver's license, Medicare Cards and passports, for which Optus had absolutely no use, once identity was established. And three, if this event doesn't run a purgative through the corpus of unnecessary company record keeping nothing will.

Now, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland wants Optus to share the confidential records with financial institutions and others to enable early detection of attempts to exploit the hacked data. That seems problematic to me: the more that data is shared, surely the more the risk of it being hacked again.

And still no mention of Optus or any other company with a honey pot of redundant data being obliged to erase it!

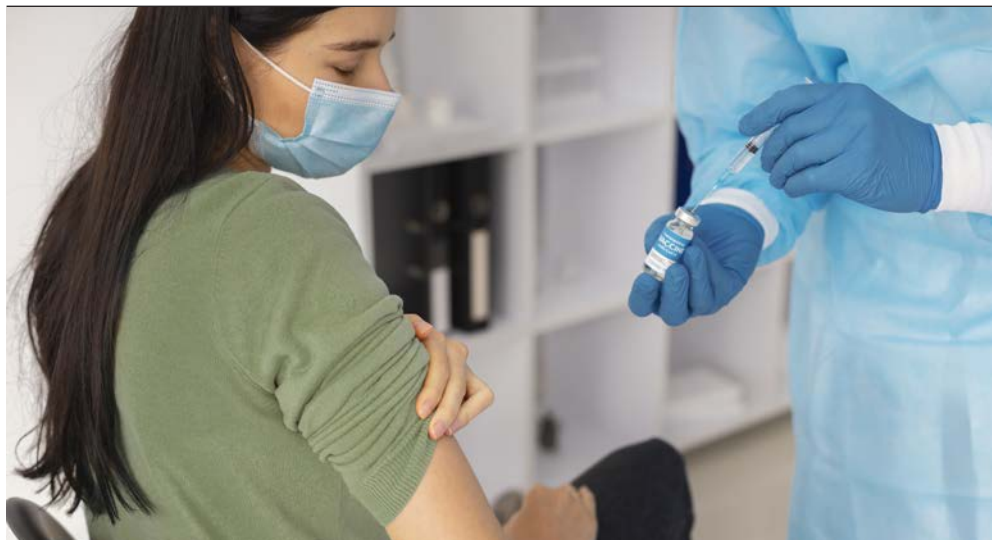
Identity theft is real and traumatic and occasionally expensive to the victim. But in relying on the ease that modern technology offers when it comes to paying and receiving money, plus instant communication, are we becoming addicted to the ease, and ignoring the risks?

A start date for the Crikey/Murdoch court trial is nine days from March 27, 2023.

**Vincent O'Donnell**

*Media Researcher and Analyst.*

# VACCINE #5



**W**e all would love this Pandemic to disappear but sadly we cannot cancel it or unfriend it. Dozens of Australians are still dying each day from this potentially brutal disease. It is important to test, isolate if positive and always wear masks in public areas; complacency worsens our risks.

If you do test positive, it is important to promptly phone your GP or NSW Health or the Taree Respiratory Clinic. If you are eligible for either of the covid anti-virals, you

can then have these prescribed. Your doctor can email or SMS a script to you or to your chemist. Chemists may home deliver these or else ask someone who is not a close contact to pick them up and drop them off to you. The PBS (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) subsidises these so the cost will be that of your usual scripts eg \$6 for concession card holders.

There is a new vaccine from Moderna targeting the original Omicron and the BA1 variant. Check with your pharmacist or GP for details and eligibility.



## OPENING

Mid November 2022

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# THERE'S PLANNING AND THEN THERE'S PLANNING WITH A PLAN

Complaints about the red tape, slowness, lack of human contact and labyrinthian websites to navigate when dealing with planning at Council, seems to be driving town planners and consultants, certifiers, professional draughtsmen/surveyors, builders and local handymen and women up a tree.

**O**ne professional chap dumped the lot back in his client's lap with no charge, saying that a simple and straightforward job had become SO complicated with council demands in writing, endless waiting on the phone for a human or one to call back, red tape and obfuscation and obstruction, let alone the complicated and often not working council websites, plus being told he'd be lucky to get an approval in under 15 months or so, that he gave the drawings back to his client and moved to a small town, with a great council, far, far away.

We are being swamped with ugly treeless jammed together housing estates in the MidCoast that seem to move through council with ease. While some locals are being hamstrung to wait endlessly for the approval of a small handyman type job on a driveway, a deck, a shed, or a wall or a window, then gets knocked back because it's 10 cms too short, or long, or something really trivial that could perhaps be negotiated or solved on site by a sensible council person.

Council has lost many experienced planners in recent times which doesn't seem to help. Other complaints are that some planners are old fashioned and out of date with modern thinking and climate change.

President of the Gloucester Environment Group, John Watts, offers some ideas.

"As pressure grows on many communities within the boundaries of the MidCoast Council, it is more imperative than ever that strong rules and guidelines are put in place, not just to preserve, but to improve our local environment. These rules and guidelines should not just be applied to new developments but to existing communities.

The planet faces two major and

inter-related environmental challenges, being climate change and biodiversity loss. Both of these problems are being caused by human activity and the way we plan our communities has a significant effect on both.

When I use the word 'development' I am not just referring to major housing or commercial subdivisions but to all human activities that change the existing environment such as the construction of a building or road within a previously developed area.

When any development is to be undertaken, either privately or by government, there should be two overriding principles to be considered.

1/ In what ways will the development affect biodiversity, and

2/ In what ways will the development contribute to climate change.

So far as the biodiversity issue is concerned the objective should be to make a positive contribution to biodiversity, and if the development will do anything to damage biodiversity it should not be permitted. This is particularly so where it adversely affects any threatened animal or plant species. In this regard the use of, so called offsets, should be recognised as an *ineffective* way of getting around the issue of biodiversity damage caused by a development. If any particular development will lessen biodiversity then it should not be permitted at all, and the developer should in fact be provided with incentives to make sure that the development contributes in a positive way to biodiversity.

The same principles should also apply to climate change. The objective should be that the development makes a positive contribution to dealing with the issue of climate change and if it will have a negative impact then it should not be permitted.

In relation to areas that have already been developed then the

Council should be taking steps to see what can be done to make a positive contribution to biodiversity and climate change. One simple step would be to undertake a wide ranging tree planting program on all public land and to apply tree preservation rules to all Council areas where it has the power to do so. In Gloucester where I live, I am not aware of any street tree planting by the Council in the last 10 years. Recently the Council reconstructed Queen Street which is one of the major entries to the town. In doing so it managed to create a large heat basin area of bitumen and concrete with no tree or shrub planting whatsoever. It is just one example of poor planning where no thought was given to its effect on biodiversity or climate change, let alone the beautification of the

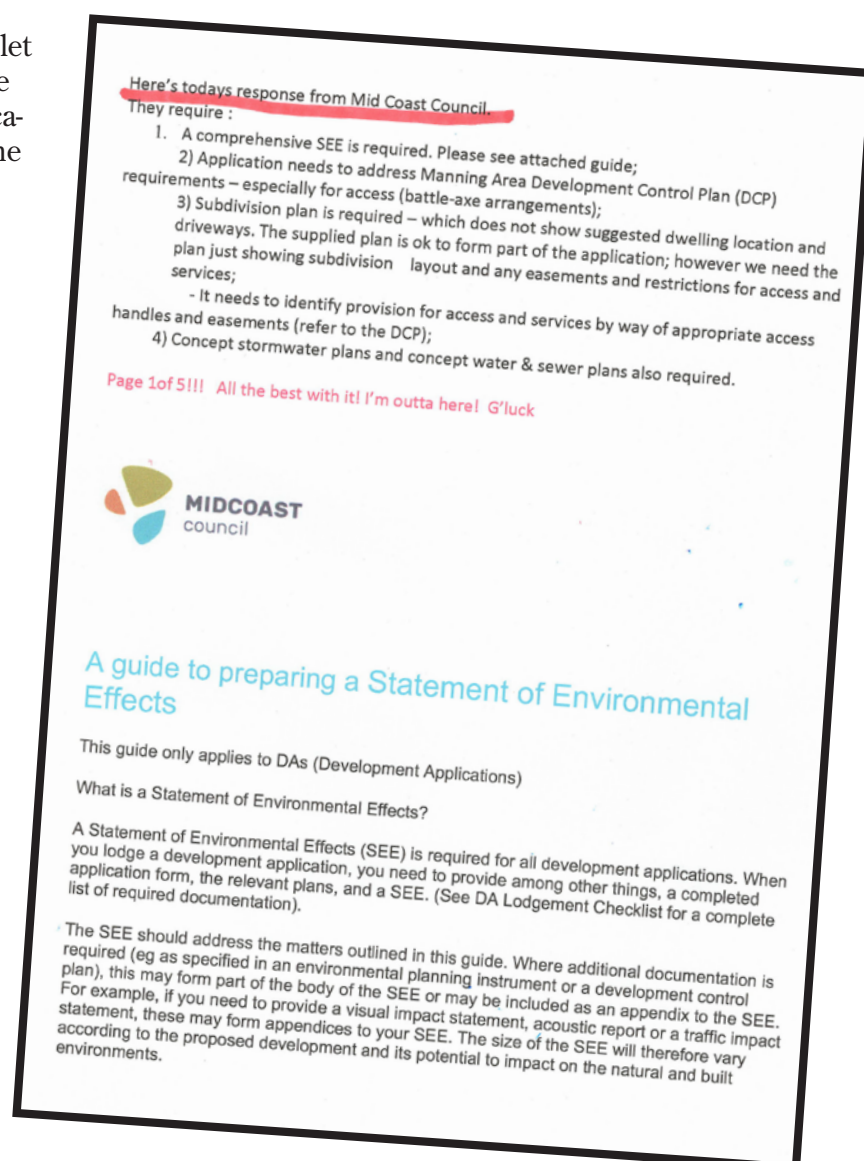
area. It was a real lost opportunity.

The planet faces the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. It is all very well for the Council to declare a climate emergency, but making a resolution is easy. Strong, imaginative, and effective action is now required."

Having just returned from spending time in the city of Sydney, it is heart breaking to walk in grey shrouded streets, constantly shadowed by the claustrophobic towers.

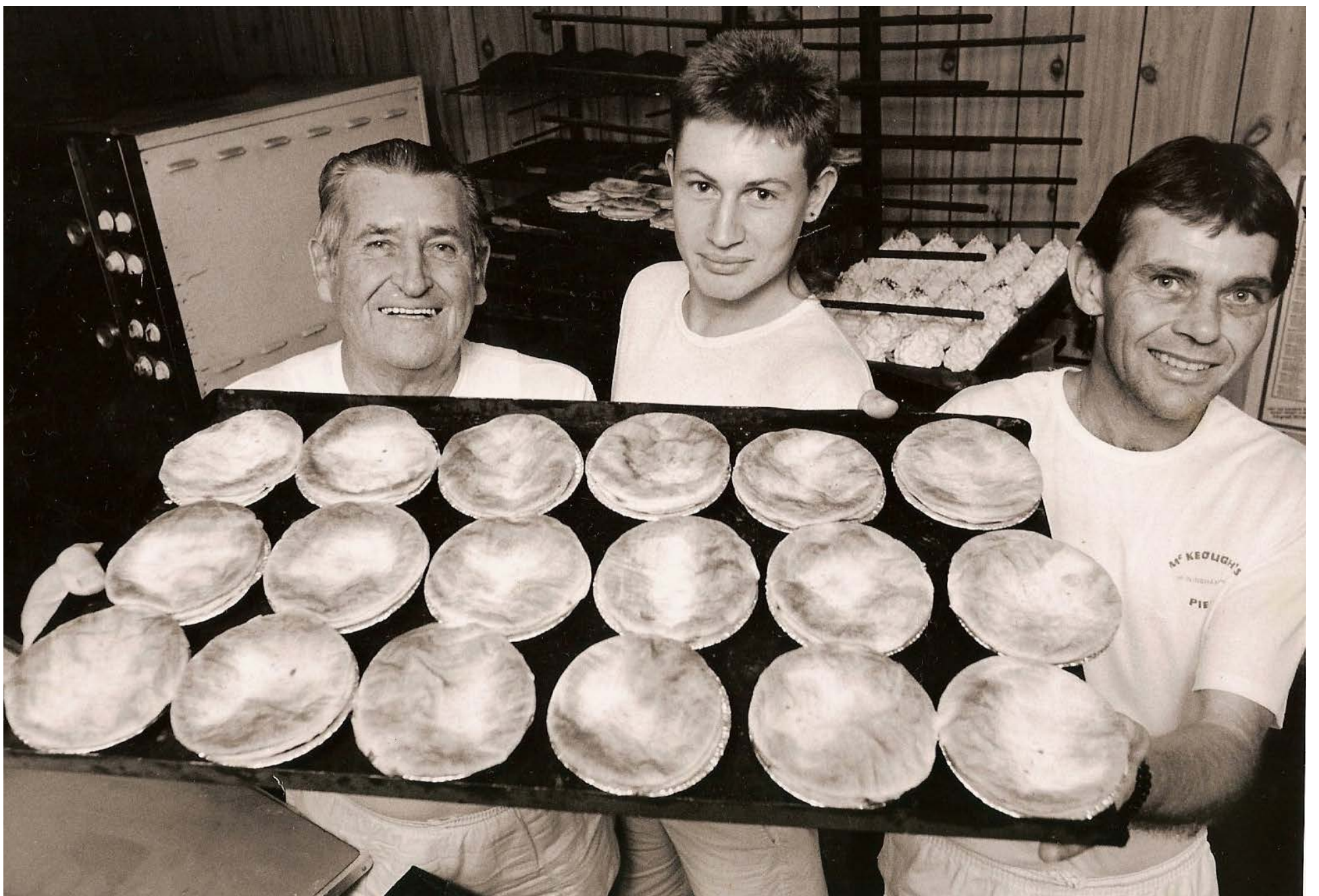
Where are the plazas, fountains, little parks, open space that make a city a delight. Planning is what makes a place habitable and enjoyable for the humans as well as the pockets of developers and fat corporate operators.

DM.



# LET'S KEEP THOSE WINGHAM TRADITIONS GOING!

The family business is what makes a country town.



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

**A**fter 55 years of 2am starts, it's time for Denis McKeough and the team at McKeough's Bakery, in Wingham, to hang up their aprons for the final time and enjoy retirement. One of the longest family operated businesses in the Manning,

has been handed over to new owners. Whilst retirement has been long-anticipated, finishing up at the business is not without a wave of nostalgia for the McKeough Family and it feels like the end of an era in Wingham.

Denis's parents, Mickey and

Norm McKeough, purchased the bakery in 1951 and Denis and his brothers, Mike and Rob, grew up at the bakery, also living in the upstairs residence at various times over their younger years.

Denis started working at the bakery after leaving school as a

temporary job but excelled in the role and was honoured when his parents offered for him to stay on in a paid role. "I can remember feeling chuffed that Mum and Dad now wanted to pay me for help that I'd always done for free as a teenager". 55 years later he continues to make the

original family pie recipe six days a week. Over the years speciality variations have been added and the pastry range expanded but the meat pie recipe remains unchanged.

McKeough's Bakery has very much been a family business, which perhaps accounts for its longevity. Mickey and Norm both worked in the bakery until they died. Denis's grandfather, Glenn McKeough, worked in the bakery part-time in his retirement, and the extended McKeough family have all pitched in to help over the years. Mike, Denis's brother, can recall baking all night with the family most weekends in his youth when the football or Aquatic carnival was on. "Those nights were always fun as the bakery is just down the road from the top pub and RSL club in Wingham. The shop front door was always open if we

were baking, so various people, would all start wandering in after the pubs and clubs closed in the very early hours. Nearly everyone always came out the back to talk as we baked and have a pie fresh out of the oven. It almost felt like a party of its own!"

Indeed, the hours the bakery has kept has meant that it has attracted a few characters who would come in before sunrise for a feed and some company. Mickey and Norm always made sure everyone was welcome at the bakery and it was not uncommon to find family or old friends in the sitting area in the bakehouse chatting to Denis and the team as they work their pastry magic.

McKeough's baked 20 dozen pies on an average day, which swelled to 200 dozen pies for

large events over the years. McKeough's are proud to have been the food supplier at many of the Manning's carnivals, shows, fairs and festivals; in addition to the local schools, clubs and businesses, for years. And it wasn't just the pies that made McKeough's famous. Their lamingtons, scones, hot cross buns and specialty cakes have been long-time family favourites. "The hot cross buns taste like the proper ones from a time gone by" is the consistent feedback.

Jenny McKeough reflects, "We often had people who left the Manning a long time ago come into the shop on a return trip to Wingham and marvel that we are still here, saying that we remind them of their childhood". Aside from the pies, the Mushroom tarts and Matchstick

pastries are the sentimental favourites and children of every generation have always reached for the Marshmallow cones.

When asked about the secret to their long term success, Denis says, that it has been the Bakery's staff. "We have been fortunate to have loyal and supportive staff over the years, many of which are now like family. Jenny Foster, our longest serving employee, has been with us for 48 years – such duration of service is almost unheard of now". We have also had fantastic support from the local community for decades, and for that we are truly thankful.

We hope that the Bakery will continue to serve the community with its new owners and that the legacy of the McKeough Family will live on.

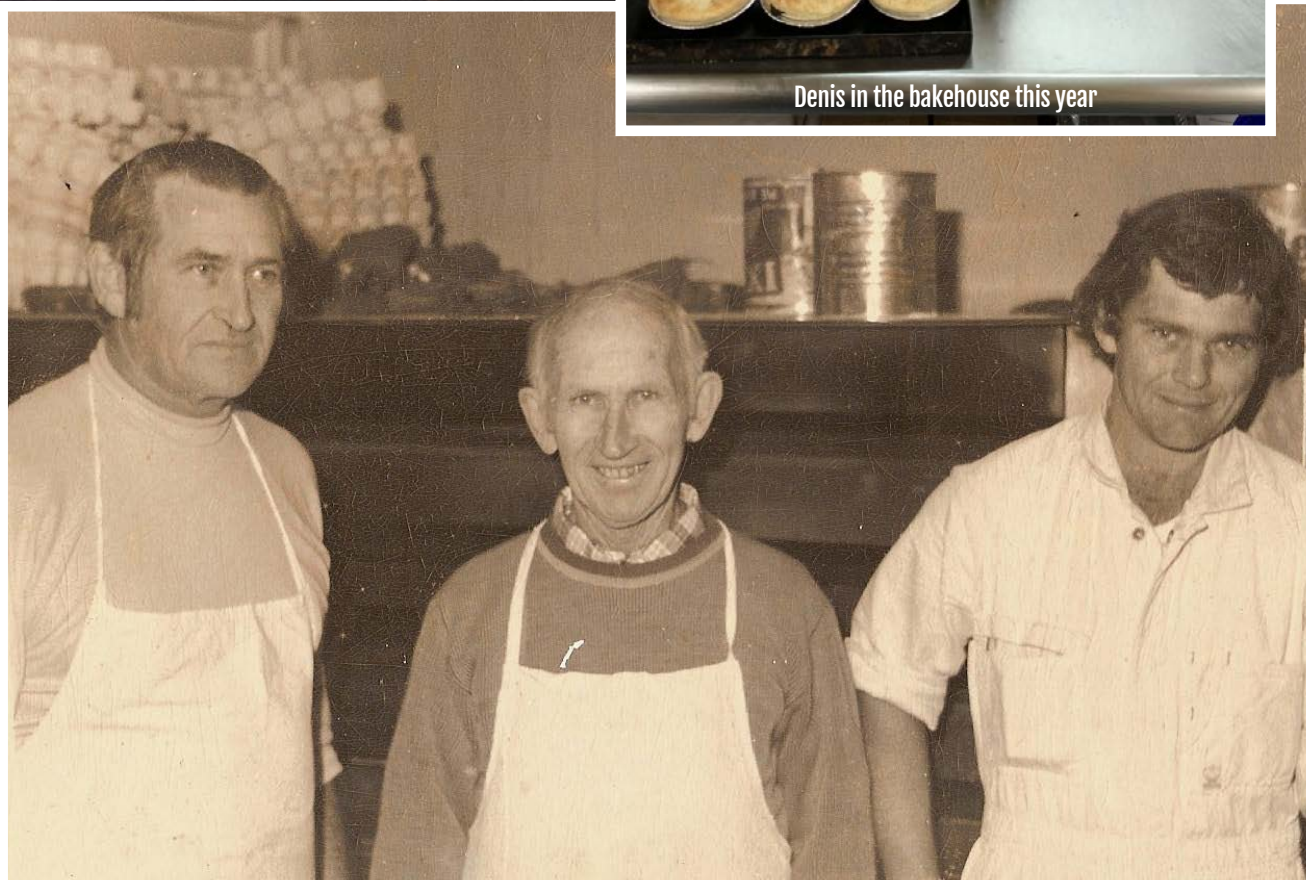
Freshly baked pies from the original family pie recipe still baked today



Jenny Foster, the longest serving employee at McKeough's Bakery.



Denis in the bakehouse this year



Three generations of McKeough men in the bakehouse, in the 1970's. Norm McKeough, Glen McKeough and Denis McKeough

# HOW TO BE A PARENT.

The name *Karitane* is often associated with pioneering paediatrician and psychiatrist Sir Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society in New Zealand. Karitane is named after the small town outside Dunedin.

**E**stablished in 1923, Karitane is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity supporting families in the first 2,000 days of their child's life. It has a history of innovation, providing leading specialist early parenting services while driving accessibility and support for parents across NSW to ensure every child receives the best start in life and supports Australian families when and where there is a need. The range and reach of the original nursing service has grown significantly with face-to-face and virtual models of care and an extensive suite of programs to support some of the NSWs most vulnerable communities.

August 2022 saw Karitane and Mission Australia, introduce the first 8 week BaP (Being a Parent) course in Forster. It sits under the EPEC (Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities) umbrella and is new to NSW, having run very successfully in Tasmania for over ten years.

It is unlike any other parenting course seen in our region. This particular program is a peer-to-peer program where parents help other parents, and the main message is 'being a good enough parent'. It's certainly not your standard parenting course with an expert out the front lecturing. EPEC facilitators sit alongside parents to help them reflect on how to develop more positive communication and parenting skills. This allows parents to be mindful of how their words and actions can impact on their children's wellbeing.

Other topics covered are behaviour, discipline, self-care for parents. The benefits from what the parents learn then ripple on to the parent's family and relationships, and has wide reaching benefits throughout the wider community.

The program has two components: Parents first take part in the 8 week course, running 3 hours per week, then parents may decide to go on to be paid facilitators of their own groups after receiving 60 hrs of training in the BaP program.

The Karitane EPEC team travelled to Tasmania in July, 2022 to see the positive impact this program has made over the past ten years it has been running. After completing the course and going on to become Parent facilitators - parents who have gained an enormous amount of confidence and gained employability skills to run further programs in their community.



## Empowering Parents Empowering Communities Being a Parent Course

### For parents with children aged 0-12

Join our FREE 8-week "Being a Parent" course. By attending this peer-led parent group, you learn practical communication skills for everyday life and bringing up confident and happy children.

- EPEC is based on parents supporting parents which are more trusted than services.
- Parents support each other to improve their relationships with their children.
- Opportunity to become a parent leader.

### Topics you will learn and discuss in a group environment:

- Understanding children's behavior
- Accepting and acknowledging feelings
- Play
- Listening and clear communication
- Labels and praise
- Discipline strategies

### DETAILS:

February 2023 (Dates TBC)

Thursdays: 10AM-12.30PM (Noon)

FORSTER VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED

**MISSION AUSTRALIA** | together we stand

For Bookings Contact Keri Harris, EPEC Coordinator Karitane, Taree  
Email: [keri.harris@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:keri.harris@health.nsw.gov.au) | 0483 369 880

This program will run again in Term 1, 2023 in Forster as well as introducing it to the Gloucester region in Term 2, 2023. If you're interested in joining the next course, please contact - Keri Harris (EPEC Coordinator, Karitane) ph: 0483 369 880 [Keri.harris@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Keri.harris@health.nsw.gov.au)

# FERTILISER VS SEASOL: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



If you think applying Seasol to your plants is enough to feed them – think again! There are a few big differences between fertilisers and seaweed health tonics that mean both are necessary for happy plants. Here's the dirt.



## FERTILISERS

Much like humans and animals, all plants require food - it's just the way we receive it that differs. Specifically, plants require adequate levels of the essential macronutrients Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium, which are found naturally in soil to a certain degree, but which require topping up to keep the plant healthy. All plant and garden fertilisers contain these three elements in different ratios depending on each plant's needs - look for the NPK on the packaging. Visit your local nursery or garden centre and you'll find a broad range of fertilisers to suit all plants in a great selection of different formulations including liquids, soluble powders, slow release pills, pellets and natural forms such as composts and manures.

### WHEN SHOULD I USE A FERTILISER?

Fertilisers should be used when your plants most need nutrients. There are a few occasions when this

might become particularly apparent:

- For potted plants, when the fertiliser included in your potting mix has been used up (check the packaging, but usually 3-6 months post planting) - ideally, you'll top up with slow-release fertiliser.
- Regularly during growing season, especially for flowering and fruiting plants - liquid fertiliser plays a valuable role here.
- At the end of winter, when your garden is beginning to wake up from hibernation mode.
- When preparing a garden bed for planting - this is when forms such as compost and manure come in most handy.
- After heavy rain, to replenish nutrients that might have leached from the soil.

## SEAWEED HEALTH TONICS

Seaweed solutions are a popular additive for plants - but they're not a substitute for fertiliser. Instead, you should think of them as a health

tonic for your plants. Why? Seaweed tonics, such as Seasol, contain seaweed derivatives that work to condition your soil and improve its structure by increasing the levels of a range of micronutrients that occur naturally in the soil while also stimulating the growth of micro-organisms. These elements are vital to your soil's microbiome and help to improve your plant's ability to take up the necessary nutrients, contributing to its overall health and resilience.

What seaweed solutions don't include is the essential macronutrients - that is, Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium - in a strong enough concentration to sustain your plant's life, and therefore can't be considered a "plant food". Seaweed tonics should be considered an essential part of your gardening regimen, alongside a suitable fertiliser.

### WHEN SHOULD I USE A SEAWEED TONIC?

Seaweed tonics are particularly

useful in a few different scenarios.

Use when repotting or replanting to help prevent transplant shock.

- Use during or after extreme weather conditions to help plants cope with heat stress or frost damage.
- Apply to new and establishing plants and seedlings to help enhance root growth.
- Apply during the growing season of ornamental and fruiting plants to stimulate production.
- Use when signs of pest, disease and fungus are evident to help combat ill-effects.
- Got a sick plant? Apply weekly for 6-8 weeks to help it bounce back.

Nevertheless, if you're unsure come and see the team at Wingham Nursery where we're more than happy to help.

**Wingham Nursery & Florist**  
02 6553 4570  
Find us on Facebook



# ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collect the past and invest for your future. A wonderful hobby that brings much enjoyment.

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

Have we had enough rain yet? After all those years of drought, water restrictions and failed crops it is still hard to say we have had enough. We must be getting close though. We surely are a country of droughts and flooding rains. A few years of in-between times would be wonderful!

A friend, Glenda, secretary of our Local Taree Collectors Club gave a report on one of her collecting activities and she has kindly allowed me to share it with you.

'Collectors collect a variety of things, as we saw with Peter's (our past Secretary) collection and his collecting habits.

When setting off on my first overseas travel, a friend asked me, or told me, to check all the public phones and collect used phone cards, for her husband.

We know Peter on his travels collected a lot of ephemera and collectables including the Coke/Cola cans which he displayed at our last Collectors Fair, (at Taree Police Citizens Youth Club - PCYC) then he sold the whole collection.

As a tourist I collect only what I can carry and use later on. When I was searching for a Permanent Ink Pen yesterday and going through several tins of old pens I thought, this is something I can bring for Show and Tell at our next meeting. All my old pens just got thrown into a container and forgotten.

I asked my grandson recently for a "Biro". He said, "What is a Biro?". Our aging members would have all grown up using pencils, then pens with a nib dipped into an ink well. Then we moved to Fountain pens - I really loved them, my first swimming trophy was a

fountain pen (but didn't keep it). Next came the BIRO aka Ballpoint pen which were produced under many names.

The creation of the ballpoint pen is usually credited to a Hungarian Argentine inventor Laszlo Biro, but an American, John J. Loud received the first patent for a ballpoint pen in 1888. It used a ball and socket to deliver sticky, quick drying ink. But it was too sticky, the ink was coarse and didn't work well on paper, but it did find an industrial use for writing on leather and cloth.

Laszlo Biro saw an idea in the quick drying inks newspapers use. His brother George, a chemist, helped him. They used a tiny ball bearing to serve two functions. It distributed ink evenly from the cartridge to the paper and it held the rest of the ink inside the cartridge. They made improvements to the ballpoint so it could write smoothly like a fountain pen.

When WW2 started they fled Budapest to Paris, Madrid and then Argentina, where they applied for a patent.

One of their contacts was an English accountant, Harry Martin, who saw the ballpoint could solve the problem faced by Britain's Air Force. Conventional pens leaked

and were sensitive to changes in atmospheric pressure, no good for writing aircraft logs. The pens went into commercial production in 1945 and were a sensation. In the US the Reynolds pen sold for \$12.50 (\$150 in today's money). People lined up to be first to buy the new technology.

When today's young people think they have all the technology, just remind them about the Ballpoint pen.

We take so much for granted. I have seen so many changes in my lifetime but have never given any thought to the history of the Biro or Ballpoint pen which are used by everyone, at school, work, home. We buy them as souvenirs, use them, then throw them in a container and forget them. They are great for fund-raising. They have many and varied uses eg. Calligraphy, fine point work, gifts, garden work and much more. Shorthand writers always used pencils, but probably now use Ballpoint pens or even computers.

Thanks to Glenda for her story and research.

Peter Williams, our Collectors Club Secretary, left for the trip of a lifetime, (at the start of Covid - March 2020) to cruise around

South America, through the Suez Canal, visiting many ports along the way. Peter contracted Covid and was transferred to a Florida hospital where he passed away. Peter is remembered for his work, his collecting and his enthusiasm. Rest in peace, Peter! A reminder to enjoy every moment we can. Life is precious!

Don't forget to visit our "best little Museum anywhere" in Wingham on the corner of Bent and Farquhar Streets, Anna, Rob and Adam at Clancy's in High St, Taree, Barry at Isadora's Antiques in Victoria St. Taree and Sue at Delinquent Funk in Isabella St, Wingham.

Dave (a good friend) and I have opened a shop (Antiques & Old Wares) at 12 Isabella St, Wingham. Call in and say hello.

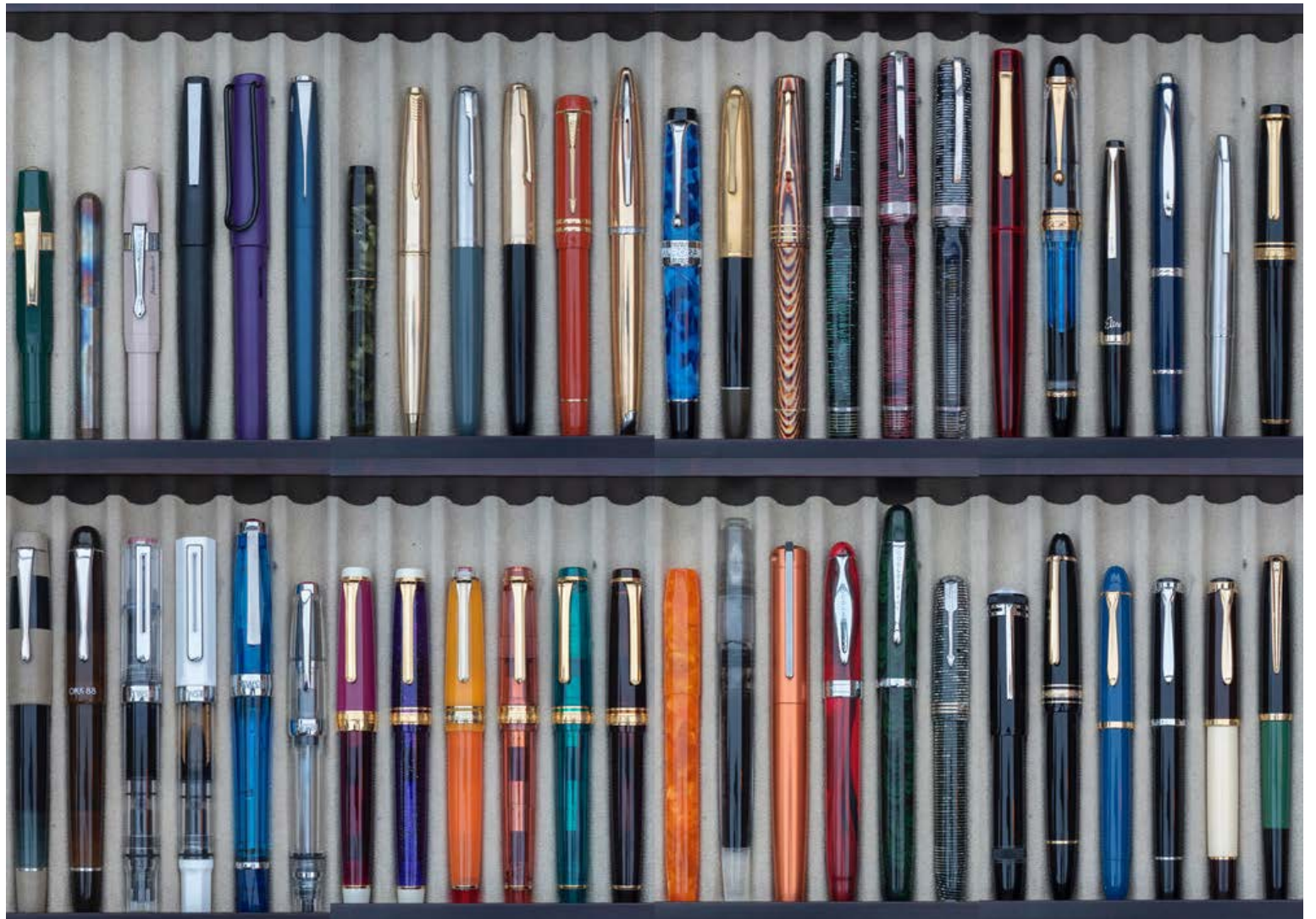
I hope that collecting brings you the enjoyment that I have experienced over forty odd years!

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

**Phone Rex - 0427 880 546.**

Take care and stay safe!

Photo: - A pen collection with purpose built display grooves.



A pen collection with purpose built display grooves.

# WHAT WE OWE THE FUTURE A MILLION-YEAR VIEW



William Macaskill

Published by One World 2022 Rrp \$26.25



**F**or the past twelve months I've been doing Pilates with an instructor who always pushes me a bit harder each time, with the result that at the conclusion of each session I feel physically stretched and a bit wacked. However, I always leave the studio with a sense of achievement.

Reading this book was like undertaking several strenuous sessions of Pilates for the brain and after I finished it, I felt that I had achieved something, although I'm not sure if it left me feeling more or less positive about the future.

This is the first book that I've read for some time where I kept saying to myself: 'Gee I hadn't thought of that before' and 'not sure that I agree with that.' What We Owe the Future is not an easy read, and some concepts are difficult to immediately grasp, but it is a book that really does stretch the mind and will challenge many of the reader's preconceptions.

Macaskill is a young Oxford University philosopher who is one of the founders of the 'effective altruism' movement and he raises many philosophical issues, some of which many readers might find difficult to immediately get their heads around. One example is in chapter 8 where he considers the idea of whether 'the prevented existence of a happy life is a moral loss.' Complex stuff indeed.

The introduction begins by asking the reader to 'imagine living, in order of birth, through the life of every human being who has ever lived.' It then goes on:

*Your first life begins about three hundred thousand years ago in Africa. After living that life and dying, you travel back in time and are reincarnated as the second-ever person, born slightly later than the first. Once that second person dies, you are reincarnated as the third, then the fourth, and so on. One hundred billion lives later, you become the youngest person alive today.*

Living all these lives takes almost four trillion years in total and includes drinking 44 trillion cups of coffee and 1.5 billion years having sex. Although you experience many good things you also undergo much cruelty and for 10% of the time you are a slave.

Macaskill then asks the reader to go even further to imagine experiencing, not only all the past human lives, but every life that will ever be lived and then poses the question:

*If you knew you were going to live all these future lives, what would you hope to do in the present? How much carbon dioxide would you want us to emit into the atmosphere? How much would you want to invest in research and education? How careful would you want us to be with new technologies that could destroy or permanently derail your future? How much attention would you want us to give to the impact of today's actions on the long term?*

This scene setting, Macaskill suggests, is because morality is about 'putting ourselves in others' shoes and treating their interests as we do our own.'

The main point of the book is

found in the first line of chapter 1 which says:

*Future people count. There could be a lot of them. We can make their lives go better.*

Many of us tend to think that in some way we are perhaps at the tail end of humanity's journey but Macaskill suggests otherwise asserting that while there have been about 110 billion humans who have already lived on earth but there might well be another eighty trillion people yet to come. 99.5% of all human experience might yet to be lived.

In putting his argument for what he calls 'longtermism', the thought that 'the idea that positively influencing the longterm future is a key moral priority of our time', Macaskill looks at the main threats facing humanity such as climate change, engineered pathogens, great power war, takeover or value lock-in by artificial intelligence. One point that I found particularly interesting is that he is not overly pessimistic when it comes to climate change although there is certainly no place for complacency.

The book argues that we have a moral obligation to do whatever we can to improve the lives of all the humans yet to be born and that our present generation is uniquely placed to do positive things because we live in an era of rapid change that is unlikely to persist.

As I read the book, I became concerned that, in terms of moral obligation, Macaskill was focussing almost entirely of the future welfare of humans and ignoring the position of other animals. However, in chapter 9 he finally does deal with the welfare of nonhuman animals, both farmed and wild. He says:

The question of what weight to give to human interests and to non-human interests is difficult.

The argument is then put that in considering the differences in capacity between humans and nonhuman animals we should look at the number of neurons that each has. I must admit that I found this argument unconvincing and, having regard to our present biodiversity crisis, I found his conclusions relating to the human caused loss of wildlife to be startling and unfortunate when he says:

*How you evaluate this depends on your view on wild animal wellbeing. It's very natural and intuitive to think of humans' impact on wild animal life as a great moral loss. But if we assess the lives of wild animals as being worse than nothing on average, which I think is plausible (though uncertain), then we arrive at the dizzying conclusion that from the perspective of wild animals themselves, the enormous growth and expansion of Homo Sapiens has been a good thing.*

Macaskill looks at the things that governments and corporations can and should do relating to issues such as climate change, artificial intelligence, and pandemics but when it comes to the role of the individual, he asserts that making donations to appropriate organisations, political activism and having children is more impactful than changing personal consumption decisions, such as vegetarianism, flying and driving less and not using plastic bags.

It is difficult not to agree with the book's basic proposition that we should act in a way that makes life better for future generations, but there will no doubt be disagreements and debates about the meaning of a 'better life' and how it might be achieved.

This is a challenging book in many ways and one which will no doubt lead to some fiery debates, but it deserves to be read.

## John Watts

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

# THE SECRET



Alexandra Smith

Published by Pan Macmillan Australia 2022

RRP \$36.99

In the dying days of his term as Prime Minister, as part of his strategy to avoid legislating for an effective federal integrity body, Morrison relentlessly attacked the New South Wales Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) for its treatment of Gladys Berejiklian. Morrison even described ICAC as a kangaroo court and made clear that he thought ICAC's investigation into Berejiklian was grossly unfair and totally unwarranted.

In *The Secret*, Smith objectively and carefully examines how it was that ICAC came to inquire into Berejiklian's conduct, an inquiry which ultimately led to her resignation.

Smith is the state political editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and has won the Walkley Award. She makes regular comment on ABC TV and radio and is the president of the NSW Press Gallery. Her knowledge of NSW state politics will be obvious to the reader as will be her skill as a communicator. The book is well written in a clear and easy to understand journalistic style.

It is a mystery to many people how it was that the career of such a popular and highly experienced politician such as Berejiklian came crashing down so suddenly. This book provides the answers and also gives the reader insights into the character of Berejiklian and clues as to some character flaws which contributed to her downfall.

The book cover says:

*"..... for all of her premiership, and well before, Berejiklian was harbouring a secret that she kept from her friends, family, colleagues and constituents. The secret-revealed during ICAC proceedings in 2020-would eventually bring down one of the country's most deeply respected leaders."*

*Journalist Alexandra Smith tells the inside story of the dramatic last weeks of Berejiklian's premiership and examines the political decisions and personal sacrifices that characterised her early days in public life, her rise to the top and her eventual downfall."*

Gladys Berejiklian grew up in suburban Sydney in a close and loving family. Her parents were Armenian immigrants, and the Armenian com-



munity was an important part of her life. She was always very protective of her family and private life which might help to explain her failure to make public her intimate relationship with Liberal backbencher Daryl Maguire, known to many as Dodgy Daryl.

As with many children from immigrant families, Berejiklian was expected to work hard and do well at school and she certainly did all that was expected of her by topping her classes and becoming school captain of her high school.

The book then examines the beginnings of her political rise through the ranks of the Young Liberals to become president, a well-worn path to a political career, as the Member for Willoughby. Other former young Liberal presidents included John Howard, Philip Ruddock, Joe Hockey, and Dominic Perrottet.

Berejiklian's big opportunity came when she was handed the often-difficult portfolio of Transport by then Premier Barry O'Farrell in 2011, a role she embraced enthusiastically. She seems to have earned the admiration of her colleagues when, despite having the numbers, she did not seek the Liberal Party leadership to permit Mike Baird to be elected unopposed after the demise of O'Farrell. Ironically it was also ICAC that saw the end of O'Farrell's premiership after a slip of memory concerning the receipt of a \$3,000 bottle of 1959 Penfolds Grange.

One interesting fact to emerge from the book is the important role that she played in supporting the Yes vote for same sex marriage, apparently becoming somewhat of a gay icon

## The Secret

The behind-the-scenes story of the mighty rise and shocking fall of Gladys Berejiklian



## Alexandra Smith

for her stand.

Berejiklian's popularity soared with her handling of the devastating bushfires and the covid pandemic and the fact that she was perceived as a person of integrity.

Her troubles began with her evidence to ICAC which revealed details of her long running and secret relationship with Dodgy Daryl, evidence which came as a shock to even her closest colleagues. However, that evidence was given as part of the inquiry into Maguire's conduct, and it seems that Berejiklian was hopeful that there would not then be an ICAC inquiry into her own conduct. When it became clear that ICAC was going to examine her own conduct Berejiklian had no option but to resign.

Despite her reputation as an honest politician Berejiklian's evidence before ICAC showed that she had a few blind spots in the integrity area. She was unable to concede that there was any conflict-of-interest issue in relation to

the non-disclosure of her relationship with Maguire, despite the fact that she was involved in making decisions which might benefit him politically. She denied that she had any suspicions about Maguire being involved in any dodgy dealings, and she maintained that there was nothing at all improper about the use of taxpayer funds for what is known as 'pork barrelling.'

While this is a great book for those with an interest in NSW politics, it is much more a fascinating insight into aspects of human nature and human foibles. It also demonstrates the importance to our political system of a fearlessly independent body such as ICAC.

I recommend it highly.

**John Watts**

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet*. John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group

# GRACE TAME

## THE NINTH LIFE OF A DIAMOND MINER – A MEMOIR



Pan Macmillan

Rrp \$49.99

**T**his book is a surprise in many ways. Yes, it's gutsy, brave, defiant even. But it's also touching, funny, surprising. Grace Tame's personality in all its toughness, braveness, fragility and humour jumps from each page.

The story of her abuse as a young girl by a schoolteacher and its subsequent damage is not the raison d'être of this story, though that trauma and her fight to stand up for women, call out issues of sexual abuse, brought her to our attention as Australian of the Year, has given her a platform.

But she is an intriguing mix of the public face and personality, with a private story she tells well.

I wondered at the title of the book, till I read about Jorge – a rough old diamond miner she meets in her time in Portugal aged 19. Jorge has one front tooth, a chihuahua, the clothes on his back, and a clapped-out Peugeot stuffed with photograph albums documenting his life adventures. He had “nine lives, or thereabouts” wandering the world, including a stint mining diamonds in Brazil before wending his way back home.

Jorge was asset poor but rich in things that really matter – “the simple pleasure of having nothing more than a wealth of vivid memories and real friends.” She reveals that “our power lies in how we respond to what life throws at us.”

Yes, the book does deal with her



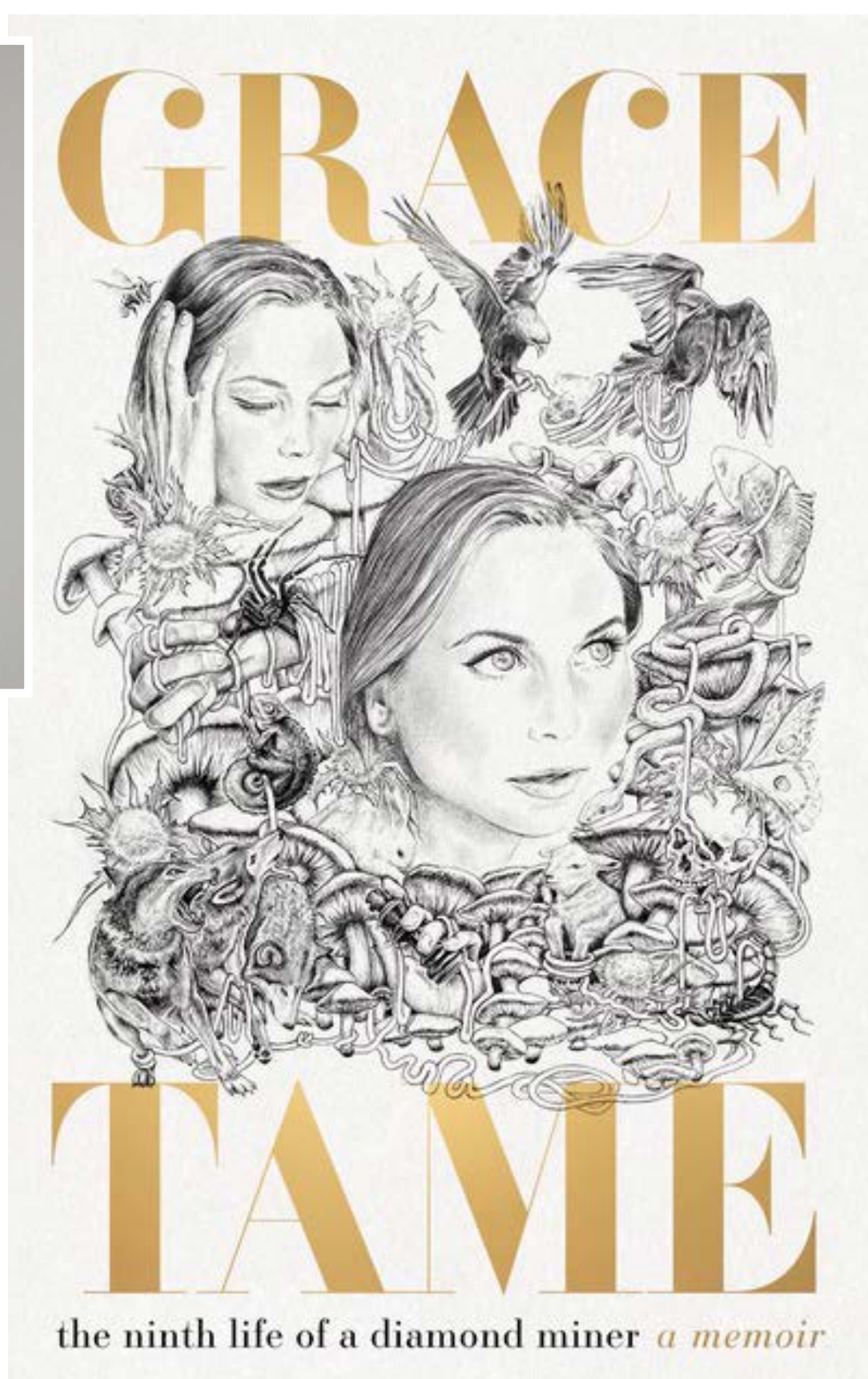
public persona and the issues and incidents that brought her to our attention, from the loud brave speaking out, to the side-long look at the then PM that says so much more. But there's lots more to tell of a life lived to the fullest.

She's a good writer, unafraid to reveal her fragilities, how her autism manifests, her traumas and her triumphs. But her art (included in colour photographs) intrigued me as much as her writing.

Her final words ... “May these words bring you home” signals she'll always be at home in a world of words.

Grace is still so young. It will be interesting to follow her journey.

DM



# SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL

Angela Lansbury



Angela Lansbury and John Mills in the Aussie film "Summer of the Seventeenth Doll"

**A**ctress Dame Angela Lansbury recently died aged 96.

Most remember her from her TV series "Murder She Wrote".

However I recall, as a shy young schoolgirl, meeting her in the make-up room of Artransa Film Studios in Sydney's French's Forest where my mother worked.

She was one of the overseas stars in a film being made of popular hit Aussie play, "*Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*" by Ray Lawler.

As was the way, then, and sadly still too often now, for a film to be made, big name overseas actors had

to be attached.

So in a quintessential Aussie story, the stars were Ernest Borgnine, Anne Baxter (who fell in love with grazier Randolph Galt and married him living on a remote station), and John Mills with Aussies in the support roles. The Director, Leslie Norman, was English.

The film was not a crash hot hit. In the US it was retitled, "Season of Passion". The mish mash of attempted Aussie accents, or none at all, the revamping of the plot to appeal to OS audiences (they thought) turned a classic into bomb, though it got mileage here as one of the first

so called co-productions.

What's changed you might well ask!

Australia, thanks to our generous tax cuts and incentives to bring overseas film productions here, makes it harder for home grown productions to get a financial guernsey.

Australian audiences want to see, hear and read *our* stories.

I recall my chat with Ms Lansbury as she sat in the make-up chair as being very sweet and friendly. I couldn't keep my eyes off her flawless English complexion. Anne Baxter was lovely too, Ernie Borgnine was loud, John Mellion made

me laugh, John Mills was utterly charming, such a gentleman, and the young Australian actress who played Bubba the sweet young love interest, played by Janette Craig, didn't seem to be heard of very much after that.

Undoubtedly Angela Lansbury's great love was the theatre and her performances on Broadway and the West End brought her accolades.

She did return to Australia several times, even in her 80s schlepping round Australian stages for producer John Frost. Vale Dame Angela - a gentle force of nature indeed.

DM

# SOME ADVICE FROM ALBY

When he is not playing rugby for Maitland Juniors through the winter months and bowling leg breaks during the cricket season, young champion Alby Nancarrow always finds time to go fishing with the family.

**I** caught Alby on Fingal Beach with his dad Nick targeting bream just behind the wash on a rising tide into the dark.

For bait Alby used strips of fresh mullet, a few old prawns and chicken breast fillet. Bream are not fussy eaters as they will have a crack at just about anything including bread, cheese, yabbies, pip-pies, worms and cubed pilchards – the list goes on.

Of all the local beaches around us the most productive are Stockton and Fingal although bumper bream can be

caught on all beaches in the right conditions particularly at this time of the year.

If I had to name one bait best off the beach it would be the savage beach worm available at all Bait and Tackle outlets. Fresh, live worms are preferable, however pickled, salted or frozen worms will do the trick. I suggest you learn to catch your own beach worms as you will save a fortune along the way. And, to quote Alby, "It's heaps of fun!"

Give it a go.

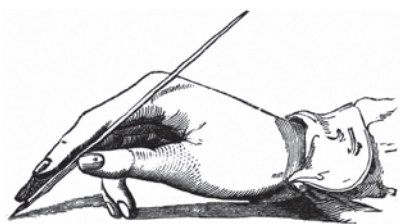


Young Maitland champ Alby Nancarrow bounced this cracker bream up Fingal beach

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](http://www.stinker.com.au) or send an email to [editor@manningcommunitynews.com](mailto:editor@manningcommunitynews.com) with your information and questions.





# YOUR SAY...

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

Dear Editor,

**I**t may be nice to live within sight of the sea or a river, but it amazes me that people do not see how dangerous it is. The sea sweeps away houses on low-lying areas by the beach, and houses on cliff tops. These houses are usually expensive, but when they collapse the owners expect the rest of us taxpayers, who are not so silly or so rich as to buy risky houses, to pay for sea walls or other defences to protect them. People who live on river banks are in exactly the same situation, particularly now floods are regular and deep. It is no wonder such properties have become uninsurable unless the premiums are huge.

The last paragraph of your article about rising sea levels and storm surge hits the nail on the head. The huge amount of water which has devastated Pakistan, like all other

flood waters, ends up in the sea. It is getting worse as Himalayan, Andes, and Alps glaciers melt, along with the Greenland icecap. Hundred year floods now seem to happen every few years, if not more frequently. We worry about man-made emissions, but are we taking into account the effect of bush and forest fires, and the CO2 they produce, in calculating how fast we are warming the planet? If sea level rises a metre, those floods will be a metre higher too. Why on earth would anyone with any intelligence buy a house on these proposed developments? With a bit of luck they won't, and the developments will not happen.

We should build on high ground which is little use for agriculture, and stop expanding settlements and cities in low-lying areas.

Yours faithfully,  
Terry Stanton.  
Tinonee

Dear Editor,

**T**his International White Cane Day, Guide Dogs Australia's 'Look up. Listen Up. Let me be.' campaign is urging the community to be more aware of how they might be obstructing people with low vision or blindness, with the aim of making our streets safer and more accessible for all.

This means looking up from phones and turning the volume down or off, with 3 in 4 Guide Dogs Clients saying distractions from mobiles or headphones are the main cause of obstructions to their path.

Bikes and scooters being ridden on pavements are also a concern, as this can leave more vulnerable members of our community at risk of physical harm.

White cane use is skilled and

concentrated work, and members of this community devote time to learning that skill to maintain their independence and quality of life. It's important that work isn't obstructed, especially since these incidents leave white cane users feeling anxious, frustrated and unsafe.

Most members of the public are trying to do the right thing, but that should stop short of touching a person or their cane without asking – something a third of Clients have experienced.

In short, simply leveling-up your awareness is the one thing you can do to create a safer environment for everybody.

For more information, visit [www.guidedogs.com.au](http://www.guidedogs.com.au)

Jaryd Clifford

Paralympic Medallist and Guide Dogs Ambassador

## Looking For A Tenant Extraordinaire?

Mature woman desires quiet neighbourhood or country home. Two bedrooms best but will consider other depending on location. Ability to have small veggie garden is a plus. I pay rent weeks in advance and have great references. Only long term possibilities please. Maggie 6559 4745.

So today, in church,  
a guy in a dress tried to drown me

And, I kid you not,  
my family just stood there  
taking pictures!

[liturgy.co.nz](http://liturgy.co.nz)

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