

The Manning Community News

MAY 2023

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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

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THAT THERE IS A HOUSING CRISIS IS NEWS TO NO-ONE

Midcoast local government area is at the lower end of the earnings scale and many people are living in poverty.



One man's castle.....

will we demolished if it doesn't
meet council regulations.

No compromises.

painted by a homeless man, one of the
most thought-provoking and poignant
pieces of public art. . . .

Visible homeless is apparent if you head down to one of the reserves by the river. There you will see a few tents and people living in vans and cars with nowhere to go. They get moved on, but then they, or others return. Others remain out

of sight, sleeping in cars, or in town when shops are closed, and others out in the scrub. Though during Covid a group of men set themselves up very well in the bush camping in tents with dogs and mates, plus friends and volunteers bringing food. Public fa-

cilities of shower and toilets were nearby and all was kept tidy.

That was until council found out and turned off the water and locked the toilets and made them move into single rooms in town. Minus pets.

But the real scale of homelessness is much greater and less visible.

There are significant numbers of people (thousands?) living in unapproved dwellings. These range from shacks to sheds. Some are built of solid recycled hardwood or scavenged materials, some are newly built sheds. What they have in common is that the inhabitants are unable to afford entry to the traditional housing market. And many don't want to. They'd rather experiment with bottle

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USE IT OR LOSE IT IS ALL VERY WELL BUT...

I had to fly to Sydney for an important meeting at 8am. I either go the night before and pay for a hotel plus transport ..train or drive to Sydney. Or drive to Newcastle and stay overnight or drive to Newcastle at 2am. Or, as I did, drive to Port Macquarie at 4.45am.

It is so frustrating not having an air service for our massive electorate.

So I sent Council a few questions to update me on just what is going on at Taree airport, if anything.

I sent this to the Council's media rep -

"Can you please fill me in on what's happening ..if anything...re getting an airline service back into Taree?"

What are the issues and problems with the airport apart from runway not fit for purpose and also unable to take the bigger planes.

Why did Rex pull out?

Are there any plans to upgrade the airport to attract an airline service?"

This is what I received from the MidCoast Council acting media representative.

Hi Di

In response to your query about Taree Airport, please find a response from Council below:

Regular passenger transport (RPT) air services from the Taree Airport ceased on 31 July 2022.

These services were being provided by FlyPelican.

FlyPelican intends to review the viability of the Sydney to Taree and the Taree to Sydney flight routes during 2023 and Council has retained a strong relationship with this service provider.

Council has been liaising with the Office of the Federal member in order to source a funding stream to subsidise a regular passenger transport operator offering services to and from Taree Airport.

Council understands that without a subsidy both flights to and from Taree to Sydney are unviable given the low passenger numbers.

There are no issues with the Taree Airport or runway which prevent the provision of a regular passenger transport service.

The airport is limited in terms of the size of the planes that can take off and land as the pavement is not strong enough to carry the weight of much larger planes (Boeing 737-800 and the Airbus A321).

In relation to "REX", as you would be aware the company is a previous supplier of RPT air services from the Taree Airport.

"REX" chose to discontinue these services due to ongoing viability issues (low passenger numbers) and are unlikely to return given that they have larger planes than FlyPelican and need to fill more seats to be viable.

In simple terms, there needs to be a significant increase in passenger numbers or a government subsidy to entice any RPT provider to resume services from the Taree Airport.

If you need any further information, don't hesi-

tate to get in touch.

Regards

Sara

Sent from my iPhone

Sara Wilson | Community Relations and Education Coordinator

Direct (02) 7955 7334 | Mobile 0409 339 518

Email Sara.Wilson@midcoast.nsw.gov.au |

midcoast.nsw.gov.au



I then contacted Rex Airlines Director of Media.

He gave a hollow laugh and directed me to their press release when they terminated the Taree Service telling me there was nothing more to say.

This was the press release from Rex when they terminated service to Taree.

Surely we can do better.

DM

Regional Express

15 DECEMBER 2017

MEDIA RELEASE

REX EXITS TAREE – SYDNEY ROUTE

Regional Express (Rex) has today announced that it will exit the Taree to Sydney route with the last service operating on Saturday 27 January 2018.

Rex's General Manager, Network Strategy & Sales Warrick Lodge said "Rex commenced servicing the Taree to Sydney route more than 10 years ago in February 2007. This followed the collapse of Big Sky Express Airlines in late 2006 and a request from the Greater Taree City Council. The Taree route is loss-making for Rex however, the impetus to withdraw from the route originated from the Mid Coast Council's refusal to supply a 3-phase power outlet to the airport apron (an investment of less than \$1,000) when Rex was prepared to invest \$23,000 for a new 3-phase Ground Power Unit that would improve operating efficiencies and reliability on the route."

"Rex was dismayed by the decision of the Mid Coast Council to hold back key services for the primary user of Taree airport given that Council had spent in excess of \$4.2M on airport upgrades over the previous three years without consulting with Rex to understand its needs."

"Rex had earlier given the Mid Coast Council one year to find a replacement airline and Rex has recently been informed by Council that a replacement airline has been sourced. As Taree to Sydney is a licensed route, Rex has provided more than the required four weeks' notice to Transport for NSW of its intention to withdraw from the route."

The Rex services between Newcastle and Sydney, which are currently shared with Taree, will continue to operate as normal with 36 weekly services between Newcastle and Sydney.

Taree passengers holding Rex reservations for travel beyond 27 January 2018 will be offered a full refund.

Regional Express (Rex) is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of more than 50 Saab 340 aircraft on some 1,500 weekly flights to 60 destinations throughout all states in Australia. In addition to the regional airline Regional Express, the **Rex Group** comprises wholly owned subsidiaries **Pel-Air Aviation** (air freight and charter operator), **Air Link** (Dubbo-based regional airline) and the **Australian Airline Pilot Academy**.

Rex Media Contact: Corporate Communications: +61 402 438 361 media@rex.com.au



HI TO RADIO LAND!

Local Radio 2BOB's 'Find Your Voice' youth Training initiative is continuing to provide free training to local youths aged between 12 and 26 who want to learn the skill of radio presentation.



Radio youth training team L-R Lucy Kelleher, Riley Donovan, Cameron Waugh, Jamaica Keogh and Jackie Faice.

2BOB's Youth Programming grew out of the legacy of the original 'Schools Out' program, which saw a variety of school groups from across the greater Manning region come into the station to broadcast programs for many years. It provided a positive experience for hundreds of kids across the Manning Valley.

"2BOB hopes it can continue to provide that same positive experience to local youth in our area for years to come with this

new program. "said 2BOB Youth Mentor Brendan Parker. "2BOB is a great stepping stone to a career path into radio, media, journalism or communications based careers.

"Radio is a great place to build self confidence and resilience. Broadcasting improves your ability to speak in public and provides the confidence to do so in front of peers. Participating at 2BOB and becoming a presenter has secured a path to employment for some of our youth presenters.

Previous Youth Coordinator, Bailey Corrigan recently secured his first job in commercial radio in Tamworth and everyone wishes him well.

Said Bailey, "After listening to several different radio stations in my early teenage years, at 15 I decided it was the right time to give radio a crack myself! 2BOB has played a significant role in helping me to increase my communication abilities, build my self confidence, and I have been given the amazing opportunity to play the music I love and share

it with the local community and wider streaming audience."

2BOB has held two successful open days over recent months providing an introduction to radio and the station to local youths, several of whom have completed their training programs and are progressing towards hosting their own live to air programs.

For more information contact:
Brendan Parker
admin@2bobradio.org.au
0490 103 516

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walls, ferrocement and bamboo, and make-do with composting toilets. And be free of a lifetime of debt.

Let's face it, if you have casual, part-time or no employment, or are on a pension of any sort, you will not be able to afford the average rental, let alone gather a house deposit and pay a mortgage. For many folk, putting a simple basic dwelling together on a rural block (often owned by someone else) is the most they can manage.

Unfortunately, if someone dubs you in to Council, Council's approach is to issue a demolition order. What happens to the inhabitants seems to be none of their concern. They want everyone to fit into their expensive little boxes and meet the onerous building standards.

Those who live on the fringes with poor or no services such as water and power on tap, no sewage, sometimes no rubbish service and dirt roads - more akin to a string of potholes - seldom complain. Partly to not draw attention to themselves, but also because they have few expectations.

They are happier living in very basic conditions where they feel some security than be caught up in the rental arms race, where each year rents go up but your income doesn't and if you can't pay you're out.

I can't help thinking that Council's resources would be better spent expanding the housing options. Encouraging the construction of 'granny' flats and providing guidance to make the process of getting approval more straightforward and ensuring that the flat meets basic but not onerous requirements.

Council needs to be working with the state and federal governments and the private sector to see more diverse housing options constructed. For example, simple units for singles and slightly bigger ones for two people without children. These could be medium density constructions but using more durable and cheaper materials such as steel, colourbond and cement sheet, designed and built in such a way that they can be dismantled and all the materials re-used at a later date. Quality, attractive housing, built with good shared facilities such as a community garden and a

common room, might see some older people downsize and give young people a start.

The current modern house is in many ways an environmental disaster. Despite its outward appearance it's not expected to last more than about 50 years. It's pine frame, gyprock walls and dark tile roof make it unsuitable to withstand the extreme weather that we all know is coming. A severe hailstorm and the roof gets holes in it and the water gets in, making the gyprock water logged so the ceiling falls in. In floods the gyprock needs to be removed and discarded to stop the mould. The dark roof absorbs heat so without air-conditioning the temperature inside is very unpleasant.

Modern building standards are no longer fit for purpose, and this will become ever more apparent with each extreme weather event we experience. More flexibility with building materials such as rammed earth, hempcrete and lightweight cement such as aircrete and Hebel should be encouraged.

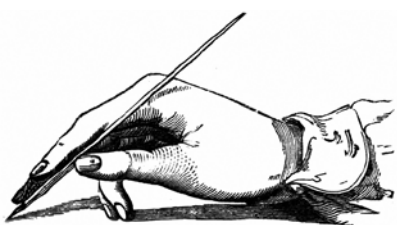
A few communities in the US, especially those where homelessness

in freezing conditions can actually be fatal, are responding by building very simple and affordable shelters for those without. A good example are Conestoga huts <https://communitysupportedshelters.org/conestoga-huts>. There are already around 200 of these in Oregon, and a number are being built in other northern US states and Canada. These 6 by 10 foot shelters are insulated and lockable, and are being built by volunteers for less than US\$500 each.

We don't all need -or want- huge modern houses. I would argue that it is the push to have everyone isolated in their identical boxes that drives the consumption frenzy that causes us to squander the diminishing resources earth provides. We know that a large part of the mental health crisis in our society comes from alienation: from community and the natural world. By re-thinking how we do housing, we can address some of those issues.

And don't get me started on the perversity of negative gearing where low income taxpayers subsidise the wealthy to endlessly expand their housing portfolio.

Susie Russell.



YOUR SAY

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

The Editor,
The Manning Community News
Good morning Ed,

The article in the April edition of the MCN, titled, *'The Election? Yawn'*, includes the following concerning paragraph:

"After twelve years, there are fears we are in for more of the same where the new National Party representative, Tanya Thompson, the former staff secretary to the late Stephen Bromhead MP, promised in her TV ads "to carry on his work and plans."

I presume that means continued bombardment of a costly bulletin of endless glossy pages

with innumerable self-promotional photos of the local member with ad nauseam repeat advisings of grant monies having been acquired for the area. These funds do not come from the member's pocket and in securing said funds, the member is simply doing his/her job!!

I would also caution the new member to not waste her time and energy with follow-up petitions etc for a widening of the Forster-Tuncurry bridge, begun by Stephen Bromhead following the fatal accident on the bridge two years ago. The petition gave false hope to the plaintive cries of people who know no better. The cost to widen the bridge would be in the hundreds of

millions of dollars and the state government's finances are already stretched in funding other far more important capital work projects. If the bridge is widened in my lifetime, (I am a healthy 75 year old), I will walk barefoot and backward from Beach Bums to Blackhead.

In future matters of a contentious nature, (similar to the earlier Council merger), I would also caution the new member to support the community, who were, in the main, against the merger, and not simply toe the party line, (who promoted the merger).

**Steven Maher
Forster**

ENVIROFAIR AND MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL IS BACK FOR 2023!

2BOB Radio is proud to announce that the Envirofair & Multicultural Festival will be held on Saturday June 10 and organisers promise this year's event will be as bright and entertaining as ever. The day will start at 9am and finish at 4pm with a gold coin donation requested upon entry.

This will be the 29th Envirofair with the focus once again on the 5 R's - Reduce Reuse Recycle Renew and Repurpose, but this year 2BOB has added Recovery and Revival, to reflect the resilience required after recent years of drought, fire, floods and Covid.

This year's Envirofair will include environmentally themed market stalls and displays, plus the return of the Environmental speaker's tent thanks to Jessica Leck and our local Landcare group.

The multicultural aspect of the festival will include a variety of mouth-watering food stalls and informative displays, as well as live world music, including local artist Tlarmon and Pam Hata, with more to be confirmed.

"Combining Envirofair with a Multicultural Festival means we can reach a broader audience with multicultural displays and a line-up of world musical acts and dance performances to entertain the wonderful



folks of the Manning and beyond," said Brendan Parker, 2BOB's Event Coordinator.

"A lot of things that have entered seamlessly into our lives, such as recycling, solar and renewable energy,



the commercial rollout of electric vehicles and the phasing out of single use plastic bags were still just dreams when Envirofair first started," said Brendan. "The growing popularity of Envirofair over the years reflects

these gradual changes in society and there's always room for improvement, such as the 'Save Bulga Forest' movement which has formed due to the return of logging in several of our local forests, so soon after the fires."

Envirofair will have plenty to entertain the kids with face-painting, dance workshops, installations and a display from Reptile Solutions, where festival-goers can get up close and personal with a few of our reptilian friends!

The 29th Envirofair and Multicultural Festival will be a fabulous day of family fun entertainment for the Manning and beyond thanks to grants 2BOB has received from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Crown Lands, Multicultural NSW & Midcoast Council.

Interested stallholders are invited to contact 2BOB via their Facebook page or email admin@2bobradio.org.au or ring the station on 6552 6200.

BRUMBIES AND BROOM INVADERS OF THE BARRINGTON TOPS

Gloucester is marketed as a gateway to the World Heritage Barrington tops.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NP&WS) website has this to say about the Barrington Tops:

Most of Barrington Tops National Park is declared wilderness; large, natural areas of land that, together with their native plants and animal communities, remain essentially unchanged by modern human activity. Wilderness areas in NSW represent the largest, most pristine natural areas within NSW - the last of Australia's wild and untamed places. The edges of the wilderness area of Barrington Tops are

easily accessible; some of the most spectacular views in the park are from Careys Peak and Devils Hole and Thunderbolts lookouts. You'll notice the varied textures of the forest below you, with the ranges of the Barrington Wilderness running east and south from the plateau like the fingers of an outstretched hand.

For the past couple of years access from Gloucester to the Barrington Tops National Park via the Scone Road has not been possible because of a major landslip. However, many of us in Gloucester were delighted when it was recently reopened, and once again we could plan a bushwalk to the area, which we did.

One of the most popular spots for those visiting the National Park is an area called Polblue where there is a camping ground and easy access to a walk around Polblue swamp, about which the NP&WS website has this to say:

The Polblue Swamp track will take you on a short journey through the wetlands and high-altitude forests of the Barrington Tops Plateau. You'll see the smooth dark trunks of black sally, snow gums with scribbles on their bark and be dwarfed by the towering mountain gums.

From the forest edge, watch as grasses give way to a dense growth of sedges crowding the moss of the swamp. If you're walking in spring or summer,



GORSE, A NOXIOUS WEED SMOTHERING THE PARK





DROPPINGS ON TRACKS

you may see rare ground orchids along the track and it's a good walk for spotting wombats and kangaroos.

On the day of our walk, we stopped for a bite to eat near the camping ground and then did the trek around the Polblue swamp. From the start it became clear that the area did not quite match its description. There were two things that we noticed.

The first thing was brumby damage. On the way to the Tops we had seen quite a few wild brumbies on the side of the road and in many places the Polblue swamp walking track showed quite a bit of evidence of horse hoof damage and horse manure. I knew of the feral horse problems in Kosciuszko National Park but was unaware that they were also an issue in the Barrington Tops.

However, what was also concerning as we walked the track was the huge amount of Scotch Broom infestation which in some places had completely overrun any native vegetation.

Scotch Broom¹, like many other plant and animal pests, was brought to Australia by the early European settlers. Apparently, it was imported here in the early 1800's by Governor King as a substitute for hops,

and unfortunately it was well suited to some Australian conditions and quickly spread. It seems to particularly enjoy parts of the Barrington Tops. The 2014 Broom Management Manual² (the manual) tells us that it has infested about 10,000 HA of the Tops and each plant can live up to 30 years.

The manual also tells us that a mature Scotch Broom plant can produce over 15,000 seeds and can generate soil seed banks of up to 50,000 seeds per square metre. It can be spread by water, by humans and by animals and seed germination can be stimulated by fire, cultivation, weed control works and by the digging of animals.

The manual explains that Scotch Broom can adversely affect native plant habitats and can impact native animals by excluding native plants relied on for food, by modifying their habitat and by harbouring feral animals.

I knew that Scotch Broom infestation in the Barrington Tops had been a problem for many years. I seemed to recall that the late Kerry Packer donated funds to help deal with the issue. However, it seemed clear from our bushwalk that it was still a serious problem, so I contacted the

Gloucester office of the NP&WS for comment about what is being done to deal with the Broom and brumby infestations. Ranger Peter Beard was happy to chat with me and answer a few questions such as:

- How long had Scotch Broom been a problem in the Barrington Tops NP?
- What area of the NP is presently infested with Scotch Broom? The 2014 manual says about 10,000 ha.
- For the last 5 years what are the various methods that have been used to try and deal with the Broom infestation?
- What are the impediments to effective control?
- Is the infestation getting better or worse?
- Could more be done?
- As you know when I visited Polblue in January I saw lots of Broom near the swamp walk. Has that area had any attention since then? Details?
- Is the Broom infestation a threat to the Park's listing as a world heritage site?

Peter informed me that Scotch Broom had been a problem in the area since about 1964 and that unfortunately there has been no real reduction in the area infested in the last 10 years. The problem does not seem to be getting better or worse. The fires of 2019-2020 apparently resulted in a mass germination event.

Peter said that the main control methods for Broom are physical removal, spraying and biological controls, although whether work can be carried out depends on many variables such as weather, access, availability of resources, plant biology and plant location. Volunteers are relied upon for much of the physical work and

I was heartened to hear that since my visit to Polblue in January there have been 8 days of volunteer work with up to 20 volunteers each day resulting in the removal of lots of mature Broom plants.

The authorities often boast about the creation of new national parks but do not seem so keen to publicise the problems encountered in properly maintaining and improving the existing parks. I was quite disappointed to observe the state of the Polblue area in January as I am sure would have been many other visitors to the area. I was also surprised that the area of infestation was not being reduced despite the best efforts of the local NP&WS staff, who from my observation, work extremely hard and are passionate about preserving and improving the bushland under their control. However, it seems fairly obvious that the authorities who control the purse strings do not unfortunately regard this issue as being important enough to devote

sufficient funds to allow the NP&WS to properly deal with the Scotch Broom curse. As the manual explains, Scotch Broom can adversely affect native plant habitats and can impact native animals which is quite undesirable, particularly when NSW is facing a biodiversity crisis.

So far as feral horses are concerned, we are all aware of the political pressure that was applied to the NP&WS when they wanted to prevent the fragile ecosystem of the Kosciuszko National Park being destroyed by huge numbers of wild brumbies. The brumbies issue is still clearly one of some sensitivity because when I raised it with Peter Beard, he referred me to the media section of head office. I asked them what was being done about the brumbies issue and was told that their numbers were being monitored and that a Feral Horse Management Plan was being prepared. That caused me to ask:

- When was work on the Plan of Management commenced?
- In the last 5 years has there been any brumby culling in the Park?
- Is there any reason why all brumbies in the Park cannot be culled immediately?
- Has there been any political pressure on the NP&WS not to cull brumbies?

A less than illuminating response came from NP&WS Senior Media Manager, and was as follows:

- The overarching plan of management for Barrington Tops National Park was adopted in 2010. This guides all aspects of the Park's management including the monitoring of horse numbers.
- Wild horses have not been culled on Barrington Tops National Park.
- As with all park management activities, managing wild horses on national park (sic) requires a well-considered plan that reflects contemporary events and circumstances prior to commencing operations.

I will have to leave it to the reader to draw their own conclusions from that response about what is being done or going to be done about the wild horses in the Barrington Tops. Not much so it seems.

There is nothing pristine about bushland that has been invaded by brumbies and Broom and in my view both problems need much more attention. Let's hope that our newly elected state government will find the much needed resources to effectively deal with these issues so that the true state of the Park matches the marketing.

John Watts

DEMOGRAPHIC WINTER: HAS THE “POPULATION BOMB” NOW IMPLODED?

Half a century ago there were warnings about the “population bomb”. The world had too many people and there was a fresh debate over the earth’s “population carrying capacity”.

Some environmentalists asked whether Australia had too many people.

Now many countries seem to be running out of young people and there are concerns about a shortage of young taxpayers.

The Population Bomb was a 1968 bestseller by US scientist Paul Ehrlich. It tapped into the fears previously raised by the UK’s Reverend Thomas Malthus (1766-1834). Malthus challenged the prevailing notion that countries should have as many people as possible both to grow the economy and staff the military (to this day we comment on, for example, “140m Russians versus 44m Ukrainians”).

Malthus warned of the dangers of too many people. His fears were countered by the 19th century’s western world’s expansion into agriculturally rich areas like US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and their provision of food for Europe.

By the late 19th century, there were population “safety valves” via emigration to the colonies, and a desire to build up population to maintain large armies in readiness for the next war. Malthus’ fears were then seen as outmoded and forgotten.

But by the late 1960s, there was a new concern about the environment. It is now hard to imagine but the “environment” was hardly discussed (and the word “environment” is not even mentioned in the

1945 United Nations Charter).

The post-World War II economic boom had been successful; the world was richer than ever before. But there were unexpected environmental consequences.

The Ehrlich book was controversial because it blamed the looming environmental crisis on population growth (especially in the developing world) - rather than the developed world’s consumption of raw materials.

What few predicted at the time was that we would see the “bomb” defused in the late 20th century and that by 2023 concern would be expressed that we were running out of young people and young workers!

Therefore: the “population” debate is undergoing yet another change.

The population bomb was defused by a number of factors. Education for girls and women has been very important. Education is the best contraception. The more intelligent a woman is, the fewer children she is likely to have.

There has also been improved birth control (which Rev Thomas Malthus could not canvas). There has also been improved healthcare: babies lived longer and so parents needed fewer of them because there was less need for “spares”. We now have societies in which children bury their parents, rather than parents bury their children.

Meanwhile there has also been the impact of consumerism: people

prefer to spend money on themselves and not on costly children.

Now we are dealing with the implications of the new era.

For China, there is the haunting question: will it grow old before it grows rich? Europe and the US were able to develop aged care systems while populations were young and there was plenty of money; but China is already getting old and so “cannot make the aircraft while it is flying it”. Does the fear of declining economic and population strength drive President Xi’s impatience?

In Japan (which is the world’s “oldest country”), there are too many elderly people and not enough young workers (which gives Japan an incentive to devise robotics to make up for the lack of young workers).

By 2050 Japan, China, Spain, Italy, Singapore, and Poland (all very different countries) will have 40 per cent of their population aged 60 and over.

Luckily the 19th/ early 20th century labour-intensive work patterns are easing, with machines now doing much of the brutal back-breaking work. Meanwhile people can work for longer in better health in the new service sector.

Therefore, the formal retirement age will continue to increase to keep people working – even in France. They are needed to pay taxes, and to receive less old age pension. (Governments will have increasing

problems funding old age pensions).

Will older people campaign in Australia for a “Grey New Deal”, to stop being forced out of work too early, to end age discrimination, and for there to be a reduced emphasis on the young?

Looking to the longer term, are we failing to recognise population aging as a crisis as bad as, say, climate change? Demographics are destiny. The issues raised in this article have serious implications for Australia and elsewhere.

Finally, populations *are* growing in many Islamic and African societies: will there be increased migration (legal/ illegal) from those areas into the richer world? Some young workers will be welcomed in the western world, but many other migrants will not be: how are they to be kept out?

Politicians will need to cease their “stop the boats” scare campaigns. The media should avoid adding to public anxiety.

Perhaps an Asian migrant family with enough courage, skill and initiative to sail to Australia in a rickety old boat should be welcomed as ideal entrepreneurs? They have the get up and go which an aging Australia needs.

Keith Suter
Keith.suter@globaldirections.com.au

CASH FOR CRAZY COWS HELPS A GOOD CAUSE!

A clever and fun initiative – Who Let The Cows Out, came about after a meeting between the Taree Lions Club and the local Women in Dairy Group led by Meg Nicholson.

The concept started with a promotion within the schools in the area who received a life size fibreglass cow to promote the local dairy industry in a colourful way by painting the cows in crazy designs.

The Lions Club became involved by providing the funds to freight the cows to Taree and supporting the Women in Dairy with the distribution of the cow statues.

It was so successful they decided this would be a great way to promote the significance of the dairy industry and its association with the Taree and midcoast communities.

Business houses were approached to cover the costs of the statues enabling them to paint and display the crazy cows outside their business.

The reaction to this has been fantastic with over twenty statues being delivered and on order, as they started to appear in every locality from Taree to Gloucester, the Combyone and soon towards Forster.

Businesses can purchase a statue for \$500 and use their imagination when decorating.

This is the basic bones of the idea if you need any more detail do not hesitate to call President George Greaves on 041 7949 739.

(I gave Boris one for his birthday which is being painted in colourful patchwork and daisies! He's called her Daisy and she sits on the front lawn to welcome guests. Mina the dog has finally given up trying to round Daisy up and send her packing! Ed.)

George Greaves
President Lions Club of TA-
REE Inc
P.O. Box 55
Taree, NSW 2430



IS THE USA DYING OF (TOO MUCH) DEMOCRACY?

You don't need to have been following the long-running sagas of the indictments, or potential indictments, of the former US president Donald Trump closely, to note that at almost every turn, the political allegiance of one or other players is mentioned; sometimes it's right in the foreground of the story. Not just the participating members of Congress but the judges, attorneys-general and also the lawyers.

One reason is that in many states, civic officials, right down to the local sheriff, members of school boards and the committees that administer elections, county, state or federal are all elected by popular vote with a wide franchise. The candidates must contest the office in a competition of ideas and ideals. In the US you are either a Democrat or a Republican. Small parties and independents are vanishing.

Is this grass roots democracy at work, and is this how it was envisaged in the closing years of the 18th century?

When the US constitution was written, news travelled at the speed of a horse. Most news and politics were local, but the newly minted republic needed mechanisms whereby local issues could be ruled on in a manner expected of a democracy, and larger issues communicated upwards, finally to the halls of the nation's congress. This, plus the lack of administrative infrastructure, outside the major population centres, seem key factors. The first US congress however, established 1776, was quite weak and reflected that.

Each state was equally represented in a single chamber and each had a veto over most actions. The congress had limited authority over foreign affairs and military matters, and no authority to collect taxes, regulate interstate commerce, or enforce laws, nor could it undertake the collective defence of the twelve founding states.

This unworkable central structure was scrapped by the Philadelphia convention of 1787 that drafted and approved the Constitution of the United States. This constitution is still in force today, albeit with 27 amendments, each ratified by 75 per cent of states and six un-ratified to date.

States in the US are powerful entities, much more so than in Australia, though our states still retain sovereignty. As an extension of the powerful position of a US state, the internal administrative divisions of county and city share that power, and exercise much local authority including running local police forces and overseeing the manner in which elections are supervised. And, as a consequence of that early desire for local democratic autonomy, many such appointments come through a political process dominated by party loyalties and, as voting is not compulsory, the necessity to motivate the people to get out and vote.

A recent decision in North Carolina illustrates the corrosion of the democratic process by determinedly partisan politics. As reported in the New York Times, the Senate and congressional district boundaries used in 2022 elections last November, did not sufficiently favour the Republican Party so the party draw new maps with boundaries that would further favour the Republicans for elections in 2024.

The new boundaries were challenged and the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that new maps of the state's legislative and congressional districts were illegal

gerrymanders. At that time the court had a majority of Democratic justices. On April 29, the same court, now led by a newly elected Republican majority, looked at the same facts and arguments and reversed its own decision. The gerrymander would stand.

The practical effect is to enable the Republican-controlled General Assembly to scrap the court-ordered State House, Senate and congressional district boundaries, and redraw them in its own favour at will.

This electoral rorting is happening in other parts of the US, especially in Republican controlled states. Sometimes it reflects opportunism in the wake of an election. In other cases, like the stacking of school boards, it is the outcome of a planned and considered campaign. In the US, schools have boards, often elected from the general community, not just the cohort of parents. And many have great power including the right to hire and fire the staff, including the principal.

The Washington Post on January 19 last year told the story of the takeover of a school board in Virginia's Spotsylvania County by a loose coalition of 'parents' rights' candidates, and the firing of the long serving school superintendent (principal).

The firing in Spotsylvania is a dramatic example of a parent-led takeover of school boards that is happening nationwide, with mothers and fathers seeking seats, recalls of sitting members or both. Although parents have long served

on school boards, this crop of activists is campaigning to restructure American public education so that parents, whether or not they come from an educational background, can serve as final arbiters for a wide range of issues, from whether masks should be optional to what books are available in children's libraries

These take-overs are seeing the reshaping of schools' curricula based not on educational or social needs but on political and religious prejudice. In time it will result in a national community with limited, shared world knowledge and educational experience, and so less able to analyse the issues of the day and come to common cause, be 'One Nation under God'.

These are issues that we have largely avoided in Australia (so far!) as we follow the Westminster blueprint for democratic governance. Politics certainly plays a part in appointments to high office, but rarely is it an issue of first contention, except for the appointment of senior diplomats at our embassies to our most important allies.

In essence, it is easier for any public officer to fulfil their duty if they do not also have to keep happy a political rump of either left or right opinion to keep their job. It is easier to serve the public good.

So I ask the question: Is the US dying of too much democracy?

Vincent O'Donnell
Media Researcher and Analyst.

FACING THE GRANDKIDS ASKING “WHY”

While I was on holiday, I noticed a tweet that left me in no doubt about the subject of my first column back. It said: “I genuinely think the next generation will not forgive us for what we have done to them and the world they will have to live in.”

I, too, fear they won't. I don't know whether our political leaders ever think such thoughts, but it fills me with dread. Maybe the pollies think what I reluctantly think: With any luck, I'll be dead before the next generation realises the full extent of the hell our selfish short-sightedness has left them in.

But the climate seems to be deteriorating so rapidly I'm not sure I'll get off that easily. I love my five grandkids, but I'm not looking forward to the day they're old enough to quiz me on “what I did in the war”. What was I saying and doing while our leaders were going for decades kicking the problem down the road as the easiest way to get re-elected?

“Well, I was very busy writing about the shocking cost of living – oh, and rising interest rates.” Really? Is that the best excuse you can offer, Grandad?

We elected a bloke called Albo who promised to try a lot harder than his predecessors to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases. He said he'd cut them by 43 per cent by 2030. He was quick to put that target into law, and his people worked through the Christmas holidays to outline the “safeguard mechanism” he'd use as his main measure to achieve the reduction.

While the rest of us were at the beach, Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen announced a few weeks ago that Australia's 215 biggest industrial polluters – running coal mines, gas plants, smelters and steelworks – will have their emissions capped, with the caps lowered progressively by 30 per cent come 2030.

Businesses whose emissions exceed their cap will face heavy fines. To the extent they can't use cleaner production processes to reduce their emissions, they'll be allowed to buy “carbon credits” from other heavy polluters who've been able to reduce their emissions by more than re-



Boris Janjic with some of his children and grandkids.
What will they inherit in coming years if we don't act quickly.

quired, or from farmers who've planted more trees.

Trouble is, it wasn't long before the experts started pointing to all the holes in the scheme. For a start, the combined emissions of these biggest polluters account for only 28 per cent of Australia's total emissions.

For another thing, the notion that, as well as reducing the carbon we're adding to the atmosphere, we should find ways to remove some of the carbon that's already there is a good one in principle, but riddled with practical problems. Whereas the carbon we emit may stay in the atmo-

sphere for 100 years or more, the carbon sequestered by a new tree will start returning to the atmosphere as soon as it dies or is cut down. It's hard to measure the amount of carbon that tree-growing and other agricultural activities remove, which makes such schemes particularly easy to rort.

In his recent report into expert criticism of our carbon credit scheme, Professor Ian Chubb sat on the fence. While judging the scheme to be “well designed”, he identified various dubious practices that should be outlawed. And he

stressed that big polluters must not rely on buying carbon credits to the extent that they're able to avoid reducing their emissions in absolute terms.

A further weakness in the government's scheme comes from its refusal to prohibit any new coal mines and gas plants, despite the International Energy Agency and other international agencies saying the world won't have any chance of avoiding dangerous climate change if it's relying on new gas or coal projects.

So, the scheme involves leaning on our existing 215 biggest polluters to reduce their emissions by 30 per cent, while allowing a bunch of new big emitters to set up, provided they then start cutting those emissions back.

Really? This is how we're going to cut our total emissions by 2030? Seriously?

Last year a reader rebuked me for failing to make it clear that nothing Australia does to reduce its own emissions can, by itself, have any effect on our climate. Why not? Because climate is global, and we're not big enough to have a significant effect on total world emissions.

The best we can do is set a good example, then pressure the bigger boys to do likewise. So far, we've been setting them a bad example.

It's the global scale of the problem that makes our efforts to actually increase our exports of coal and gas so irresponsible – and, to our offspring, unforgivable. We're the world's third-largest exporter of fossil fuels, after Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Australia's emissions within our borders are dwarfed by the emissions from the coal and gas we export. But never mind about that. Let's just extract a few more shekels before the balloon goes up.

Ross Gittins

(This article first appeared in *Pearls & Irritations*.)

APHRODITE'S BREATH



Susan Johnson

Allen & Unwin Rrp \$34.99

A summer visit to Greece can often wave a magic wand over its visitors: “the sky an endless blue, the sea as clear as vodka,” says author Susan Johnson who fell in love with the island of Kythera but has written a very different memoir.

She could have lost her heart to any one of the many enchanting islands that are sprinkled across the Aegean Sea as they are all rather special. Kythera is where her Greek friends in Brisbane said she should go to and where many of their parents and relatives had migrated from during the 1950 and 1960's.

Yearning for the freedom and beauty of the Kythera of her youth and unwilling to leave her recently widowed 84-year-old mother alone, Susan invited her along to what she promised would be a Greek island adventure.

When her mother too promptly answered yes, Susan should have had second thoughts that perhaps they were both being brave and foolish in equal parts.

She found no insurance company world-wide would insure her mother for a year, except one based in Colorado USA specialising in expensive medical insurance for expatriates. That might have been a red flag that their Greek odyssey might not turn out as smoothly as she dreamed.

Kythera is part of the Ionian group of islands not far from Crete on one side and Corfu on the other; it is a barren place of 4,000 people who live in small communities dotted across the island.

In spring and summer, it is a fantasy of wildflowers which sprout from rocks and crevices everywhere you look, but in the wintery months it is beset by wild bone-chilling winds which sweep through the walls of the old stone cottages without any of the luxuries such as hot running water, heating and other basic modern comforts.

Like most of the islands the people stick to their uncomplicated customs and simple rhythms of life, bunking down during the winter and then dancing, drinking, eating, swimming, enjoying themselves and welcoming tourists in summer, as if today is too precious to think beyond.

Susan, without checking what month would be a good time to arrive, rented what seemed like an enchanting old cottage on top of a

hill with a dazzling view, in the cold month of March and set off with mountains of luggage only to encounter blizzard strength winds and old heaters that were never going to combat the whistling winds that surged through the cracks of the stone walls.

Her mother, wrapped from head to toe in warm clothes complained endlessly, finally insisting that her daughter had to break their bond and find them another place to live.

Friends on the island searched high and low as the approaching tourist season had booked up every available bit of accommodation. Finally, their friend Maria secured an empty Doctor's house, a traditional Greek cottage with a big old-fashioned kitchen and a huge fireplace.

It was decorated in an eclectic mix of knick-knacks including religious icons on every wall which shared space with paintings of bare breasted African women and nineteenth-century sailing ships. Evidently the doctor had travelled the world and treated the locals for free, so his grateful

patients paid him in kind.

It was still a cold house, but spring was only weeks away and her mother settled into her new home except for asking Maria to find her a washing machine. Susan had already bought them a smart TV and a car, as the roads were almost impossible for her mother to walk safely.

Like all the islands, Kythera adheres to superstitions that are part of the fabric of everyday life; the folklore everyone lives by. Susan and her mother learned not to raise eyebrows when a neighbour suggested they burn sage leaves to quieten the ghosts of the dead who would have died in their house or gave the reason a friend missed the boat from Athens as being a ghost causing them to have an accident in their apartment.

Susan mingles her many experiences during her almost two years on Kythera with many historical stories and local beliefs. She intertwines them with Greek myths and the long history of the island which many believe was the birthplace of the

goddess of love, Aphrodite.

The book is a fascinating read because Susan is prepared to share all sorts of honest thoughts and feelings about her behaviour toward her mother who is not easily pleased. Susan, herself, by way of contrast, is constantly over the moon and enraptured with everything Greek.

She does acknowledge that she came to recognise her old life, her busy city life, the constant rush and speed, had been a protective cover, a mask for what lay beneath. “It was as if Kythera had ripped away that mask, leaving my frail self, exposed. That ship of life I had believed I so purposefully steering was revealed to be a flimsy vessel tossed by the weather.”

Musings like these are sprinkled throughout the memoir as Susan waxes lyrically about day-to-day life on the island and the insights she gleans from their adult mother-daughter relationship.

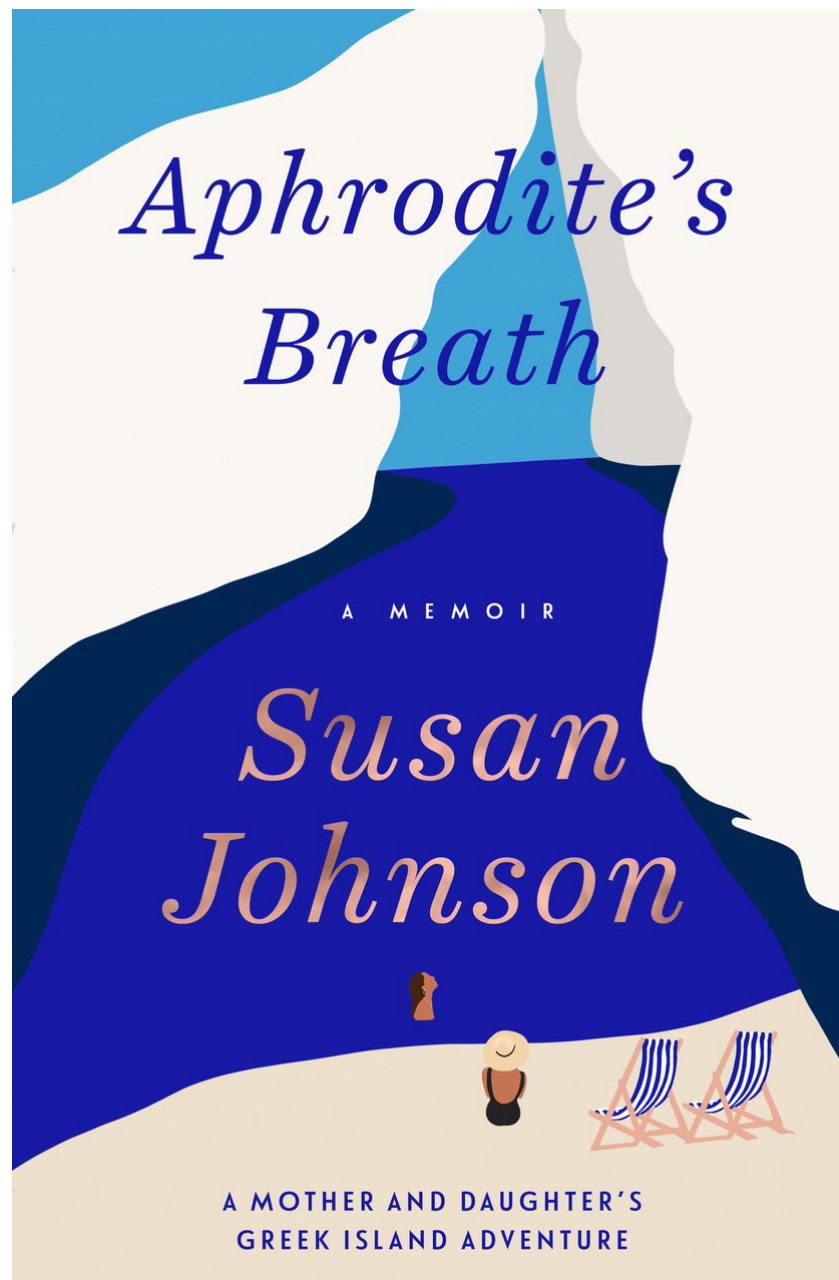
She deeply regrets one terrible outburst when she shouted a lot of pent-up accusations at her mother, hurting her deeply. She and her mother agreed her mother should leave the island and go back to Brisbane at the end of the autumn. This she did and two years later her mother died there.

Susan didn't know what her mother really thought of her year in Kythera until she found her diary. In it her mother wrote. “I was unlucky to be there at the end of the worst winter in many years, so I will forget those months and remember the best parts. Kythera will stay in my heart as a year well spent, lapping up every experience, the glorious springtime and likeable people, especially our lovely hosts. Australia is my home. Kythera is theirs. I am happy they included me for a short time.”

I too spent a year on the island of Paros in the Cyclades group with my husband and two children. I can vouch for the harshness of the winter months and the halcyon days of summer peopled with interesting locals and tourists from all over Europe. This book bought back vivid memories and a longing to return to that simple uncomplicated lifestyle and the heartbreakingly, beautiful landscape.

But, as Susan found out, nothing lasts, and I too must move on!

Sherry Stumm



MOTHERLAND



Stephanie Trethewey
Allen & Unwin. Rrp \$34.99

Motherland is a collection of “stories of the strength, heartbreak and passion of rural mums”.

That is what the book cover promises.

However, on reading Stephanie’s book, my immediate visceral reaction was - “Crikey ... how did they survive, how did they do it, how did they emerge with their sense of humour intact and, in a number of cases, how did they go on to create small businesses that benefit country people battling alternatively with fires, droughts and the other surprises nature throws at outback families?”

A better description would be that this is a tale of incredibly strong, resilient, gutsy women, who face harrowing hardships that would have defeated most of us.

It is a beautifully written debut book about life as it is today for rural folk. It comprises the recollections of a remarkable bunch of women who speak honestly about their memories of coping with bush life, always with intimate and extremely personal details.

The sheer bravery of coping with their isolation, their husbands working seven days a week, living in far flung parts of Australia, cut off from the luxuries of hot running water, air conditioning and other frivolities such as stable internet connection, streaming services, even the chance over coffee to confide in a friend when emotionally up against it.

Throw in giving birth in emergency situations, babies that won’t settle at night leaving their mums sleepless and having to carry on the daily chores, help with paddock feeding, muck out sheds and when necessary, birth baby calves if they get stuck.

As their children grow older their role develops; it means keeping an eye on the weekly timetable for school of the air and, if they get sick, nursing them in the hope that medical help will not take too long to arrive should their little ones need to be airlifted to hospital.

It’s a hard life, it’s busy, it’s tiring, there’s no respite because animals need to be fed and watered daily, paddocks need to be tilled, planted and harvested and all this endless work is often the family’s only income.

You simply have to read *Motherland* to get the true flavour of their strength and heroism.

Take the case of Julie McDonald. She lives on 240,000 hectares at Devoncourt station in Queensland whose husband Zanda in 2013 took Julie and their daughters out for some weekend work. A windmill on the station needed servicing, a regular job Zanda did several times a year. This time he climbed into the lower platform of the windmill to tighten the bore casing when suddenly the tool slipped from his hands causing him to lose his footing. He fell 4 metres to the ground. Julie knew it was serious, grabbed her mobile phone that had little service and frantically called for help. It arrived an hour later. Airlifted to Mt Isa Hospital and then on to the intensive care unit at Townsville, Zanda’s injuries proved so severe he died 19 days later.

Left alone with young girls, Julie sought a counselor to help her overcome her grief and crippling anxiety. She battled on alone running the farm continuing her husband’s work with the help of her in-laws and in 2014, the Platinum Primary Producers Group, a collective of 150 Australia and New Zealand’s top rural leaders who established an award in Zanda’s name

to support innovative young producers, helping their career growth through personalised mentoring and education.

Then there is Keelen Mailman, a proud Bidjara women who lives at Mount Tabor a 73,000 hectare cattle station near Augathella in western Queensland. The land belongs to her people which she’s been managing successfully for the past 25 years, becoming the first Aboriginal woman in Australia to run a commercial cattle property.

Keelen has spent her life as a fierce advocate for traditional owners, but she’s also suffered incredible lows as she triumphed against the odds. Born in Clermont in western Queensland her youth was spent with her family on the fringes of Augathella at the Yumba, an Aboriginal camp. She grew up in a tin shed with dirt floors and lived with her mother, brothers, sisters and grandparents so it was a tight squeeze in an even tighter-knit community sharing one tap of running water to serve more than a dozen families.

Despite their poverty she and her siblings lived an incredible bush life sourcing honey, fishing for yabbies, finding buried eggs laid by sand goannas and hunting porcupines.

Keelen explains “my mum was very strict about us knowing our traditional land and how to live off the land with our cultural fruits, foods and medicines if we were ever stuck.”

As she grew older, she experienced sexual abuse by one of her uncles who beat her violently if she tried to refuse him, until she finally found the strength to make him let her go. Her world fell apart when her mother, by this time an alcoholic, suffered a massive stroke at the age of 38. Keelen and her siblings were alone without support and even though an aunt came to look after them with her children for several months, Keelen had to take on the role of carer until her mum came home disabled from hospital.

At 16, Keelen fell in love with a country boy and had a baby, but her relationship crumbled and he left her. She met a rodeo rider with whom she also had a baby. He too vanished. Finally, after a ten-year relationship which ended with her taking out a domestic violence order against her partner, she returned to Augathella with three young children. A respected elder threw her a lifeline and offered her the chance to manage Mount Tabor and she has been the boss there ever since.

The elder copped a lot of flak offering it to a young single mum insisting there was no way she could do the “job of a bloke”. She proved them wrong and what she has achieved over the years has been truly astounding.

In 2021 Keelen was recognised with the Order of Australia for her commitment and contribution to her local community and her culture.

These are just some of the stories that will leave readers shaking their heads in wonder as each story unfolds with a litany of back breaking work and, in each case, rewards for the way they have been able to win through and give back to their communities.



As Diana Butler notes, “I’m a great believer that our pains become our gifts.” Diana grew up in the rural community of Hollow Tree in the Central Highlands of Tasmania, became a country nurse and has spent her retirement years turning her incredible grit and enthusiasm into support for some of the world’s poorest people in a remote village in Tanzania in Africa.

For 16 years this fiercely strong woman has organised fundraisers to purchase and send medical supplies to the small 34 bed village hospital. She has managed to send shipping containers with hospital beds, an electrocardiogram machine, bandages, masks, syringes and a blood fridge. Perhaps her most ambitious gift was an ambulance packed with medical aids and educational materials so that the community for the first time could run their own mobile health clinic.

The author of this wonderful book, Stephanie Trethewey has also had to battle to fit in and cope with isolation and country life. She was named last year as Australia’s AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year for her work improving postnatal support services for rural mums. Stephanie is the CEO of Motherland, Australia’s first personalised online rural mothers’ group program.

Stephanie lives on a farm in Tasmania with her husband and two children. She started Motherland as a podcast to share incredible stories of rural mums to overcome the loneliness which she says wouldn’t go away.

From being a national TV reporter in Victoria, leading a busy and exciting life, she has gone on to become a rural mum. Though it might sound charming, she says her transition nearly broke her. Her new reality, however, has ignited an unexpected zeal to help, to make friends and to tell these womens’ stories of courage and endurance.

She also insists: “Thanks to the Motherland project, I feel at home on the land and what an incredible home it is.”

Sherry Stumm

KOALA! . . . A LIFE IN TREES



Danielle Clode

Black Inc. Rrp. 34.99

This is a very good book. Indeed, Danielle Clode's book 'Koala' is more than that: it is a comprehensive scientific treatise on the koala, its history, currency, and future potential, told by a master storyteller with a highly personable touch.

I learnt a lot, and indeed with the exception of the most notable of koala experts, it is hard to imagine that any reader would not learn a lot.

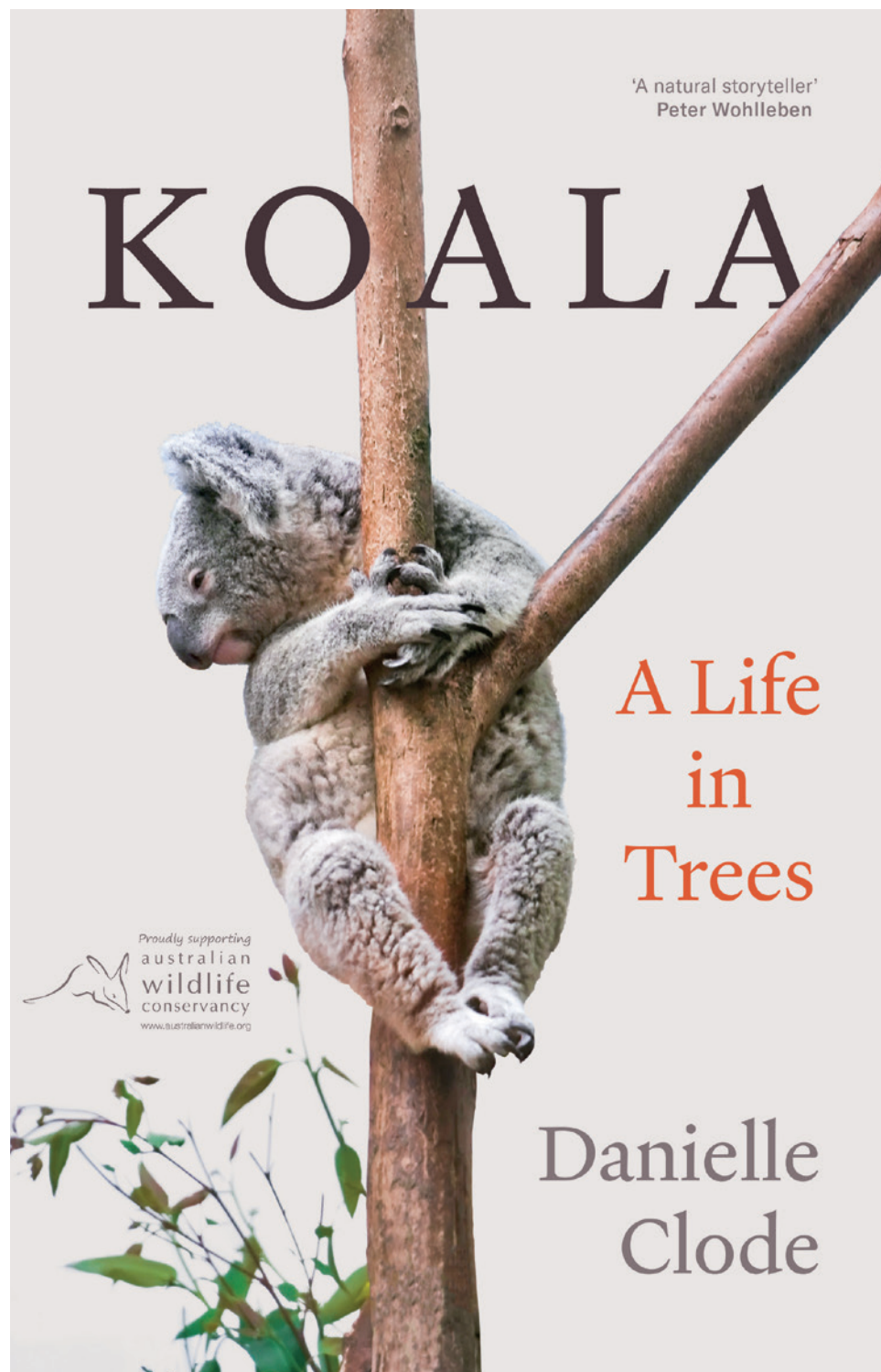
As well as a biologist and natural historian Danielle Clode is a natural storyteller. She has a prevailing curiosity, a powerful ability to gather information from a diverse range of experts from paleontologists, historians, cave explorers, wildlife carers, ecologists, biologists and many others and weave all of this into a highly readable and vivid narrative.

Personally, I have been fascinated by wildlife and their habitat all of my life. I am also very fortunate to be one of the few Australians who have seen a number of koalas in the wild, including on my own property. However, in reading this book it became clear that there were many things I did not know about koalas.

I did not know that there were once 20 different species of koala spread over time, including one that weighed in about 23 kilos. I did not know that the oldest koala fossil found so far was 24 million years old, from a time when Australia looked very different to what it does now and had more soft leaved swampy rainforest which sustained the koala of that time as opposed to the eucalypt forests that our current koala has become so dependent on.

I did not know that the patterns of light and dark skin on koalas' noses are as individually distinctive as their fingerprints, which, like our fingerprints, are unique to each individual. I did not know that koalas do not moult seasonally, which is why they are so vulnerable to increased climate temperatures and heat stress.

I did know that the surge of koala cuddly toys led to a mass slaughter of koalas themselves as their skins or pelts were the primary resource used to make the toys as well as fashion fur items such as gloves, hats and coats. I did not know that 57,933 koala skins were exported in 1908 alone from Sydney despite all three eastern states having already



declared koalas a protected species. In Queensland it was even worse with records revealing that one million koala skins were 'taken' from one 'hunting' season dating from the 1st of April to the 30th of September 1919 and another 600,000 killed in just one month, August 1927.

Indeed, with echoes of what is happening today, Australian government legislation designed to protect the koala continued to fail dismally against the drive of capitalist industries until 1930, when the then president of the Wildlife Preservation Society, David Stead, appealed directly to US President Hoover to ban the importation of koala skins.

With this history it is an absolute miracle that any koalas are left at all today.

Nevertheless, this book includes hope for this most iconic of Australian animals, who alone has brought in millions of dollars of tourist dollars and wildlife conservation donations.

Actions by far-seeing individuals and wildlife organisations have led to thriving and disease-free koala populations on island refuges that then have been able to be returned to the mainland.

I did not know that as a result of this conservation strategy South Australia now has a thriving koala population including along the regenerated River Torrens in urban Adelaide. The successes of these strategies have now been declared the gold standard of wildlife conservation.

Despite this message of hope however, there are nevertheless fearful alarms on the future of the koala and the other wildlife that similarly depend on maintaining forest habitat. We may not hunt them for their skins anymore to turn into cuddly toys and fashion items, but current state and national government legislation has similarly grimly failed to protect them as we continue to destroy and fragment their habitat. Another thing I did not know but strongly suspected is that in the last 200 years we humans have reduced Australian forests to the smallest area that they have ever occupied.

Habitat fragmentation, road strikes, droughts, fires, disease escalated by stress and social crowding are all taking their inevitable toll. Climate change with its increased severity of high temperatures, droughts and floods already is, and will continue to, wreck further devastation on their populations.

Our governments, both State and National, have promised to do more to save not only the koala but the current 1700 threatened and endangered species, a number predicted to escalate to Australia's enormous shame. We all live in hope that these wonderful ambitious proclamations are more than just headline generators and may in fact include effective real action and achieve their stated goals. However, as we continue to watch the habitat destruction in NSW and Queensland which now both rate as global hot spots for deforestation, and the increasing climate extremities, it is hard to hold that hope. As Danielle Clode states - if we can't protect our forests, we can't protect koalas, let alone all of the other species at risk of extinction.

Meanwhile, similar to many ordinary Australians, Danielle Clode has taken action into her own hands and planted corridors of koala food trees that will, perhaps, maybe, just maybe, sustain koala and other species populations long after she has gone. Most probably it is at the hands of the goodwill of ordinary Australians, that is you and me, that the koala, and all our other precious species, have the best hope.

Kym Kilpatrick



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NOTICE RE SLEEPBUS FUND

I understand that the \$65000 NSW State Government grant is now in the account of the Rotary Club of North Taree which applied for it and with which we (MHAG) have been working throughout. I believe there is about another \$25000 in that account from our and the Club's fundraising efforts and there is \$16810 in our Bed Inn Bus account at Sleepbus. We are therefore able to order the Bus and pay the money to Sleepbus. Because there is State money involved Bob Nelson President of the Rotary Club tells me that certain paper-work still has to be done with

Simon Rowe of Sleepbus to satisfy the Government and his Rotary obligations before he can hand over the \$100,000. Unfortunately as I anticipated Simon Rowe of Sleepbus tells me there are now eight buses to be built if front of ours not six and ours won't start until the papers are done. His rough estimate of delivery is now some time in the first half of 2024.

Best wishes Terry Stanton for MHAG.

02 6553 1360.

ROAD TRAUMA THE CAUSES ARE MANY

The potholes haven't gone away. The patch-up jobs on some of the worst are pretty pathetic as they don't last. The road edges are crumbled, dropped away, or overgrown. As are roundabouts and verges. All unsafe. Accidents waiting to happen.

It doesn't help that we have huge semi-trailers and BDoubles trundling along country roads never meant to take such heavy vehicles. There was a shocking incident recently near the Bight Cemetery where a local farmer moves his 100 or so cows across the Tinonee Road morning and afternoon. It's a brief wait. However as the traffic on both lanes of the road waited as the cows

crossed, a massive BDou-ble bowled at speed past the lined up cars overtaking all at high speed, whizzing past the tail of the last cow nearly collecting it as he overtook the two lines of traffic.

If anyone has dashcam of the incident please let us know.

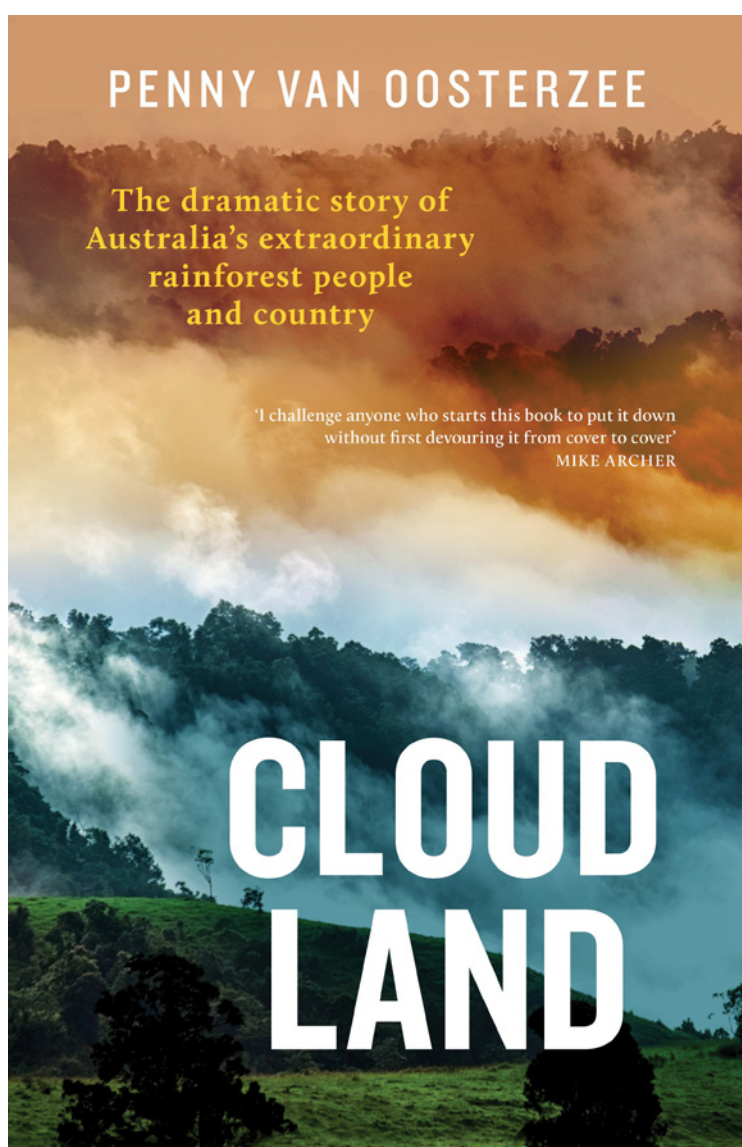
Council has a massive issue on its hands with roads, bridges and maintenance which requires money and staff...in short supply it seems!

CLOUDLAND

(THE DRAMATIC STORY OF AUSTRALIA'S EXTRAORDINARY RAINFOREST PEOPLE AND COUNTRY)



Penny Van Oosterzee
Allen & Unwin RRP \$34.99



A greatly overused marketing quote on the inside cover of *Cloudland* says:

I challenge anyone who starts this book to put it down without first devouring it from cover to cover.

Unfortunately, that was certainly not my experience, as I will discuss.

The cover of the book explained that:

On their property on the Atherton Tablelands, Penny Van Oosterzee and her husband are regenerating rainforest from paddocks, reconnecting fragments into a living corridor that will run from the Daintree and beyond. Penny weaves this personal experience into a sweeping account of Australia's rainforests. From their swampy birth millions of years ago to the present.

Concerned as I am about the destruction of our forests and having

a strong interest in the issue of re-wilding, I keenly anticipated reading the book. It was not what I expected from the marketing.

Penny Van Oosterzee is an Adjunct Professor at James Cook University and has been a Governor of World-Wide Fund Australia and she is a board member of the Federal Biodiversity Council. She is engaged in environmental consulting and has authored several other books. She is clearly learned in relation to environmental and evolutionary issues. Her PhD focused on climate-change policies and their relationship to land-use prioritisation, such as ecological restoration to increase forest-carbon storage and biodiversity. Well qualified she certainly is.

The book's sub-title uses the word 'dramatic'. That is certainly not the adjective that I would have chosen to describe this book. I often found it difficult to follow, what point was being made, or where it was heading, and it also jumped too readily from one topic to another.

Perhaps because of the marketing comments I expected this to be a book that was easily accessible to the average reader, but the use of many technical words and complex concepts makes it a challenge for those with no relevant expertise. It seemed to me to be much more textbook than dramatic story. It has 649 endnotes.

Most of the book's first 76 pages are taken up with much detailed and complex information about evolution and various extinctions over the past 550 million years. One example of that detail is the following passage on pages 38 and 39:

Pelycosaurs gave rise to a new type of animal, the therapsids. Not quite a mammal, they had nevertheless developed characteristics that have been passed down to us today: a secondary palate that conveniently enabled breathing and chewing at the same time; nasal structures that allowed the intake of more oxygen; a posture that allowed for more flexibility. Therapsids begat the cynodonts: small, burrowing, furred animals that are recognisably mammalian. Clutches of fossilised juvenile cynodonts show them curled in an embrace with an adult, suggesting that even at this early time they probably exhibited parental care.

That information might be fascinating and comprehensible for a few experts or science students, but I was left wondering what it had to do with the regeneration of cleared rainforest in far North Queensland.

On page 14 the author begins to tell us about buying their Atherton Tablelands property called Thiaki in 2005 and how they commenced regeneration work. Just as I was getting interested in this issue, after just a few pages, the topic changed to an esoteric discussion about ancient plants known as bryophytes. It then jumps to the topic of sea animal evolution and then for half a page we are told about a tetrapod known as labyrinthodonts, which were apparently the dominant vertebrate animal from 350 to 210 million years ago. The discussion then turns to her husband having what was thought to be a heart attack, but which turned out to be a reaction to a tick bite. Then there is a detailed mention of the evolution of cycads and how the Aboriginal population of the area were able to eliminate the toxicity of their nuts.

Chapter five begins with information about the 'clearing frenzy of the

first 20 years of the twentieth century' but again, just as I am becoming interested in that topic, the narrative jumps to the asteroid that smashed into the planet 66 million years ago causing enormous destruction. It is only in the later stages of the book that we are provided with more detail about how and why so much of the Atherton Tableland forest was destroyed by cedar getters and for farming. It is pointed out that forest destruction continued, with government approval, until quite recently.

What I did find interesting but sad was the way the European settlers perverted Darwin's *Origin of the Species* to justify the wholesale dispossession of the Aboriginal population and the many massacres that took place. The author points out that no perpetrator of any massacre was ever punished by the legal system. It is explained that the violence eventually stopped but then only to be replaced with paternalism.

After much discussion about forest destruction, Aboriginal massacres, and dispossession and about Australia being a climate change laggard, in the last few pages of the book we are provided with a little more detail about the regeneration activities of the author and her husband on their property. I was certainly hoping for much more practical information and detail about such work and how it could be applied more broadly throughout Australia to regenerate cleared land.

Perhaps I am being too critical of this book. It does contain much useful material and one certainly cannot challenge the author's scholarship. However, my personal view is that an opportunity was lost to share many important issues in a simpler and clearer way that the average reader could readily understand, or perhaps not have marketed the book as an 'enchanted, addictive' book.

This is a book that contains lots of detailed and well researched material, but it is not an easy read.

John Watts

GLUTEN-FREE MEDITERRANEAN

Great gluten free recipes that are easy, tasty, quick!

Helen Tzouganatos
Published by Plum, RRP \$44.99,
Photography by Jeremy Simons.



Lamb & Spinach Gozleme

olive oil, for pan-frying
lemon wedges, to serve
DOUGH
260 g (2 cups) gluten-free self-raising flour
90 g (½ cup) Greek yoghurt (or coconut yoghurt for dairy free)
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon sea salt flakes
LAMB & SPINACH FILLING
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
pinch of sea salt flakes
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon ground cumin
pinch of freshly ground black pepper
250 g lamb mince
large handful of baby spinach leaves

DFO, GF | SERVES 6

Crispy, golden gluten-free Turkish gozleme can be easily whipped up in under 20 minutes, so it's the perfect after-school snack. The dough comes together very quickly and while it's resting, you can quickly make your filling of choice. I love a spiced lamb mince filling when I feel like a break from spinach and feta, but you can get as creative as you like. Don't overfill the gozleme – the flatter the parcel the crispier it will get when it hits the hot frying pan.

Combine all the dough ingredients in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, add 125 ml (½ cup) of warm water and mix on medium speed for 1 minute to form a smooth dough. If the mixture is too dry, add a little more water and mix again. Set the dough aside to rest, uncovered, while you make the filling.

To make the filling, heat the olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and salt and cook for 5 minutes to soften. Stir in the garlic, paprika, cumin and black pepper and cook for 30 seconds. Add the lamb and cook, breaking up any chunks with a wooden spoon, for 3 minutes or until browned. Add the spinach, stir and cook for 1 minute to wilt. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Divide the dough into six balls. Working with one ball at a time, roll out the dough between two sheets of baking paper to form a paper-thin rectangle about 20 cm x 30 cm in size. Scatter 3 tablespoons of the lamb and spinach filling in the centre, leaving a clear border of roughly 8 cm around the edges. Fold the dough over the filling to enclose. Cover with baking paper and very gently roll out again to flatten and thin out the gozleme. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling.

Place a heavy-based frying pan over high heat and allow it to heat up. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of olive oil into the very hot pan and cook the gozleme, one at a time, adding more oil as needed, for 2–3 minutes on each side until golden and crispy. Serve with lemon wedges.

FILLING VARIATIONS

- **Spinach & Feta:** combine 135 g (3 cups) baby spinach, 3 sliced spring onions and 200 g crumbled feta.
- **Potato & Cheese:** combine 460 g (2 cups) mashed potato, 150 g grated mozzarella, a handful of finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves, ½ teaspoon paprika and salt and pepper.





ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

Collect for enjoyment, collect for knowledge, collect for the potential of future windfalls, collect to share and most of all collect because it is a wonderful hobby that lasts a lifetime. I worked at my career for forty years, collected interesting items all that time and have had my first foray into a business venture (an antique shop) in retirement. A hobby that can last a lifetime!

The autumn weather is great, the grass is green, there is rain around, lockdowns have abated and it's time to get on with life because life is wonderful. The alternative lasts a long time! Make the best of what you can. We don't get many chances. ANZAC Day reminded us that many didn't get a chance to reach their potential. "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me" – through kindness, respect, empathy and love. From little things big things grow!

Support your local small businesses and tradespeople as they all need your help. They are the backbone of our community.

George Barsony, known for his Barsony Lamps, was born on the 15th November 1917 in Pecs, Hungary. One of his first major sculptures is a 2.2-metre bronze statue of St. Francis of Assisi in Pecs, which he completed when he was 21. Barsony came to Sydney as a refugee in 1949. Shortly after, he met his future wife, Jean Bird, an immigrant from England who also worked in a pottery in Sydney. They moved to a home in Bankstown in 1955 and opened a small workshop that eventually became Barsony Ceramics. The company operated during 1950s to 1970s and had a factory on Guernsey Street, Guildford, Western Sydney. Most of Barsony Ceramics' products were decorative items such as figurines, lamp bases, candlesticks, figure vases, wall hangings, and bookends. They also produced items under Venice and Silver Cloud, but these are rarely seen in the market. The most popular collector's items are Barsony's porcelain lamps, often referred to as **Barsony lamps**. What separates these from other lamps are their highly decorative bases. Barsony lamps are distinctive because of their usual black colour scheme and distinct base: carefully crafted figurines in graceful poses. Some Barsony lamps have a hidden light bulb, while other pieces don't even have one. Despite not being



A selection of Barsony figures.

a functional source of illumination, Barsony lamps are beautiful enough to be displayed as works of art.

In the 1950s, exotic black figures became strangely popular, contrasting with the typical pastel colours of the time. Barsony Ceramics products were quite in demand. But as the times changed, so did tastes. Black figures declined in popularity, so Barsony Ceramics ceased operations in the 1970s. Fortunately, these exquisite lamps have seen a resurgence in popularity, especially for collectors. Barsony's black ladies are once again being sought after by art aficionados. Rarer variations in figures and colours command a premium. While Barsony has other popular black figures like the "Little Boys" and "Little Girls", his black ladies, especially his "Ballerina" series, continue to be the most coveted pieces.

Barsony ladies are known for their soft, rounded edges, rounded breasts, and bright red lips. The black figures are contrasted by splashes of colour on their clothing and accessories. While some might find a few of Barsony's ladies

politically suspect (some of the pieces can be perceived to be more of a black cliché), many pieces are notably elegant and their feminine poses add to their aesthetic. Each piece was hand-painted, making each piece unique and more desirable for collectors. Some have accents attached to them – for example, Barsony's ballerina lamps have pearl drop earrings. The shades attached to these lamps come in the bright colours favoured in the 1950s. Jean Barsony herself made the original lamp shades, of which few pieces have survived.

To be sure of their provenance, check if a lamp is marked with "Barsony" or "George Barsony." In the 1960s, these markers were replaced with a red sticker. Intact Barsony markings ensure that the item will be sold at a premium price. Genuine Barsony pieces have labels that usually contain the model or mould number and letters that indicate the type of item. So, H stands for head, L for lamp, VL means vase lamp, FL for figural lamp and so on. Unlike other collectable items, Barsony lamps often sell for a good

price despite having a bit of damage. The majority of Barsony lamps being sold have their shades replaced or are sold without a shade altogether. Barsony lamps once sold for about \$15 in the 1980s, but prices skyrocketed to ten times the amount in the early 2000s. In a 2007 Carter's Everything Vintage Price Guide, they sold for about \$300, and this pricing has increased markedly in recent years. An online search yields price ranges from \$250 to about \$1200. A red Barsony Ballerina lamp with missing earrings can fetch from \$400 to \$700 at an auction. A Ballerina in a better condition (with earrings and original lamp shade) could sell for much higher. Collectors are advised to take extra care in purchasing lamps that are passed off as Barsony. There are items out in the market that are labelled Barsony-style lamps even though they are not authentic Barsony Ceramics products. Other companies use similar labelling systems, which may also cause confusion.

Some dealers who have the lamps for sale sometimes hear from customers how they didn't like the lamps the first time they came out and how they have changed their mind now. Maybe it has something to do with mid-century items being the rage these days or their exotic appearance may have found a new audience. Whatever the reason, Barsony lamps are quite unique decorative pieces that captivated a generation and may continue to do so for years to come.

We have opened a shop (Antiques and Old Wares) 12 Isabella St, Wingham. Call in and say hello.

I hope that collecting brings you the enjoyment that I have experienced.

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!**

HOW TO PLANT BULBS STEP-BY-STEP



Autumn in the garden means bulb planting! Bulbs are surprisingly easy to grow, and with a bit of TLC will reward you with a spectacular show of spring colour. Follow our step-by-step guide to planting bulbs.



Pastel-mix Ranunculus

STEP 1: KEEP YOUR BULBS COOL

Bulbs like to be planted in cool soil. If the weather isn't cool enough (between 13 and 23 degrees Celsius), store your bulbs in your fridge's crisper section, in an egg carton or paper bag. Never store your bulbs in plastic, or they will sweat and rot.

Also, don't put your bulbs in the crisper with fruit, as the gases released by the fruit will ruin your bulbs. It's a good idea to label the container they're in clearly so you can be sure no one mistakes them for onions, or your next batch of spaghetti Bolognese could be lethal.

Quick tip: Regardless of the weather, tulips, hyacinth and daffodils need refrigeration, but for no longer than six weeks. This tip also applies to bulbs that you have dug out of the

ground (after they've finished flowering and foliage has died off). Just make sure to dry the bulbs out first before you refrigerate them.

STEP 2: FIND A SPOT TO PLANT YOUR BULBS

The great thing about bulbs is that they're happy almost anywhere, provided they get full or part sun. If in doubt, read the bulb packet instructions.

Planting bulbs in a pot gives you the chance to bring them indoors once in flower.

STEP 3: PREPARE SOIL FOR PLANTING

If planting in the ground, prepare your soil by clearing weeds and rocks, then dig the soil over until it's fine and crumbly, to at least the

depth of your spade.

Free-draining soil is a must, as soggy bulbs will rot. Whether planting in the ground or in a pot, a good quality bulb-growing mix added to the soil will improve drainage. For a soil boost, dig in a couple of shovelfuls of aged cow or chook manure or compost per square metre.

STEP 4: HOW TO PLANT BULBS

Planting depth depends on the bulb, so check bulb packet instructions. A handy rule of thumb is to plant bulbs at a depth equal to twice their width. Bulbs planted too deeply will run out of energy before they reach the surface. Bulbs planted too shallow may be uprooted by birds. Consider using a bulb planter to help get the depth just right.

Space bulbs at least twice the bulb's own width apart.

Most bulbs are planted pointy end up (growing tip). The exceptions are



Stately Jonquils

anemones and ranunculus which should be planted point down, as their point is the root. Don't forget to mark the spot where you've planted your bulbs too.

STEP 5: WATERING YOUR BULBS

After planting, water in your bulbs well, then water regularly to keep the soil moist, but not wet.

Water deeply again when shoots appear.

STEP 6: MULCHING AND FEEDING

Spread a 25mm layer of organic mulch to keep your bulbs cool. We love Organic Sugar Cane Mulch.

Bulbs come pre-packed with beauty and life, cleverly storing their own nutrients - but you can help them along. As foliage pops up through the soil, apply liquid fertiliser every two weeks. After flowering, feed bulbs with a controlled-release fertiliser. A specialised bulb food, such as Gardeners Advantage Long Lasting Bulb Fertiliser, is ideal.

We have bulb fertiliser, bulb planters and plenty of varieties in stock now. Come check out some of the gorgeous, coloured freesias, daffodils, baby Gladioli, Ranunculi, Dutch Iris and more! Can spring be far behind?

Wingham Nursery & Florist
Find us on Facebook
02 65534570



Double Freesia giant mix

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