

# The Manning Community News

JUNE/JULY 2022

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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

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# DEVELOPMENTS... FOR BETTER OR WORSE?

Sadly, like Sydney, it seems developers rule...

**T**he spreading cancer of suburbia across good farming land, ecological treasures, environmental necessities – such as oxygen giving, carbon absorbing trees – and sheer simple natural beauty – is not confined to sprawling Sydney. It's here.

Yes, we need housing, especially affordable housing, but the rash of housing estates in rural landscapes smack more of greed than of necessity or thoughtful, creative sustainable thinking.

Country people weep at the destruction of not just farmland, but rural landscapes that heal souls and please the eye under the rushed sprawl of unimaginative, housing estates.

Midcoast Council area is blessed by what has always been a "clean green natural" environment with family farms, rural industries, a gentle pace of life along our beaches, rivers, hills and forests. Towns evolved to suit and meet our needs, and if visitors stumbled upon us, well good on them, we're happy to share what we have and how we live here.

But it seems now, that our area is being created, changed and developed for an influx of newcomers, retirees, visitors and tourists. Yet rental or purchased housing for families, workers, medical or industrial staff, you name it, is in short supply or too expensive. And let's not look down the future road of fleeing climate refugees.

The fact remains that in the mix of a growing population the most important factor is – space, to grow food from cattle to micro-greens. We can't grow everything hydroponically and our most basic need is water... which is a whole other scary story!

"Jobs and growth" is only part of a very large mix. Innovation, industry and mum and pop enterprises are part of the fabric of our community as much as experimental, innovative technology and new ways of creating and surviving in all fields of enterprise. But these must go hand in hand with the social, local, and caring for our communities. Development in all fields should complement not obliterate what we love about the place we call home.



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# HOW TIMES CHANGE

**Bob Brown**

In 2019 the much publicised Nationals Senator Matt Canavan railed against the Stop Adani Convoy as: ‘do-gooders and bludgers’ heading to Queensland and ‘telling us all what to do’.

He was too young to remember his idol, Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson, heading to Tasmania in 1983 to tell locals they must dam the Franklin River.

After Queensland, the Stop Adani Convoy culminated in a rally outside Parliament House in Canberra. That was the biggest show of public feeling in the 2019 election campaign. Five thousand people called on both Labor and the Coalition to stop the Adani coal mine then about to get under way in Queensland’s Galilee Basin.

However, no major media outlet covered the rally, not a word or a picture. Climate change was off their agenda.

Labor lost the election two weeks later after announcing it would not stop the mine and, as well, would give \$5 billion to fossil fuel corporations to accelerate gas extraction across Australia including from the Galilee and Beetaloo (NT) Basins.

Had leader Bill Shorten assured Australians he would stop Adani extracting the coal the Queensland result would have been much the same, but Labor would have picked up seats in the southern capitals and won the election.

Post-election, some fashionable commentators claimed that the Bob Brown Foundation’s convoy, not Labor’s pro-coal policy, had cost Labor the treasury benches.

In fact, the convoy saved Greens Senator Larissa Waters’ seat in Queensland which pre-convoy polls had had her losing. After 4,000 people turned out in Brisbane to cheer the Stop Adani Convoy rally there, an electorate freshly invigorated about climate disasters, including the bleaching of Great Barrier Reef corals, voted Larissa back in. Her Senate win was an essential foundation for the Greens well-earned Queensland successes in 2022.

After the 2019 election came the bushfires and floods which speakers in the Stop Adani Convoy had warned about. As the Adani mine was developed over the protests of thousands of citizens, many of whom were arrested or jailed, hundreds of thousands more Australians were going through the hell of the coal-fuelled climate disasters of bushfires and floods.

Coal-toting Prime Minister Morrison holidayed in Hawaii and came home with his hubris in shatters. Rockhampton-based Matt Canavan became less visible, even on the ABC. The climate sceptics who for so long had been ubiquitous in climate change discussion thinned out in both commercial and ABC broadcasting.

Coalition MPs like the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, who had paid for counter-gatherings to the convoy in 2019, were shuddering in 2022 as the Greens and Teals galvanised new attention on climate change. The latter-day Landry called on her extremist colleague Canavan to: “pull your head in, Matt”.

United Nations’ Secretary-General António Guterres warned that it is: “moral and economic madness” to invest in new fossil-fuel projects. Every time Greens leader Adam Bandt repeated the same sentiment in the election campaign the Greens gained votes.

Ms Landry got back with a reduced majority while three Greens were elected in Brisbane. She now plaintively affirms that we need action on climate change. She should have listened to the convoyists who were, after all, not breaking news; scientist Eunice Foote first warned about the perils of injecting carbon into Earth’s atmosphere in the 1860s.

Politics is a game for too many scribes in the Canberra press gallery who get paid well to report on the entrails of human political interplay and shortcomings. However, the viability of our little planet is not a game. It is deadly serious and requires mature reportage of the fact that Earth’s biosphere is rapidly deteriorating due to human destruction, not least the burning of fossil fuels causing catastrophic global warming. This existential crisis surpasses all others in human history.

Six hundred years ago Machiavelli wrote that if you want to change the world you should get ready to be crushed by those who already have the power and the money.

That’s the case now with the huge, vested interests which profit from burning fossil fuels. Labor and the Coalition have buckled but the Greens, and now the Teal inde-

pendents, have not. Nevertheless, many petty politics-captured pontificators in the media are all too ready to take up the cudgels against the agents of change who are outside their own myopic bubble.

This echoes the Suffragettes travails more than a century ago. Amongst their highly organised critics was journalist Flora Shaw who saw women as having: ‘a ‘God-given’ position as the help-meets of men’. The Suffragettes’ frustration was insufferable and some resorted to violence, giving the anti-Suffragists even more ammunition. But the tide of history was unstoppable.

So it is now with the climate emergency. The difference is that this time life on Earth is at stake and the global community’s response is appallingly slow and short of the mark. That is why, in a recent joint declaration, 400 climate scientists, physicists, biologists, engineers and others broke with usual caution to back peaceful protesters courting arrest from London to Sydney. Their frustration is insufferable.

After Anthony Albanese’s sigh-of-relief victory, it is tempting to think that all is okay again. But it isn’t. Witness Labor’s rush to burn more gas, including the new Prime Minister’s full-blooded endorsement of Woodside’s giant Scarborough gas extraction project off the Western Australian coast. Scarborough’s projected greenhouse gas pollution of Earth’s atmosphere is greater than the Adani coal mines.

For those who hope that the urgency of environmentalism is seeping into the old parties, look no further than Labor combining with the Coalition in the Victorian and Tasmanian parliaments, since the federal election, to pass draconian new laws with jail sentences aimed at crushing peaceful protests against coal mining, industrial fish farms or the logging of native forests. Standing in front of a chainsaw about to cut down an ancient tree full of endangered species, or in front of a napalm-dropper setting fire to its felled remnants, is now an equal crime in Tasmania to aggravated burglary or to invading a neighbour’s house brandishing a shotgun.

Because they cannot win the public argument for destroying biodiversity, Labor and the Coalition are going to criminalise environmentalists. They are captured by the resource extraction lobbies and are not about to implement the seismic change required to respond to the scientists’ alarm for life on Earth. The Greens-Teals vote will continue to grow, but they needed to be in government now, everywhere, for the planet to have its best chance.

Even so, while there is life there is hope. Down in Tasmania’s takayna/Tarkine rainforest, more than 80 peaceful protesters have been arrested for getting in the way of giant state-owned Chinese mining company MMG’s machinery preparing a toxic waste dump. The rainforest is a stronghold for Tasmania’s giant masked owl, the largest barn owl on Earth, which is vulnerable to extinction.

MMG has alternatives to its proposed acid wastes dam outside the Tarkine near its Rosebery mine. Yet former Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, gave MMG the go-ahead, even dismissing as unnecessary MMG’s offer to protect the big trees which contain nesting sites for the owls. A week before the election, after the Federal Court intervened to say MMG must protect those trees, Ley notified the Bob Brown Foundation that she was reconsidering her decision.

Her reconsideration is now on the desk of the new Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek. The world’s best practice option for MMG is to pulverise its mine wastes and place them back underground. The nearest mine to MMG is already doing so. But there are no options for the endangered owl, Tasmanian devils or other threatened species in the Tarkine. This may be a small matter in the global environmental crisis but, now that it is Minister Plibersek’s call, hope has returned to the rainforest camp where forest defenders lie awake at night listening to the calls of the masked owls which face being silenced forever.

Bob Brown.  
The Bob Brown Foundation



# A MITE-Y DANGER CLOSES IN ON OUR COAST

A mite, the Varroa mite, that infects bees and bee colonies was detected in Biosecurity Hives at the Port of Newcastle, on 22 June 2022.

NSW Agriculture Minister Dugald Saunders instantly placed a 10 km Quarantine Zone around the Port. This zone has now been extended to 50km.

A week later a total "Bee Lock-down" - an Emergency Biosecurity Order which prohibits any movement of bees or beehives throughout the State of NSW.

This means is **you must not move any bees in NSW at present.**

"Australia is the only major honey producing country free from Varroa mite, the most serious pest to honey bees worldwide," Minister Saunders said.

So, in a nutshell, Australia was, up until 22 June 2022 one of the few countries in the world that was not infested with the Varroa mite - a mite that has destroyed bee populations and honey production worldwide.

We all know that without bees pollinating plants, especially produce we eat, food will become a scarcity. It seems one out of every three mouth-

fuls of food we eat has been pollinated by bees.

If the Varroa mite gets loose it will decimate production of Australian honey, and then we must also consider the knock-on effects of reduced pollination of Australian Agricultural products. And what will happen to prices? An upwards spiral could well be the result. The cost to Industry - frightening.

The Varroa mite (an arachnid - so has eight legs), is known scientifically as *Varroa destructor*, an organism that is a carrier of at least 5 viruses that affect the ability of bees to fly, which stops them gathering pollen, nectar, and carrying viruses that also stop young bees emerging from their incubating cells in the hive.

Just having a scientific species name of "destructor" tells us that this mite causes plenty of damage.

Varroa mites are native to Asia and were first detected in bee colonies in Japan well over 100 years ago. This mite has now reached all

continents on planet Earth (except Antarctica, of course.)

The Acting Chief Executive of the Australian Honey Bee Council (Mr. Danny LeFeuvre) stated that -

"The NSW Department of Primary Industries staff are going door to door to make sure all hives are accounted for in the Newcastle area."

Apparently, a significant mite infestation in late Autumn to early Spring usually leads to the death of entire honey bee colonies, and the various authorities are alerting local beekeepers.

If you know of hives, whether owned by a beekeeper who isn't registered (they will have no number on the hives) or feral hives anywhere in your area, then please contact the DPI with their location.

For those who are in the 50km exclusion zone, you cannot move any bees, hives or components into, out of or within that zone. This also includes taking honey or comb from the hive.

The Varroa mite is quite small and coloured 'reddish brown' - obviously not the black small hive beetle (with 6 legs).

In Queensland, a successful Varroa mite eradication program, led by Biosecurity Queensland, commenced around the Port of Townsville in 2016 and declared 'eradicated' on 1 July 2020.

In Victoria, Varroa mite was detected in a ship's cargo, emanating from the USA at the Port of Melbourne in June 2018. This infestation was also eradicated.

However with the latest news the bees are here and further heading north is deeply concerning and questions should be asked how this catastrophe happened at the Port of Newcastle.

For information call the Dept. Primary Industries on 1800 084 881  
**DM**

## THE KARUAH MISSION

A Fundraising Initiative by Lambton Park Hotel

**J**ust half an hour up the highway from Newcastle, on Worimi land, sits a community of strong, proud Aboriginal people, the Karuah Community.

Living and growing up on the mission brings a great sense of community and strong connection to their culture to the Karuah people. However, with a significant lack of funds and support some resources are scarce.

On the list of important needs is a new office. The Karuah Community's head office needs to be moved as it experiences a threat of being condemned, walls lined with holes and the roof full of leaks. Government funding is limited, so Karuah is mostly left to their own devices for fundraising.

In an effort to maintain their status as a self-sufficient community, our CEO, Shai Tichardson has introduced an educational facility for people of the community, where they learn various trades that assist with maintenance of the mission. Recently, some members have studied land-

scaping which has allowed them in turn to build a community garden that provides fresh produce, fruits, and vegetables.

The community believes in being self-sustaining to empower members and allows the strengthening and continuation of Aboriginal culture.

Next on the agenda is a medical centre, so community members can access the medical care they need, including; psychology, counselling, general medical, dental etc without a need to travel.

A beautiful, but vulnerable community that needs our support. The connection to their land, is important for Indigenous communities and it is vital for them to maintain.

The Lambton Park Hotel have arranged a fundraiser this July. Where various local businesses have donated large prizes to support the efforts. These items will be raffled off on Saturday 30th July at their Christmas in July MEGA raffle.

Please come along and join us!





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# DEVELOPMENTS... FOR BETTER OR WORSE?

Newcomers choose to settle here to be part of who we are and what we have. Newcomers can, and do contribute to, and enhance our community. But we all lament losing our landscape, wildlife and lifestyle.

The responsibility to nurture, protect and support the local community is surely, partly a role of the council.

Businesses that benefit from people shopping, buying and building, may not agree. But it is all in how matters are managed. Visitors are attracted here or move here for the historic, countrified, clean and green natural beauty, the lifestyle, and the pace of life.

## MUSHROOMING DEVELOPMENT

And so given the developments small and large mushrooming everywhere, those in the pipeline and ones still on the drawing board, perhaps it's time Council et al took a breath and looked at what we have here... and how we can do it better and more sympathetically and sensitively to protect the local environment.

Surely the number of homes cheek by jowl can be balanced by less houses and more space to add desirable aesthetics as well as privacy and attractiveness with trees and gardens. Why must developers clear a site to dirt before building when with some planning and building around established greenery makes the project more desirable.

Developers may not agree... but at the end of the day when we're hemmed in by crammed houses, traffic and no land, (look at Sydney!) the foresight will have been more valuable... monetarily as well as

environmentally.

## JUST A FEW COMING OUR WAY

Since our article last month on the proposed housing development at Parry's Cove, Tea Gardens, where there was no mention of any marina, it seems there has been a rethink by the developers, Sheargolds.

As we suggested, calling the development a "cove" might indicate that a marina could eventuate.

On 4 April, 2022 the Hunter Regional Planning Panel approved a considerable portion of this development but excluded the proposed housing area in what is technically known as Lot 10 DP 270100 within the Parry's Cove site. Included in the proposal were 114 hectares to be set aside as conservation offset land. This is a gesture by the developer to keep a chunk of land intact for biodiversity, local flora and fauna, to replace what will be wiped out in the housing development.

The Parry's Cove proposed stages 15 and 16 (132 house sites) were struck out (or "saved" as one councillor put it) by the Hunter Regional Planning Panel on 4 April 2022.

On 23 February 2020, MidCoast Greens Councillor, Dheera Smith congratulated the council for approving to retain this land as a "Franklin Dam" moment. However, the Council was quick to point out that it should be noted the development application for Parry's Cove is being assessed by the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Panel – **not** MidCoast Council.

This voluntary planning agreement is currently with Sheargolds' lawyers to report back to Council in

August 2022.

In Sheargold's original launch to the community it proposed that features of the application include - *"multi-million-dollar residential facilities... The Residents Hub- a central community meeting space including... expansive decks and covered lookouts over the central lake... In addition to the resident's facilities, multiple parks and laneways will create a connected and walkable streetscape to encourage residents and the broader community alike to retreat and enjoy the beautiful natural setting with approximately 100 ha of bushland set aside and protected into perpetuity to conserve local biodiversity. The landscape masterplan has a goal of producing a sensitive design that provides an abundance of habitat for the array of local fauna."*

However, it was pointed out at a Regional Planning Panel zoom meeting (16 March, 2022) by an objector that the offset area contains considerable marine swamplands and is unsuitable for fauna such as koalas and there is no significant flora or Wallum frogs.

## CHANGE OF PLAN??

On 16 June 2022 - the Sheargold Group announced that initial consultation with the public on their 'Marina Proposal' (the company's description) had now commenced. Sheargolds' senior representatives sought a preliminary meeting with Ms Shai Richardson, the CEO of the Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council, attended by other KLALC representatives, including Mr. Travis Cobb and other invited persons.

And whaddya know... Sheargolds announced they are currently in

the process of preparing a planning proposal for a marina that would sit adjacent to the Parry's Cove project.

The proposal for the Parry's Cove Marina is on the internet with lovely photos of large boats moored in pristine water next to the Marina Village. A video includes areas 15 and 16 – the housing lots that were just excluded by the Regional Planning Panel. The whole area is described as providing: *"an accessible and versatile place for the Tea Gardens community to enjoy the Myall River Waterfront. At the Marina Village you will be able to enjoy everything from a day of relaxation – picking up a coffee, window shopping and enjoying the beautiful waterfront view – to a day filled with activities – launching your kayak or SUP from the waterfront park and fishing from the pier – to a new waterfront dining experience in the evening."*

If you are interested in this tentative Parry's Cove Marina Proposal on the Myall River please check out the Proposal on the Internet - *Parry's Cove Marina*.

## NORTH TUNCURRY

In May this year Council announced a proposal from Landcom to change land zoning rules to allow around 2,100 homes, a town centre and open space at North Tuncurry as exhibited by the NSW Department of Planning (which is the NSW Government's land and property development organisation).

"This is a significant proposal that, if approved, would see 615 hectares of Crown Land rezoned and able to be developed," MidCoast Council's Director of Liveable Communities, Paul De Szell, explained, and that the planning proposal is being assessed by the State Government, and not MidCoast Council, Mr De Szell reinforced.

**However, if the proposal is successful and the zone changes to allow for the development, MidCoast Council will be responsible for assessing development applications for construction on the site.**

## LANDCOM

Landcom's vision is to deliver new homes, jobs, services, conservation land, and open space close to the growing Tuncurry-Forster urban area. The North Tuncurry Urban Release Area is located on the eastern side of The Lakes Way, directly to the north of, and adjoining the Tuncurry town centre. It includes: More than 2,100 dwellings to accommodate up to 4,500 residents in a mix of low-rise homes centred around a new local centre, golf course and open space.





Approximately 13 hectares of employment land for industrial and business development to generate 126 full-time jobs on the site and more than 2,100 on-site jobs during construction.

327 hectares of land to be managed for biodiversity conservation (60% of the site)

Public access connections to Nine Mile Beach.

New active transport connections linking with the Tuncurry town centre via new and improved walkways and cycling links.

Specified roads will be capable of accommodating standard buses and a network of cycling and pedestrian paths... to encourage pedestrian activity

Nine parks providing 6.1 hectares of new open space. Reconfiguration of the existing golf course, A new town centre, golf clubhouse, community centre, cultural centre, mobile surf club and public gathering places.

The Department of Planning and Environment and Landcom have consulted on the project since its inception. MidCoast Council has been definite in re-iterating **that the Department of Planning and Environment is the planning authority for this application, not MidCoast Council.**

Details on the proposal can be found on the Department of Planning and Environment website.

Landcom is seeking approval from the Minister for Planning to rezone the land by amending the Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2014. The proposal also includes a new development control plan that seeks to amend the Great Lakes development control plan to add site-specific design elements.

So what has happened to this land since it was knocked back years ago as it was considered swamp and had a protected orchid species on it?

Seems to me we must be alert *and* alarmed!

### KOLODONG DEVELOPMENT

The announcement that a 78 hectare property at Kolodong (between Wingham and Taree) had been sold to Cameron Brae property development was made in October 2020.

Locals who were unaware of such plans were somewhat stunned to learn of the plan for turning the rural land into:

*"...a modern, sustainable 450 home urban community with new parks and playgrounds, walking trails, viewing platforms, all in close proximity to the Taree CBD, local schools, shops and community facilities."*

By "viewing platforms" some locals wondered if these might be for viewing the potential sea of housing roofs replacing the neighbouring paddocks. A 50 metre buffer zone was included in the plans between the development and surrounding rural land.

A lot of locals were unaware the area was rezoned to residential by

MidCoast Council late in 2019.

However, at the first announcement of the project local protest groups vociferously pointed out the potential chaos of traffic madness and congestion which is proving correct as construction began. And now the removal of 69 fully grown eucalyptus trees along one side of Wingham Road has further outraged the community. The trees' destruction also caused distress and anger from locals as it was believed the road could have been widened on the other side where there weren't trees, even if it cost more.

Council's Director of Infrastructure and Engineering Robert Scott sent a long email explaining in part...

"To improve large sections of the roadworks in that area changes are necessary. It will cost \$20 million. There is a need to widen the road and align roadworks to create one intersection that can handle traffic into the future.

The north side has considerable infrastructure such as kerb and guttering and overhead powerlines, and underground there are sewerage pipes and telecommunications infrastructure. Widening this side would push the road closer to the property boundaries. Therefore council has decided to widen the road on the south side.

It is true there are trees we planted here years ago, but at the time there was no planning for widening the road."

### NOW RENAMED

Apparently we can look forward to a display village at the entry of the renamed "Eucha Valley" estate.

Housing lots range from 400-600 metre square. Had they been 1.5 acre blocks the design might have been more sensitive and rural looking.

The developers will not construct the homes but offer them to builders.

While the developer's representative did visit and schmooze with some concerned Kolodong locals over the past year or so, appeasing some and not others, the issue remains of concern over the escalating development in the electorate.

### THE FUTURE OF HOUSING

Housing, especially affordable housing, is critical in our area. The homeless, the flood and fire affected, chronically ill and disabled are a huge group of affected people which includes women and children, victims of domestic violence.

The economy, the lack of staff and funds are all given as reasons for the situation. But the perception the "rich are getting richer" and with no long-term future proofing or thoughtful or creative planning for our area, let alone dealing with climate change, could see us soon reaching a point where it's all too late.

DM

# THE MAGIC CARPET A MURRAY RIVER ODYSSEY

Rex Ellis is Australia's longest operating safari guide.



**T**here are good flows in the Murray River and so he is resurrecting his magnificent Murray Raft tour...small parties drift down a lazy river on a large 21 foot raft. It has a canopy and a carpet beneath your feet and comfy deck chair seating with plenty of room to move around. A large inflatable boat is towed behind to help push the raft around bends and into shore to explore and visit the wetlands where the birdlife is exceptional, plus other on shore attractions.

His campsites are among the best in Australia with campfire cooked meals and quality wines.

Moving at a gentle 3-4 kilometres an hour the scenery is ever changing.

Enjoy the sounds of silence apart from bird calls and an occasional boat.

Two or three staff accompany parties of seven.

Transfer by 4WD to and from Mildura or Adelaide included in the price - \$2,250.00 per person.

Contact 0400 854 358 [rexellis@safari.com.au](mailto:rexellis@safari.com.au) [www.safarico.com.au](http://www.safarico.com.au)

Or ...

### TAKE THE LAST BOATS TO LAKE EYRE

A world class adventure!

12 fabulous days ex Adelaide following the Warburton River to Lake Eyre!

There is an out of season rise in the Diamantina River which presents the opportunity for several eight day boat safaris this year.

Rex Ellis has travelled down this river 31 times since 1974 when he crossed the lake from north to south.

This will be Rex's last year of operation, and this will probably be the last commercial operation on this river.

Details available. Price - \$12,750, per person.

Contact 0400 854 358 [rexellis@safari.com.au](mailto:rexellis@safari.com.au) [www.safarico.com.au](http://www.safarico.com.au)



# SPOTTED TAIL QUOLLS

## (*DASYURUS MACULATES*).

If you live in one of our more rural areas, especially if you have chooks, you may have come across one of the very special native animals that are increasingly disappearing from our landscape, the Spotted Tail Quoll (also known as the Tiger Quoll although they do not have stripes!!)

The Spotted Tail Quoll is one of four species of quolls that live in Australia and is the second largest carnivorous marsupial left in Australia, second only to the Tasmanian Devil.

As the name suggests the Spotted Tail Quoll has a pattern of white spots that continues to the tail on a coat that is otherwise tan brown or black. They have a long snout, pink nose, hairy tail, big ears, sharp claws and carnivore teeth. They grow to around 76 centimetres in body length with tail lengths of 50 centimetres. Males tend to be larger than females, and as marsupials, females have large abdominal pouches. The average weight of an adult female is around 2 kilograms and an adult male about 3.5 kilograms.

Their preferred habitats are forests, woodlands and coastal heathlands, so much of the Manning Valley was once prime Quoll country. Although they still need heavily vegetated areas, since European settlement they have adapted to cross open farmlands in search of prey such as rabbits and, yes, sometimes our chooks.

Spotted Tail Quolls are usually solitary animals with large territories. Females typically have home ranges of between 200 to 500 hectares whilst males have even larger territories of between 500 to 4000 hectares. They are highly mobile covering several kilometres in one night but prefer to traverse their home ranges along densely vegetated creek-lines. They need hollow logs and rock crevices in rocky



outcrops to den in. Females will sometimes share their dens with other Quolls both male and female, presumably their young or a current mate, but males typically do not.

Spotted Tail Quolls do however appear to use communal 'latrine sites' often on flat rocks perhaps for territorial marking and communication. It is at these communal latrines for example, that females will advertise that they are in oestrous, or ready to mate.

As nocturnal animals they do their hunting at night but will sometimes sunbake outside their dens during the day. Their natural prey animals include insects, birds, mice, rats, lizards, frogs, echidnas and possums. As stated they will also take rabbits and, if the opportunity presents, domestic fowl. Larger prey is typically killed by biting the back of the skull or neck. They will also scavenge on carrion.

Quolls are relatively short lived, only about three to four years, although in captivity they have lived to over 6 years. Females have only

one litter per year, with mating occurring between April and July.

Courting involves the male following the female around and the pairs exchanging a loud series of vocalisations. Mating can last from several hours to a full day. Afterwards the couple part company and the male has no further involvement in parenting or care for the young.

Gestation is around 21 days, after which an average of 5 young are born live. Like other marsupials at birth the young are significantly under-developed, only 7 mm long, hairless and blind. They do however have a strong sense of smell and rudimentary forearms they use to crawl into their mother's pouch.

The young will stay in their mother's pouch for another 12 weeks growing bigger and stronger. With such a full pouch females will sometimes lift her hind legs whilst walking to ease the pressure.

About four weeks after birth the mother will start to prepare a nursery den that she will line with grasses and other soft materials.

After about 12 weeks the young will move out of the pouch and be left in the den whilst their mother hunts. At around 18 weeks they are weaned and begin to eat only meat brought back to the den by their mother. Between 18 to 21 weeks they will become independent and by 12 months they have reached sexual maturity.

As well as scent marking, Spotted Tail Quolls have a range of vocalisations with mothers and young in particular having a range of clucks and cooing sounds. When threatened they growl and make high pitched screeching sounds.

As stated earlier, Spotted Tail Quolls are increasingly disappearing with an estimated decline in population of between 50 and 90%. Loss of habitat and fragmentation of remaining habitat may mean that surviving animals are too isolated to find mates or suitable territories. They also fall victim to foxes and

feral cats.

In the past they have been killed because of their tendency to raid chicken coops. As a listed vulnerable species it is illegal to kill or trap Quolls.

Chicken keepers can do much to Quoll-proof their hen houses. Using aviary mesh with a roof and gaps 20 mm or less, ensuring that the mesh is dug into ground at least 400 mm and/or has a wide skirt and providing a secure night roost (Quolls like cats can climb!) will all work to protect your chooks not only from quolls but goannas, pythons, feral cats and foxes as well.

Quolls have very different tracks to dogs or foxes, being more elongated, with two pads at the back, three in the middle and then four claw prints. If you do see or suspect you may have a quoll on your property please contact National Parks and Wildlife and Council offices.

**Kym Kilpatrick**



# ASPI – A BASTARD CHILD

**Bruce Haigh**

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, ASPI, was conceived as a body to provide the government with the advice it wanted to hear.

**I**t was commissioned by Prime Minister John Howard in August 2001 to undertake 'policy-relevant research and analysis to better inform government decisions and public understanding of strategic and defence issues.' It was set up against a background of LNP hysteria relating to an increasing number of refugees arriving by boat. In 1999, 86 boats with 3722 asylum seekers arrived and in 2000, 51 boats with 2939 asylum seekers.

The LNP government was coming under criticism for its handling of boat people including their indefinite incarceration in remote concentration camps. In turn the government was critical of the RAN for humanely dealing with refugees in unsafe boats at sea. In 1999/2000 it deployed members of the AFP overseas in a disruption program aimed at people smuggling operations in a number of countries including Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

In August 1999, Paul Barrett, the talented Secretary of Defence, was dismissed by the Minister, John Moore and his successor, Allan Hawke was dismissed in 2002 with two years of his contract left to run, apparently because Howard did not think much of either of them. They did not provide the advice he wanted to hear. The way was open for ASPI to strengthen its defence and foreign affairs credentials with the LNP.

From the outset ASPI was a highly politicised right wing 'think tank'. Initially funded by the government it came over time to accept funding from the US Government and significantly from the US arms industry. It supported Australian involvement in the US war against Iraq and Afghanistan, defending the war in Afghanistan right up to the precipitate US withdrawal last year.

ASPI has taken it upon itself to promote the purchase of American weapons including most recently US nuclear submarines, a purchase

which defies military logic and common sense. By any measure they will not be ready for delivery until at least 2045. The acquisition was proposed under the new AUKUS arrangement which has the stated aim of strengthen Australian defence arrangements in the face of alleged Chinese expansion.

In fact, the nuclear submarine deal is a smoke screen for the stationing of US nuclear submarines in Australia. Australia will not get nuclear submarines, if for no other reason than the technology will be obsolete by the projected date of delivery. It was never a serious proposition even if the LNP, ASPI and the right wing MSM took it seriously. It has been a cynical American ploy swallowed by a gullible Australia.

Under AUKUS the United States seeks to militarise the north of Australia to further threaten China. However, from the measures proposed it seems the US may have more than threat in mind, namely preparing the north of Australia for launching an attack. None of this has been put to the Australian people. This is not in Australia's interests. It only serves American interests. China would be bound to retaliate in force. Australia would be the primary target.

ASPI has been a cheer leader for increased US pressure on China. The narrative built over the past seven years, to hide US fear of China as a significant trade competitor and rival power challenging US hegemony, is that China constitutes a military threat. No doubt it is becoming so as it seeks to counter the US military threat.

America is an increasingly fractured and recalcitrant state as it observes its power being drained by collapsing social cohesion. ASPI needs to ask, why place value in an ally which will not control the arbitrary use of arms by its citizens when those arms could bring about the very thing owners claim for bearing them – the breakdown of law

and order, which could in turn lead to civil war. Not so far-fetched when you look at Trump, his supporters and those seeking to replace him.

The LNP and ASPI are quick to point to shared values as justification for our one-sided alliance with the US. This year alone there have been 223 instances of mass shooting in the US. Black Americans comprise the majority of US citizens in prison and by far the greatest number of people killed by US law enforcement agencies. Where are the shared values?

China has its own poor record on human rights, bolstered by Xi Jinping's new nationalism. The Yugurs are treated appallingly, allegedly for reasons of 'national security'. The US has pushed this as a line of attack on China but took it further with claims of genocide. This claim is contentious and yet to be proved, unlike the genocide carried out against Sri Lankan Tamils by the ruling Sinhalese, unremarked and allowed to continue by the US.

ASPI has not argued a case for even handedness in our dealings with China and the US and yet China because of its geography, economy and trade remains far more important to Australia than the US. The only reason the US remains important to Australia is because of the security threats it has created over the past sixty years.

ASPI followed the US down the Taiwan rabbit hole and took a gullible Australian government with it. As foreign affairs and defence adviser of choice for both Morrison and Dutton, ASPI neutered both departments. We are yet to be told how involved it was with the ill-fated AUKUS negotiations.

Taiwan and China had arrived at a workable relationship with \$US 250 billion in two-way trade, tourism, business investment and education. China gave the US the opportunity to stir with its ill-conceived island developments in the South China Sea and stir it did. The US has pulled

out all stops to portray China as keen to take Taiwan by force causing ASPI to howl at the mere mention of Taiwan.

The LNP made a mess of diplomatic relations with China, France and the Pacific. It had deceitful relations with France, treated Pacific Island countries with racist disdain and used a megaphone to abuse China; making matters worse for itself and better for the US. ASPI supported this travesty of diplomacy, perhaps it was the architect of it. In any case it was on the rails waving its hat at the start of any contrived confrontation.

Following the local anger and diplomatic mess created by the Morrison/ASPI forays into the Pacific on the back of climate denial, China decided to take advantage with less than mixed success. It received a polite knock back on a grand plan to lead a Pacific alliance of the willing.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong in two forays into the Pacific over the same number of weeks has shown both ASPI and the Chinese how diplomacy should be conducted. No megaphone and no presumption.

ASPI has reached its use by date. It should no longer receive Australian taxpayer funding, nor Australian government patronage. Dutton has supporters inside the organisation, he did a captains pick for the new head of ASPI. The government must rely on the advice of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence. They must be given the resources and leadership to fulfil their statutory functions. ASPI should not receive funding to run trouble through Dutton for the Albanese government.

ASPI is a political organisation with loyalty to the LNP, if they want it to survive, they should fund it.

**Bruce Haigh is a retired diplomat and political commentator.**

*This article first appeared in Pearls & Irritations.*



# FURY OVER PROFLIGATE DIDDLING AND FIDDLING REQUIRES A CLEAN SWEEP

Mike Deignan

Ratepayers get sluggish again because of Council costs and apparent incompetence!

**R**atepayers will again be reminded of MCC's alleged financial incompetence and mismanagement when they receive an increased rates notice effective 1 July 2022.

Expect to be sluggish again with an increase of 2.25% in rates charges. At the Council meeting 27 April 2022 Council gave approval to administration to apply to State government (IPART) for a rate increase. Take it as a fait accompli, IPART will approve this increase. The council meeting agenda states: *"this will raise \$1.951 million in the income year"*.

More money? *"Yes Minister: we can hire more desperately needed staff and of course consultants. When we do not have the talent staff resources inhouse, we must hire consultants. They'll provide a glossy report and stating what we tell them and, then, we can deflect blame onto them if it doesn't work out. Right? Yes Minister. They know how to identify efficiencies and express them in convincing glowing superlatives. So, we change nothing, but it will appear we have. Really? YES Minister"*.

Were you, like me, hopeful of a clean sweep with the majority of previous councillors replaced in the recent council election? Duh, it appears it's more of the same old same old.

The rates application was proposed by Cr West, seconded by newly elected, now Deputy Mayor Cr Tickle and approved by all Councillors, except K Smith and K Bell (P Epov was absent but one doubts he would have gone along with this fiasco). Cr Tickle has a financial background and writes a money matters column in the local Halliday's Point based community newspaper.

Well it appears money matters to Cr Tickle and Council, however, but not to ratepayers. You would expect financial foresight from a new arrival and a focus on excessive expendi-

ture. No particular financial acumen is needed to peruse the reports and see the worrying trend. Cr Tickle and the "approval" councillors find it much easier to slug ratepayers rather than taking immediate action to slash costs. Ironically, Cr Tickle previously served for a term as a Councillor on the "old" Taree based GT Council which eventually became "not financially viable" bureaucratic speak for bankruptcy. Will we ratepayers experience the same again?

Mayor Pontin also approved the IPART application. In her re-election campaign she claimed to have held council "financially responsible". What an absurd claim. Council have shown appalling financial responsibility and financial control. This has resulted in a severe lack of funds.

The local roads are patches on patches, pot-holed and dangerous. The dire condition of the roads is primarily the result of council's financial mismanagement and the consequential failure to deliver on the Road Improvement Program we heard so much about before the previous GM packed his bags and left on short notice. The roads were bad before the floods, so don't blame the floods. The floods have made the issue more apparent and urgent.

Reviewing financial reports for the last three years, 2019 to 2022 and using 2019 as a datum, the growth (excess / wastage) in expenditure on just two items, employee costs and consultants is \$6.7 million, \$14.8 million and \$19.5 million respectively. A total of \$41 million in the last three years!

As the 21/22 audited financial reports will not surface until later this year, the latest budget dated December 2021 was used to get employee costs for 2022. Consultant costs prior to 2021 are not available on the MCC website, so estimates were used for 2019 and 2021.

The CEO is the person ultimately

responsible for an organisation and the General Manager is the CEO for Council. The buck stops with the GM. A CEO should have their eye continuously on the financial viability of the organisation, especially items reported with abnormal variance. The reports are there for all to see the bleeding obvious. A CEO does not have to be a financial wizard. Ability and backbone to take action and slash costs are required attributes. These are often better attributes than financial acumen. Having both is preferable. And backed up by competent staff is a big help.

A contract of employment needs to include and clearly state these financial performance criteria, to ensure proper performance review. MCC is seriously haemorrhaging.

Following State Government guidelines, the current GM had a performance review (February 2022) by a panel that included Mayor Pontin and Cr Tickle. The review took place prematurely, with one year to go on the GM's contract. The result of the review was an eye-watering increase in the GM's already substantial remuneration package and a three-year contract extension. The proper and appropriate action to take should have been: shred the current GM's contract and immediately find a competent, proven replacement with experience managing a private sector enterprise.

The appropriate action would have been a relief for ratepayers and then, hopefully, within a few years a noticeable improvement in our shocking roads. You would have to ask, were "finances" even mentioned in the review? Did the GM's contract stipulate key-performance assessment criteria? Were any of the reviewers themselves aware of the current situation? Was the expenditure blow-out in the last three years even mentioned? What other performance criteria were used? Were any criteria financial based? Why are the

key performance criteria not visible to ratepayers? Was the review done at arms-length? (MCC will claim it was because of one external reviewer). Does the current Council include any Councillors who approved the original GM's contract? It would be nice to hear from them.

It is four years since Councils merged and it appears not one step has been taken to slash costs. It is not just the increase in rates that is of concern. It is the lack of insight and the lack of backbone to take immediate action to slash costs. There should be an immediate freeze on hiring yet more employees and consultants.

A broader review should also identify and eliminate all "feel good" programs that do not deliver core services (particularly roads and infrastructure) and that are of no benefit to the majority of ratepayers –eg. How much is spent on the "tourism" and the promotion of our mysterious Barrington Coast?

FTE numbers and consultants are just two expenditure items that should be immediately and drastically slashed. There are many other expenditure items that need the chainsaw. Ratepayers need to revolt and not accept any increase in rates and demand financial accountability.

Councillors need to properly represent ratepayers and demand immediate costs cutting and a full and honest exposure of cost expenditure. When will a Councillor step forward, set parameters for a severe cost reduction program and see the program to fruition? There is no need for a consultant or a consultant's report.

Just do it.

*The author Mike Deignan, Halliday's Point, invites any MCC finance staff or Councillors to review "the figures" in order to initiate cost cutting action.*



# A PLEA FROM TASSIE

Ours is a small island deep in the Great Southern Ocean and we hope you may help in our efforts to save our coastline, waterways, and marine life from the damage the Tasmanian farmed Atlantic salmon industry inflicts on Tassie.

**W**e are hoping to alert Australians to the harm industrial salmon farming does to our wildlife and wild places and to the fact that the product is actually unhealthy to consume. It's promoted as "clean, green and sustainable" but it's not.

The wonderful British actor, Miriam Margolyes - The Toxic Truth - has kindly made an impactful video for our cause that is now being widely viewed.

In Truwana-Country Under Threat we travel to Truwana (Cape Barren Island). Truwana is the only Aboriginal land in Tasmania that supports a permanent resident population of Aboriginal people. Here we meet Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder, Fiona Maher who tells us about the implications of proposed commercial fish farming in Truwana waters for Aboriginal people.

We would be deeply grateful if you could help share these stories for us and help halt the destruction of this small island's natural marine heritage.

We can have a big impact if we let the Tasmania's Atlantic salmon industry know we won't eat salmon until they change their ways. This was done before with caged eggs, and we hope to do it again with your help.

By sharing the video widely, you can help us influence the people that matter and help save our little island.

We are a small group of islanders hoping to protect this wild place for all generations and people.

If you would like more information or to help us further, please reply to [huonisland@gmail.com](mailto:huonisland@gmail.com).

Thank you for caring.

Island Collective

[rewildtassie@outlook.com](mailto:rewildtassie@outlook.com)

## Work Wanted in Wingham

Hard worker wants work in Wingham. . . gardening, handyman, building, fixing, home repairs.

Call Wayne (Bedford) 0432 214 628

# DO OR DIE FOR MANNING BASE HOSPITAL!

We have harped on in these pages for a year or more about the parlous state of Manning Base Hospital due to underfunding and lack of support from our former Federal Member and Minister for Regional Health, Dr David Gillespie who has disappointed many locally with his lacklustre support for MBH. He doesn't live in the electorate and seems to only appear for "photo ops" leaving local anger aimed at State Member, Steve Bromhead.

**A**nd with critical staff shortages, no visiting specialists who want to stay because of the lack of facilities, not to mention a scathing and critical report from the Parliamentary Enquiry into the State of NSW Regional and Rural Health about the functioning of MBH.

### FORSTER WAS NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN

The red herring of the Nationals whim to build a public hospital at Forster has been a thorn in the side of everyone involved with MBH. As we have stated for months, a Forster hospital was never on the cards.

Senior medical staff at MBH have long referred to the Forster hospital idea as a "thought bubble" from MP Steve Bromhead to garner votes time and again.

In March this year the Nationals sent out a snippy press release from The Hon. Bronwyn "Bronnie" Taylor, Minister for Women, Regional Health and Mental Health, declaring - *"Let me be clear - The NSW Nationals in Government promised to deliver a hospital at Forster and we will deliver on that promise."*

Subsequently the Nationals plonked down \$20 million to do just that.

This has thrown a spanner in the works for everyone.

While some hospitals adjoining our electorate are threatening to go it alone from Hunter New England Health, Dr Murray Hyde Page, Chairman of the Medical Staff Council Manning Base Hospital, has stepped up and pointed out that the recently finalised ten year Clinical Services Plan for our area does **not** include a new Forster Hospital. And one was never planned.

Dr Hyde Page says they have come up with a plan to speed up the upgrade to MBH with things more urgent than a new parking lot, and a collaborative program to work with Forster Private Hospital and the Mayo Hospital in Taree to provide Urgent Care and

share the workload that will make things easier and smoother for patients as well as medical staff. He is deeply concerned at the workload, stress and pressure everyone at the hospital has to bear, as the bottom line is that it affects patients' health and outcomes.

Dr Hyde Page is a big picture thinker and says he is ".....deeply disappointed at the interference of the Nationals to seemingly score points when, if their \$20 million was given to help speed up the process of setting the new Clinical Services Plan in action, it would be far more effective than fighting over a pipe dream for a Forster Hospital. While MBH received 100million dollars in the state budget, we need double that and we need it **now!**"

Another difficult issue concerning the state of play locally is the announcement in a Seven News TV segment as to the long absence of Mr Bromhead from Parliament and public events due to ill health, but that he is working from home.

While absent Mr Bromhead has subsequently recently been promoted twice with substantial pay increases as now Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Transport and Roads as well as being appointed to The Public Accounts Committee.

While Dr Hyde Page and many others in the electorate are sympathetic to Mr Bromhead's illness, many are critical of the situation given the low wages of nurses and frontline workers. 'We are very sympathetic to Mr Bromhead's health issues, but the healthcare for the community must be a priority,' said Dr Hyde Page.

Senior medical and administrative hospital staff and community action groups are anxious now to move ahead and resuscitate Manning Base Hospital as fast as possible.

'We want to be shovel ready asap. The health of the community must come first,' stated Dr Hyde Page.

DM



# WHY? IS THE BIG QUESTION!

Wendy Borchers

Why has the ABC decided to abolish 75 jobs in its precious Archives and Libraries division: 58 permanent positions and 17 contractors, Australia-wide?

**W**hy make the announcement now, on the brink of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on July 1? Why has this decision been made at all and who made it? An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed that the managing director of the Corporation, David Anderson, approves the idea and supports the fact that journalists will do their own research in future, apart from those attached to 4 Corners! As if journalists don't have enough to do.

As an archival researcher/producer with around 35 years of experience working in ABC Archives and Libraries until 2012, I can assure readers that it takes lashings of skill, enthusiasm and a profound knowledge of the Collection to be efficient in the role.

On Australia Day, 2015 I was honoured by my colleagues by being awarded an AM in the Order of Australia: *for significant service to the film and television industry as a researcher, producer and archivist, also to the preservation of Indigenous heritage*. It seems to me that these qualities, possessed by each one of my former colleagues in spades, have been ignored altogether by the current ABC Management.

## A PRICELESS COLLECTION IN ABC VAULTS.

Although each State houses an impressive accumulation of film and videotape items, the majority of the Collection is housed in Sydney vaults. The Collection represents pockets of significant milestones in Australia's cultural heritage and provides a kaleidoscope of programs for re-use in program production. I believe that all interstate branches are now completely tapeless, which is no mean feat.

A Library Sales section was established in Head Office and in each State so this material is accessible to the general public. The cuts will affect Collections, Document Archives as well as public access areas as well. The unkindest cuts of all, it seems to me.

## FILM RESEARCH – PROGRAM RESEARCH – ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES – ARCHIVE RESEARCH – CONTENT MANAGEMENT

My career as a film researcher began in 1972, when the nightly, half-hour current-affairs' program, *This Day Tonight*, was in production. The Library then was, as it still is, a very social place where journalists would visit their dedicated researcher to discuss their proposed story and to learn what footage might be available to illustrate it.

## WHY NOW?

Over the years I have witnessed highly talented members of staff walk out the door due to government cutbacks to budgets and subsequent redundancies, which brings me to another question, why has the ABC decided to make the cutbacks now and not wait to see whether some funding might be restored by the new government when it brings down its budget in October?

## FALSE ECONOMY.

It seems to me this policy is false economy of the highest order. I remember this idea being mooted many years ago but it was shot down in flames before it managed to lift off the ground, mostly because journalists rebelled against having to do their own archival research on top of all the other duties they were expected to perform. Who, under these circumstances, is going to catalogue the new material as it is produced? Are journalists going to be trained as cataloguers as well as researchers? I don't believe they will have time to squeeze in all these extra duties.

## WILL THIS PRICELESS COLLECTION LIE DORMANT IN THE VAULTS?

I wonder whether the instigator of this policy actually has any knowledge of the ABC's audio/visual Collection? Has that person ever witnessed work performed by a librarian /archivist/ producer /researcher? Will this Management decision mean that this material will lie dormant in the vaults because there are no members of staff with the specialist skills or time to access it?

## THE VITAL WORK OF ABC ARCHIVISTS IS DISCERNIBLE ON MOST TELEVISION AND RADIO PROGRAMS EVERY DAY.

Most evenings on our television screens we see the vital work of the archival researcher/producer on display, not only on *Four Corners* but programs like *Catalyst*, *Compass*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Australian Story*, *7.30*, *The Drum*, *Media Watch*, *Insiders*, *Q & A* and *One Plus One* all rely heavily on archival content and what about all the fabulous podcasts which have been produced in these straitened times, under the most trying of circumstances! Radio programs like the *Science Show*, *Conversations* and Radio National generally, also rely heavily on archival content.

## THE ARCHIVES' ACT, 1983

The Act regulates government record-keeping and public access to records. Will journalists be trained to become familiar with this, as well as becoming experts in the fields of copy-right and Fair Dealing? If a journalist/researcher can't access the critical material for which they are searching in the ABC's library, would they know of other organisations to search? Would they bother, even if they did know?

There are obviously flaws in the system; will journalists be aware of them and have the knowledge to overcome them? How will they learn about them in the first place if the experts have all departed?

It is my understanding that over 90% of radio archives is digitised but only 60% of television material and this does not include film items. Obviously still a long way to go before this goal is achieved. I'm told that many items in the pictorial library have been digitised too, but not all of them.

The ABC has this extraordinary resource at its fingertips. I understand the idea is still only a proposal so there is time and hope for the decision to be moderated or reversed.

It has taken 90 years of dedication of staff to build the Collection. Please treat it with the respect it deserves! Instead of cutbacks in funding, resources and staff, I suggest the opposite should apply – an increase in funding for the purposes of Preservation and Digitisation of the Collection.

Wendy Borchers (Forster)  
(Former ABC Archives Producer and Researcher)

## THE CHAIR REPLIES

In reply, The Chair of the ABC, Mr David Anderson, said:

"I would also like to reassure both you and your readers that we view the ABC Archives as a nationally significant resource, one the ABC will always protect.

For several years the ABC has been digitising the archive as part of our development into a digital-first media organisation. This is consistent with other media companies and public broadcasters around the world. Before undertaking this important project we engaged with similar organisations that have already completed or are in the process of preserving their legacy media collections, including the National Archives of Australia, the BBC and CBC.

The digitisation of ABC Archives is designed to protect our national heritage and make it more accessible for content makers and all Australians. By the end of this year 1.2 million

documents, 637,000 images, 97,000 videotapes and 54,000 audio carriers will have been digitised.

While we are proposing to remove approximately 58 roles and introduce 30 new roles to ensure we have the necessary skills in our workforce for this transition to digital, the ABC's archives and library services will still employ around 70 people. There will continue to be highly-skilled Archives staff based in newsrooms to assist and support our content teams, and they will remain responsible for the archiving of raw material. Any work done by journalists to assist in archiving material will be minimal and is already done by many of our newsroom employees around the country.

Many programs our audiences have valued over the years have relied on the archive and the staff who manage it. I do not foresee a time when such content will not be readily available for our journalist and program makers as they produce the programs our audiences rely on and value.

Safeguarding the ABC Archives, making it fully accessible and more usable are part of responsible stewardship of this wonderful resource."

## ON A PERSONAL NOTE . . .

The ABC in all its many forms, is, without question the most important media in the country. We grew up with the ABC as did our parents. I have to admit to some bias as my Uncle Jim Revitt was a Foreign Correspondent, the first producer of "Weekend Magazine," and among other hats he wore, started the Indigenous cadet training program, discovering talent like Barbara McCarthy (now Senator Malarndirri), Stan Grant and Aaron Pederson (who went on to another career) among many. Therefore, I know how the ABC functioned and how its principles were respected. As a cadet journalist (on a magazine) I was privileged to be given advice from some of the ABC "greats."

In these times of fractured media where influence and money count more than facts and ethics, we need our ABC more than ever (especially in times of crisis).

No large and diverse national organisation functions perfectly all the time. But against massive funding cuts and political interference on occasion, the ABC stands for principles, truth, bravery and independence . . . which are in rather short supply these days.

Aunty has been there for us for 90 years. Where would we be without her? Happy Birthday to our ABC!

DM



# WHY WRITERS WRITE

When the gentle and private and highly respected author Kate Grenville marshalls a call to arms from among her author mates and colleagues about Climate Change, things are getting serious.

**N**ot that Kate hasn't taken note of the despairing lack of action on climate, but the feeling of helplessness and sadness as we see such a bleak and scary future for our kids and grandkids, affects us all.

Kate sent emails and in a matter of days had 80 or so of us signed up to her website [writersforclimateaction.com](http://writersforclimateaction.com)

We writers tend to be a solitary lot most of the time, hoping prose more effective than protest. But when needs must, we speak.

Quite how we can shove a rocket up the movers and shakers is a bit unclear but getting rid of the Morrison lacklustre government was a big start.

While I'm not as erudite as the passionate Richard Franklin (he's campaigning in Tassie over the toxic waters caused by salmon fish farms. After reading his book "Toxic" I stopped eating farmed salmon immediately).

However, I have over 29 novels made landscape the inspiration for my books. Place, primarily Australia, is always the driving character. Often in fiction one can raise issues and change minds without preaching or pontification.

I was married to a US Diplomat and lived in many countries. Yet when I did eventually return home, I realised I didn't know, or hadn't seen, my own country. So I knew I had to explore and write about - us.

I was also nudged by a childhood association with Australian icons, actor Chips Rafferty and poet Dorothea Mackellar. Chips told me whatever I do to: "make it bloody Australian. Tell our stories."

I told Miss Mackellar that I didn't have many books so I made up my own stories in my head and she seriously advised: "Then when you grow up you must put them in a book one day."

I have done that, and as luck and timing play a big role in one's life, my first book, set in Longreach, prompted by a campfire chat with RM Williams, did well and set me on a journey for the past thirty-three years.

Each year I am prompted by varying circumstances to journey to different places to live for a few months, soaking up the atmosphere,



Kate Grenville



yarning with the locals.

To me it is the environment in which one finds oneself, that unravels the stories of place, people and landscape that dictates the lives of characters, the plot of the book.

Cities suffocate me, I yearn for space, greenness, water, and local wildlife.

But the sight of gouged wounds from mining, the nakedness of broad acre farming, the encroachment of suburbia and citification, dying rivers and mechanised feedlots, cause me physical pain.

To me, it's all so bleedin' obvious this is all wrong, and against nature's way. Especially when one sees the positive results of regenerative farming, preservation of forests and wildlife, sustainable communities.

I so longed to lock the Morrison ministers in a remote community to fend for themselves. Do without the cigars and Shiraz and instead watch a sunset from the beer garden at Karumba, listen around a campfire to Narigyin elders on the Kimberley's Mitchell Plateau, go fishing with the locals off the southern coast.

Readers want, and do, travel to these places. They send photos and emails and letters to say they look at our world through new eyes. Or tell me that they "never knew that!"

Others say they haven't been there but after reading the book they feel

they have visited or understand better, places like White Cliffs, the Daintree, the Channel Country, Longreach or Ulladulla, Broome or Heron Island.

## WORDS ARE WEAPONS.

I also publish this newspaper. I lament the cancer of treeless, soulless housing estates crammed together on what were lush dairy farms, the destruction of koala habitat, the greed of developers - bad and downright dodgy.

The Council (MidCoast) bans my paper and publicly call me unkind names and slurs. But the support by locals for this newspaper is, however, formidable. Besides how else do locals find out what's going on?

Already it's heart wrenching seeing the sprawl along the NSW coast of housing estates and resorts and varying "villages" - not as in quaint, caring small communities - but of glass towers and plastic lawns for retirees and the aged, whom I'm sure would rather see a tree or a bird outside their window.

"But what can I do?" people ask.

Raise your voice where possible. Lobby and keep tabs on your Council and local MPs. Support the likes of knitting nanas and rational business people who "get it."

Like Kate, I ache already at what used to be as I take the grandkids

around lamenting what's gone to rolling eyes. I hear my mother's voice lamenting loss and how it was, I hear again my grandfather talk of the wonder of the Wingham Brush.

I find myself carrying a small spider, insect or snail to safety. I notice that old men cry easily.

I don't want to be told, you can't stop progress. I don't want to know about another mine opening, I'm sick of hearing lies and obfuscation from politicians.

But I feel a weight has somewhat lifted with the new government, that decent people will prevail. I don't envy Tanya her new portfolio but feel greatly heartened she's there and not Susan-with-an-SS.

There are good people writing good books; historians, Indigenous writers and academics, farmers and great women on the land all over the country.

And there are some of us who "make it up" but we've been there. We see and hear and tell it like it is. And how it should be, in fact and fiction.

## IS IT TOO LATE?

When writers step outside their comfort zone like Kate Grenville, we heed the call.

Read us. Hear us. Act. There may still be time.

**Di Morrissey AM**



# Yiayia Next Door



Daniel AND LUKE MANCUSO  
PLUM RRP \$36.99  
(PHOTOGRAPHY MARK ROPER)

COMMUNITY RECIPE

Tania Gogos Wilson,  
Victoria

## Eftichia's avgolemono

I was obsessed with avgolemono soup when I was a child. My yiayia Eftichia and thea (aunt) Angela would always have a pot bubbling away for me on their hotplates whenever I visited either of them. We spent every weekend at my yiayia's house while my parents attended to their social commitments (usually with a Greek nightclub thrown in, which were great back in the day in Melbourne). I would try and set a record of how many bowls of avgolemono I could eat in a day, and my yiayia would send me home with a big Greek coffee jar full of soup so I could enjoy it throughout the week.

My yiayia was an extraordinary woman who died at the age of 99. Her son (my dad) was Demetrious Gogos, the founder of Melbourne's Greek newspaper *Neos Kosmos*, and many stories were written in the paper about my yiayia's life. She was very famous for her sweets.

### SERVES 6-8

salt and black pepper  
1.3 kg whole chicken  
6 spring onions, 2 roughly  
chopped, 4 sliced  
5 celery stalks, strings removed,  
1 chopped into large chunks,  
4 sliced  
½ bunch of dill, roughly chopped,  
plus extra to serve (optional)  
170 ml (¾ cup) olive oil,  
preferably Greek  
150 g (⅓ cup) medium-grain rice  
2 eggs  
80 ml (⅓ cup) freshly squeezed  
lemon juice

Fill a large saucepan with 5.25 litres of water and season with 1 tablespoon of salt. Bring to the boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, smother the chicken with 1 tablespoon each of salt and pepper and stuff the roughly chopped spring onion, celery chunks and half the dill inside the cavity. Gently lower the chicken into the boiling water and add the olive oil and remaining spring onion, celery and dill. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook the chicken for about 1 hour, until tender.

Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside, then add the rice to the simmering water and cook for 20 minutes or until cooked through.

When cool enough to handle, gently remove the meat from the chicken carcass and shred into bite-sized pieces. You can either add the chicken to the soup at the end of cooking or serve it on the side.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs with electric beaters, then gradually pour in the lemon juice, whisking as you go. Add six or seven ladles of the soup stock and continue to whisk until light and fluffy, then pour the lemon-egg mixture into the soup stock, stirring constantly for 1-2 minutes. Return the chicken to the soup, if you like, and gently heat through.

Divide the soup among bowls and serve scattered with extra dill (if desired) and some freshly ground black pepper.

Soups  
61

**A**fter the tragic death of their mother in Melbourne, two brothers, Luke and Daniel Mancuso, young adults, moved into their mother's home as she'd always wished. The two boys of Greek heritage had good jobs but cooks they were not. But in the tightknit Greek community they had a wonderful Greek Yiayah... a sort of grandmother come loving aunt friend or as in this case, the lady next door.

This caring and doting woman cooked for and spoiled the boys with their favourite Greek dishes.

So they decided to share Yiaya's recipes along with those of their Greek neighbours and friends in this book.

The boys are charming and caring and so lucky to have moved in next to Yiaya (she doesn't like using name!). As well as yummy recipes it makes you think, how well do we know our neighbours and who might need a warm dish of spanakopita!

## Yiayia next door



Recipes from Yiayia's kitchen, and the true story of one woman's incredible act of kindness

Daniel & Luke Mancuso (with Yiayia)





# THAT MOST MODERN OF PARASITES: THE SCAM

New technology –mobile phones, the Internet, social media–have allowed what was a minor vexation to become a large and seemingly growing problem: the scam.

**T**he Nigerian Scam letter is the oldest of the modern scams. In its earliest form the purported author, exclusively a male, commonly from Nigeria, sought the assistance of ‘a person of uncompromised integrity’, to move a large sum of money from Africa to a bank account in a western country. The reward for your help was, typically a 10–20 per cent share of the ‘liberated’ funds.

Once initial contact had been established and trust built, the author requested an advance on the promised dividend to bribe officials, secure licenses or pay costs of documentation. Once such funds were advanced all contact ceased and the money disappeared.

Several authors attribute the rise in these scams, in the mid 1980s, to social and political upheavals in Nigeria. Those factors, together with a decline in world oil prices, cut deeply into foreign exchange earnings of Nigeria, a country that relied on crude oil sales for 90 percent of its export earnings and 75 percent of its government revenues. The widespread use of fax machines and increasingly cheap international telephone rates contributed too.

The same principle has been applied to the romance scam. A casual hook-up on line, often with older people, but almost always with someone lonely, is nurtured by the scammer. Then the victim is asked for money for an urgent operation, to pay off debts to criminals threatening the scammer’s life, or to fly to Australia to be with the victim. Often, after success in extracting a small sum, the scammer escalated the requests. Some victims have lost tens of thousands or more before either the scammer disappears, or the victim recognised the fraud.

These are called advance fee frauds but they aren’t new and are named 419s, after a section of the US penal code, that codify them. Similar schemes have been recorded over the years. Brendan I. Koerner reported that:

The [Nigerian] scam is experiencing a digitally aided heyday... 419’s roots stretch back to the Jazz Age. It’s an Africanised version of “The Spanish Prisoner”, a classic 1920s scheme in which suckers were convinced that a wealthy scion was rotting in a Barce-



lona jail. Front some cash to win his freedom, and you’d be amply rewarded for your troubles. Or not.

And Richard Hall, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald edition of the Good Weekend in 1993, told of the exploits of one Sydney entrepreneur and villain, Mick Bell, who in the 1840s, extracted an advance fee from a Mr Monies ‘to finance the smuggling of a mythical £20,000 worth of goods out of the colony on a phantom ship in Port Hacking.’

My own first encounter with the scam was in 1983. One morning, a confidential offer to share in untold wealth just popped out of our brand new fax: My then business partner was keen to pursue the invitation but I was not. Perhaps it was a case of like frauds attract; he subsequently defrauded our company of considerable sums of money and cleared out to South Africa.

But while the fax machine gave new life to old scams, the mobile phone and the personal computer have created a world that scam merchants could only dream about. Scam calls to my phone sometimes outrank legitimate calls.

The persistence of NBN, Telstra’s ‘technical department’, Amazon and Netflix scam calls suggest that there are still enough gullible people around to make them worth the effort. But it

also says that the legitimate agencies do not do enough to publicise the frauds being executed in their name.

NBN is a wholesaler of data communication and contacts consumers only through an ISP, an Internet Service Provider. The only exception seems for NBN service personnel to call to confirm an arrival time for an appointment made by an ISP.

Telstra does not have a ‘service department’ as such. If a caller offers an employee number to prove they are from Telstra, remember they could be reading out a receipt number for a dry-cleaning job. You have no way of checking. Ask for something only you and Telstra know, like your account number.

But Telstra is their own worst enemy, some departments cannot talk to others. When we were getting a long delayed broadband connection (delayed because modems were not available to connect us to the obsolete Optus HFC network in our street) Telstra made an appointment for the NBN technician to call. When they did not turn up, we contacted Telstra customer service, only to be told by a rather rude manager, that our booking reference number did not exist and clearly, we had been scammed. Later we got an apology and even later, the technician turned up.

Among the more anxiety-inducing

scams is the Australian Tax Office debt scam. A menacing voice on the telephone, frequently a robocall, advises that you owe tax and police will arrive shortly to arrest you for non-payment. This outcome can be avoided if you immediately pay the debt, frequently in bitcoins, or other untraceable means of exchange like gift vouchers.

According to the ATO, in 2021, people aged 25 to 34 reported the most amount of money lost to tax scams, closely followed by those aged 18 to 24. However, age seems to endow wisdom as those aged 55 and above were among those who reported the least losses. In addition, the ATO has taken action against 595 websites impersonating ATO online. These fake sites are designed to steal passwords, personal information and identity documents, such as passports and driver licences.

Like the Nigerian fraud scams, there are variations of the ATO scam – so be wary.

The take-home messages here are simple. Don’t give personal information to people who cold call, on the phone or the internet. Don’t click on links but enter URL address by hand. And if an offer seems too good to be true, it is almost certainly not true.

**Vincent O’Donnell**  
Media Analyst and Researcher.



# Save Our Beauties!

Things are finally happening! Newly appointed Fisheries Minister Dugald Saunders has hit the sand running with a couple of law changes that are long overdue. Go Dugald!

**D**eputy Director General Sean Sloan recently announced that a slot limit for Dusky flathead, plus a reduced bag limit, will be introduced along with an increase in the recreational take of lobsters. The decisions, which I fully support, have been well researched and come as a result of consultation with the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council and the community.

The recreational catch limit of Dusky flathead, which are considered as an iconic fish, will be reduced from 10 fish to 5 while a slot limit of flatties between 36cm – 70cm will also be implemented as of 1<sup>st</sup> August. An 'in possession' limit of 10 fish will remain.

I'm very pleased to report that responsible recreational fishers have, for years, voluntarily released all female dusky over 70cm back into the system so I'm confident the law changes will be widely accepted.

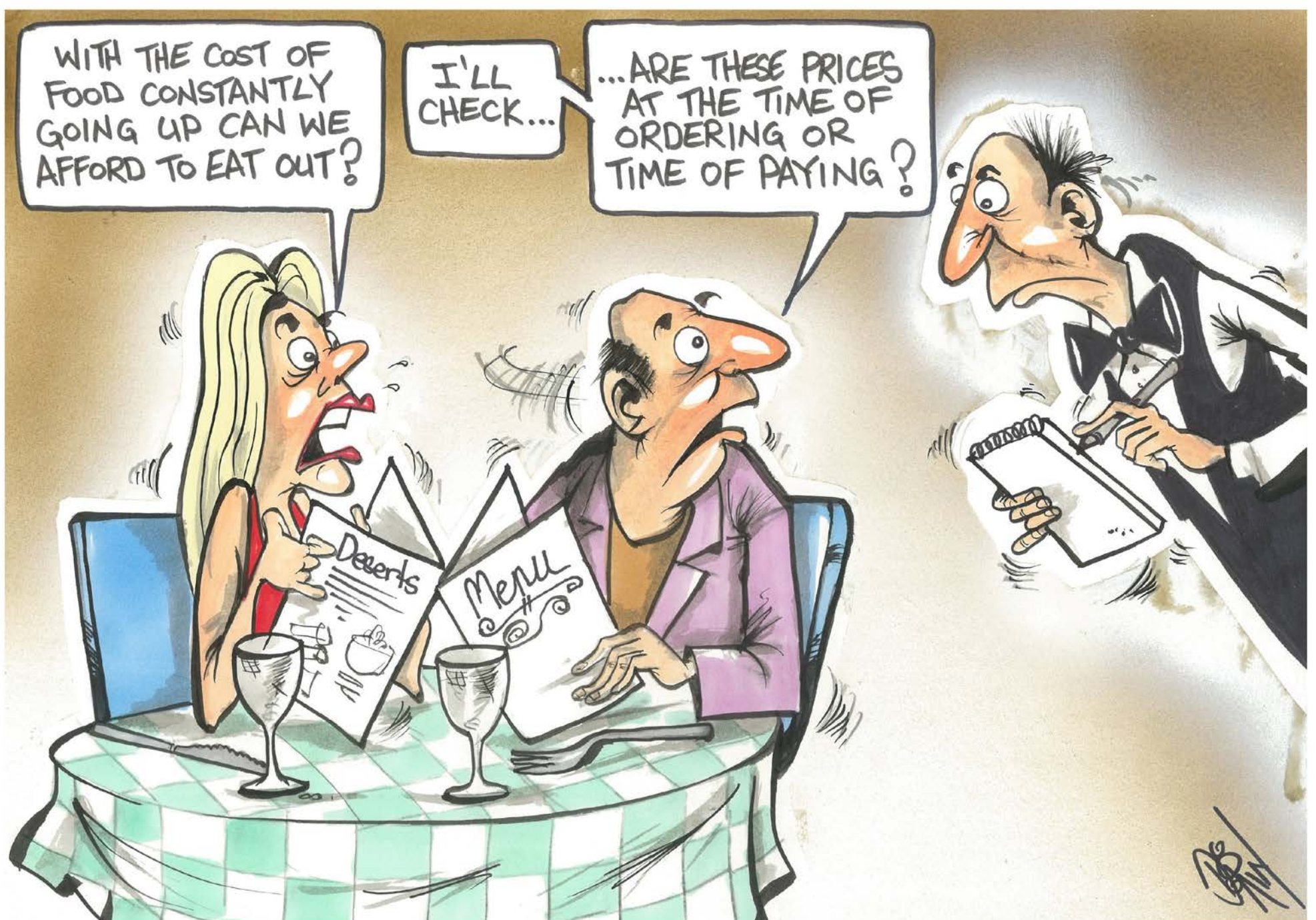
The increase in the lobster take from 2 to 3 is as a result of the sustainable population over recent years.

We eagerly await more decisions from the Minister's office!

Paul Lennon releases a beaut dusky



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.





# LOOK OUT FOR THE PICASSO COWS!

As a local farming community, with over 130 dairy farming families spanning from Gloucester to Kempsey, local community groups Mid North Coast Women in Dairy and the Taree Lions Club have partnered to donate 10 Picasso Cows to local schools across the Manning Valley and regions.

**M**id North Coast Women in Dairy and the Taree Lions Club feel passionately about supporting local dairy farmers, celebrating their contribution to the community, and educating the next generation on an industry that's at the heart of their community.

Dairy Australia's Picasso Cows program is a fun and engaging curriculum program in which students will learn about the Australian Dairy Industry, the farm to plate process and the health and nutritional benefits of consuming dairy foods, all the while decorating a life-sized fiberglass cow and completing a learning journal over an 8-week period.

Following the 8 Week education program, Taree Lions Club will further support their local dairy community, through auctioning off one very special Picasso Cow to raise money for the local farming region.

How good would a Picasso hand painted cow look in the front garden! And they don't poo or moo!





# THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY

The growth of democracy was one of the positive pieces of news in the last century. In 1900 not a single country had what we would today consider a democracy: a government created by elections in which every adult citizen could vote.

**Those countries which then had elections often restricted the voting to white men (in some countries such men had to be property owners). Australia and New Zealand led the world in pioneering votes for women.**

Today 119 countries (out of 191 UN member-states) have democracy. 62 per cent of the world's people live in democracies. Democracy has gone from being a form of government to a way of life.

But the struggle to maintain democracy is a continuing one. There is no guarantee that it will last.

"Democracy" is Greek for "the rule of the people". (Ironically, Classical Greece was not a democracy because voting was only done by property owning men).

But there is more to a democracy than just voting. There has to be the creation of a set of social values to underpin the democratic process. This does not happen overnight – and it can be eroded over time.

Britain and the United States are seen as among the pioneers of great powers who spread the democratic process around the world. But the creation of that democracy took centuries to evolve in those countries.

Before the Reform Act in Britain in 1832, only 1.8 per cent of the population voted. After the law, the figure went to 2.7 per cent (all of whom were property-owning white males). The electorate was widened again in 1867 – to 6.4 per cent. Then in 1884, it went to 12.1 per cent.

Women got the vote after World War I. The principle of one person-one vote did not occur fully until after World War II (when the students at Oxford and Cambridge Universities stopped getting two votes: one for where they lived at home and one for their university constituency).

The US's history is not much better. For the first few decades of the US's creation after 1776, only white male property owners could vote.

The US had rebelled against King

George III's dictatorship but then copied Britain's elite system of voting after gaining independence.

In 1824 – 48 years after independence – still only 5 per cent of adult Americans could vote in a presidential election (none of them women or slaves).

Blacks got the vote – in theory – after the Civil War (1861-5). But in fact in many states in the South they did not get a free vote until a century later. American women got the vote in 1920.

Ironically, throughout all this time Britain and the United States held themselves up as the models of democracy to be followed by the rest of the world.

The British also took their views into their empire. But they had only a mixed success. Many of the democratic countries created by Britain in the decolonisation process later fell into dictatorships, especially in Africa. Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand are the main success stories.

In 2022 there are continuing concerns about the future of democracy. In the US, Trump supporters are trying to restrict voting rights in key states to help Republican victories.

Many British voters don't bother to vote as they see it as irrelevant to their problems. Younger Britons are particularly disillusioned with the political system.

Australia has compulsory voting to force people to vote, and so that guarantees a high voter turnout. It also has the world's best electoral supervision system: the elections are held smoothly and efficiently. It is the global benchmark.

Of course, many of the politicians who do get elected are self-seeking duds – but they got there via a very efficient system!

**Dr Keith Suter**

**Global Directions**  
[www.globaldirections.com.au](http://www.globaldirections.com.au)

# WYLAH... The Koori Warrior



Richard Pritchard and Jordan Gould

Allen & Unwin Rrp \$15.99

**This is a fabulous concept! An Indigenous fantasy adventure (it will be a series of books) aimed at the 8-14 age group.**

Richard co-author and illustrator is an Indigenous Pacific Islander and Jordan is an Indigenous Australian and both live in Warrnambool, Victoria.

The main character, Wylah is a Peek Whurrong girl from the Maar Nation. She's funny, smart and as much a warrior as a man.

It's great to see Indigenous culture being shared for all kids to enjoy. They plan more books in the series as they do have 40,000 years of stories to tell!





# Nine Lives for our Planet

## Personal stories on nine inspiring women who cherish earth

The author, John Watts, is a retired Sydney barrister who accidentally became involved in opposing a coal seam gas field and a coal mine on the doorstep of the small NSW township of Gloucester.



John and Sue Watts at the book launch at Hillview Herb Farm Gloucester.

**I**n the process he met and was impressed by many strong and committed women who were prepared to move out of their comfort zone to take a stand against powerful vested interests. It became apparent to him that women from many diverse backgrounds, have played and continue to play, a critical role in important environmental fights all over the country.

The author wondered what it was that such women had in common and what motivated them to stand up for what they believed in.

This book is series of short biographies telling of the lives of nine inspirational women. Of the many others he could have chosen, he has selected these nine because, on the face of it, they have little in common. Seventy-two-year-old, private-school-educated

**Anne Kennedy** could be perceived by those who meet her as being a rather conservative, upper middle-class grazier. What, the reader might ask, could she possibly have in common with someone such as **Carly Phillips**, who has locked on to trees, fracking equipment, and coal loaders – and been arrested several times in the process. And what could Carly have in common with the devoutly Catholic mother to seven children, **Dom Jacobs**, or with environmental lawyer and member of the NSW Parliament **Sue Higginson**.

What the book does is to not just explore the women's environmental activities, but also delves into their lives and backgrounds so the reader might understand how and why they became so concerned about environmental destruction and were so motivated to act.

The book explains that activism comes in many different forms and that community action is often essential to protect the environment from corporations and governments. It may well involve locking on to destructive equipment but, as shown by people like Queensland Public Service whistle-blower **Simone Marsh**, and OH&S consultant **Shay Dougall**, it covers a much broader range of activities. Local woman **Linda Gill** spent many years as a Great Lakes Councillor working within the system for better environmental outcomes while **Jo Evans** has used her skills as a graphic artist to fight against the rapacious coal seam gas industry.

All nine women have been prepared to talk openly and frankly about the most intimate details of their lives, including sharing some very personal incidents and events. Many of the women's stories touch



on other important social issues such as suicide, sexual molestation, drug taking, mental illness, religious and child fostering, and **Judi Summers** discusses how she and her husband extracted themselves from a closed sect.

“Here are nine personal stories of brave-hearted women defying the greed and corruption smashing Australia's environment, including its farmlands.

*John Watts introduces us to women who light up the darkness of the climate and extinction emergencies with their flair and stoic common-sense. Each has acted to take on the gas frackers, coal miners, native forest loggers, wildlife killers, water profiteers and their political agents.*

*They ring the bell of ecological sanity. Uplifting. Motivating. Brilliant.”*

**Bob Brown.**

Nine Lives For The Planet book is available on-line at [www.redbellybooks.com](http://www.redbellybooks.com) for \$25 plus \$5 postage and handling or in good bookshops for \$27 plus GST.





# Full Circle

## A Search for the World That Comes Next

Scott Ludlam

Black Inc. Rrp \$34.99

When reviewing another book earlier this year I wrote that I had always been a great fan of the Winston Churchill quote: 'short words are best', Scott Ludlam seems not seem to agree with Churchill.

**W**hen reading a new book, I usually adopt the 40-to-50 page rule and I must confess that if I had not been asked to write this review I might well have put this book aside at that point. However, I am glad that I persisted, although getting through its 341 pages requires a fair effort. It is not an easy read and sometimes it is unclear what point the author is trying to make. There were some passages that I found to be almost incomprehensible.

Scott Ludlam was senator in the Australian Parliament from 2008 to 2017 and during that time was the deputy leader of the Australian Greens. The book tells us that he has worked as a filmmaker, artist, and graphic designer and that he has led a life of activism.

The front cover of the book displays a quote by Raj Patel which says that the book is "at once a comic chronicle of the climate apocalypse, a heartbreaking work of paleohistory and a fugitive tourist diary, strange, uncategorisable and magnificent."

I would certainly agree that the book is strange and uncategorisable, although I wouldn't myself have used the adjectives comic or magnificent.

Ludlam begins by reminding us of the climate aggravated fires which ripped through many parts of east coast Australia, and in particular the small town of Cobargo in 2020. He then recalls Professor Ross Garnaut's accurate prediction in 2008 that we would be observing longer and more intense fire seasons by 2020. Ludlam then sets the scene for much of the rest of his thesis by suggesting that: "A bloc of transnational resource sector investors control the ministerial wing of parliament and hold majorities in both chambers".

Early in the book Ludlam refers to the story about the creator of the game of chess who is offered a reward by his queen and responds by proposing that the queen put one coin on the first square of the chess board and two on the second, doubling the number of coins up to the sixty-fourth. The queen thinks this is a good deal until being told that she will owe him 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 coins. The author uses this story throughout the book to illustrate where the world will end up with the doubling of economic growth mentality which infects most political and economic leaders and systems. By books end you realise that it is this growth at all costs mentality which is leading to environmental, social, and economic disaster.

What I found frustrating about the book, apart from some of the big words that I had to look up, was the way that it jumps quickly from one topic to another. Sometimes it is like a slide show where, just as you are getting interested in one picture, it disappears and is replaced by another completely unrelated shot. Ludlam does not subscribe to the view that a good story should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Patel's comment mentions paleohistory and the book will move from subjects such as international debt, iron ore prices, manipulative advertising, the changing nature of work, onto the early stages of evolution on earth, and then onto some direct protest action that Ludlam was involved in, and then back to the unfairness of



## full circle

a search for  
the world that  
comes next



'Australia lost a senator, the world gained a luminous writer. Scott Ludlam's *Full Circle* is at once a comic chronicle of the climate apocalypse, a heartbreaking work of paleohistory and a fugitive tourist diary, strange, uncategorisable and magnificent.' —Raj Patel, author of *Stuffed and Starved* and *The Value of Nothing*

scott ludlam

our economic systems.

I do get that Ludlam is trying to use the way that early life behaved and developed to illustrate the present human condition, but I personally did not find it helpful. Others might disagree.

Ludlam's book takes us to various parts of the world such as Lebanon, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Japan, Kenya, India and Brazil to illustrate economic, environmental and other issues, but here again I found that just as I was getting interested in what was happening, we were off onto another place or topic.

The book covers a whole range of major issues such as neo liberalism, economic unfairness, state capture, global warming, climate change denial, political donations, false history telling and particularly how fossil fuel corporations have, with the connivance of governments, rigged the system to their own benefit despite being aware of the terrible destructiveness of their product.

One issue that I found particularly timely was that of dissent. Ludlam quotes former prime minister John Gorton as saying: "This government will tolerate dissent only while it remains ineffective." He then discusses how governments which have been captured by the fossil fuel industry are doing their bidding by legislating draconian anti-protest laws. This has happened in Queensland, New South Wales,

Victoria and now Tasmania. All these laws are intended to render environmental protests totally ineffective.

The book does conclude on a more positive note by:

"Imagining for a second a city that runs on sunlight, sipping just as much water as it returns to the landscape, growing a fair fraction of its own food, woven seamlessly into a mosaic of wetlands and native bushland... It is a place that no longer calculates Gross Domestic Product; it tracks genuine progress indicators for social justice, health, energy and water productivity."

It is a complex book which many readers will find frustrating. However, on balance I recommend that it be tackled, and that the reader persist to the end. Amongst the complexity and frustrations, the reader is likely to discover many gems. As Bill McKibben comments on the book's cover, Ludlam really does "take on these existential questions of real power."

John Watts

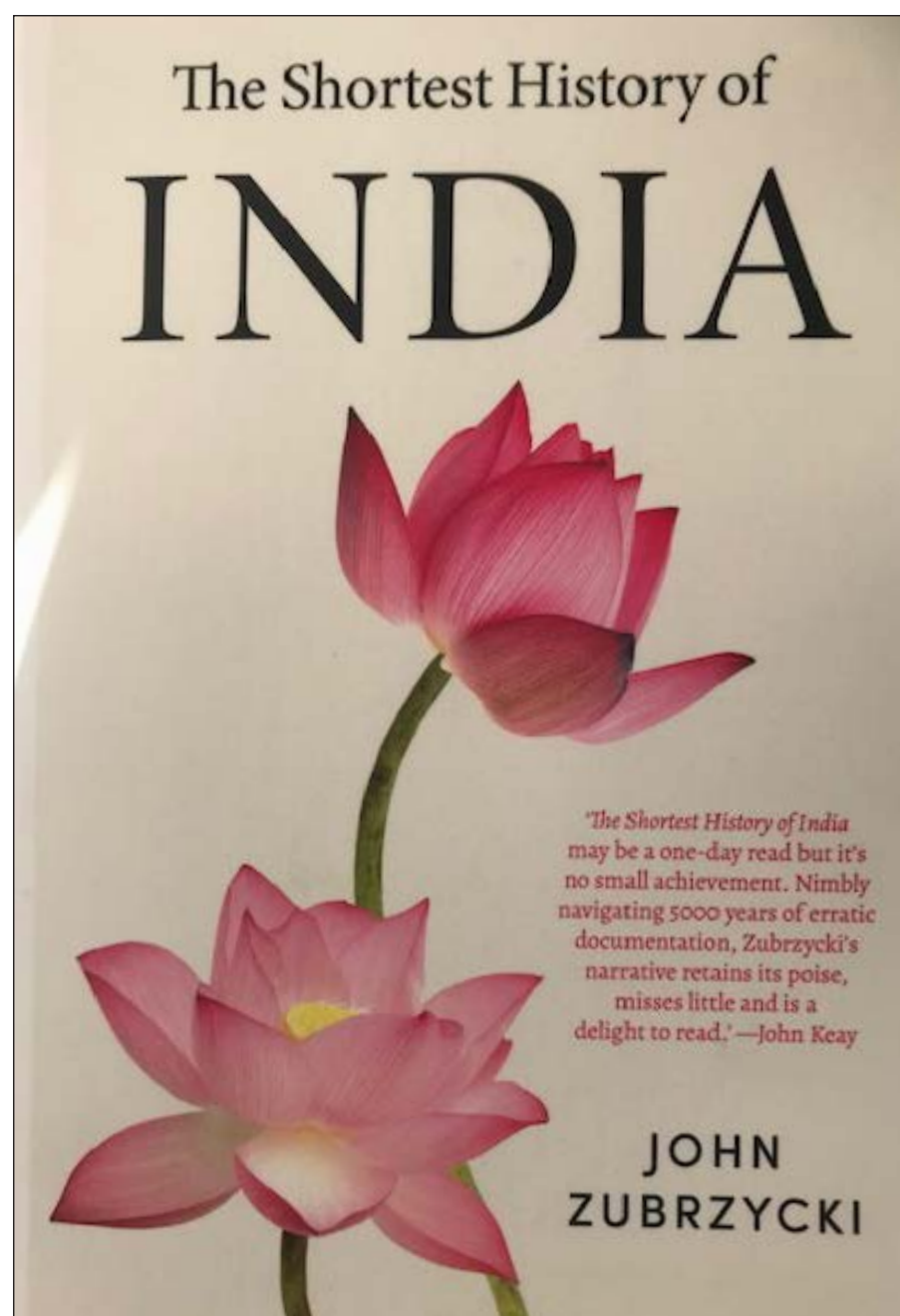
Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *Nine Lives for Our Planet* and *The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas*. John is also the president of the Gloucester Environment Group.



# The Shortest History of India

John Zubrzycki

Black Inc. Rrp \$26.99



**C**ompact, packed with facts, figures, fascinating details... this fat little book holds thousands of years of colourful history told through the eyes of its mighty and many protagonists.

From the Harappan civilisation through the Mughals, Alexander the Great, the British and the Ghandis, Buddha and five thousand years of occupation to the present day (give or take a bit) we grasp just some of the texture, colour, philosophy, the art and culture of a dynamic and dramatic landscape.

From Buddhism to Bollywood, India remains her own mystery in every sense. . . perhaps one has to

be there to truly understand!

It's difficult to decide where one should start and end a visit, as India is an eternal journey. But this Australian author is knowledgeable, entertaining, and obviously cares deeply about this mysterious, magical, frustrating and intriguing powerhouse from its poor to its powerful, it's a land ever changing.

It's a powerhouse that packs over 5000 years of colourful and chaotic history into the palm of your hand.

PS. If you go, try to see the Ajanta Caves.

DM

# Secrets Beyond the Screen

Anita Jacoby AM

Venture. Rrp \$32.99

**A**nita is one of Australia's most distinguished and awarded TV Producers.

This is a true story from a daughter turned journalist.

While "every family has a secret" this is a touching, sad and sensitive story as we follow her as an adult who suddenly learns her distinguished charming handsome father she adored, had a secret. But quite how, why and what, requires years of painstaking meticulous research.

It's painful to learn the man you adore as a father, had at the very least more than a double life. A successful and well liked and admired businessman who was an associate or mentored some of the leading

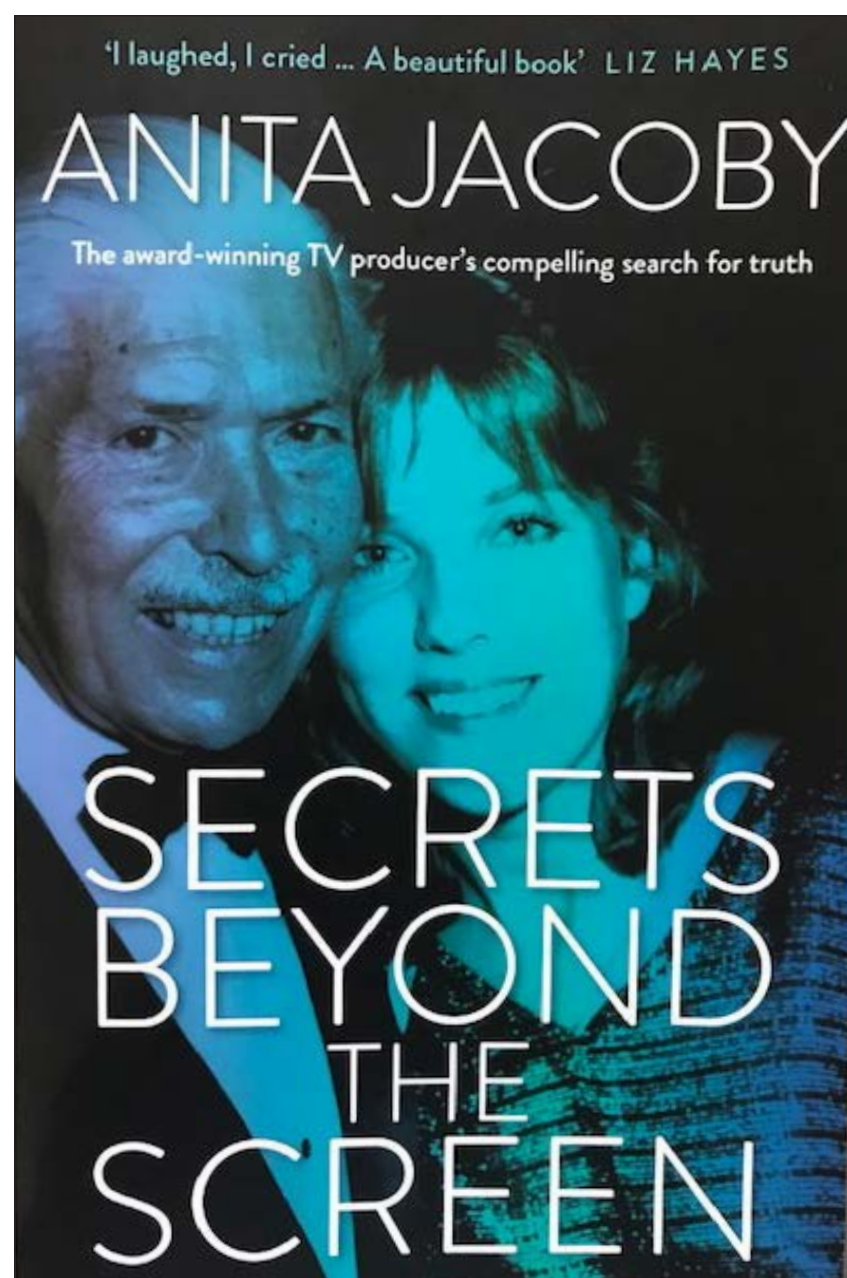
figures in Australian politics, business and the arts.

Her search leads her to question everything about her father...and herself. As well as weaving and intriguing mystery, it's a touching and embracing story which begs the question, do we ever really know our parents? Their lives before we came along?

Anita's love of her father, her strength and resilience is deeply affecting and a wonderful read.

(Especially the bits of her early days in TV where some of us can certainly relate!)

DM







# Antiques And Collectables

I hope you are well, free of worry, free of stress, free of pain and free to live your life the way you wish. We are a lucky, we have choice. Lots and lots of people don't.



Someone's treasured wall vases beautifully displayed

cherubs, and angels. There is also a wide range of animal characters like [cats](#), [dogs](#), sea horses, fish, birds, [butterflies](#), [roosters](#), and [owls](#). Wall pockets are sometimes shaped like fruits and nuts.

Wall vases are great fun to collect with a myriad of shapes, sizes and forms. They can turn up anywhere from markets, garage sales, op. shops, the net, antique shops, auctions and the list goes

**W**ouldn't it be lovely to have Government and Opposition work as teams rather than hearing about a leader act as the fountain of all knowledge (eg Morrison). I hope PM Albanese and the Labor Party can do better. It is looking promising. We are not America with a President. We need a team that works together cohesively to make Australia a place we can be all proud of. This Government, which the majority of Australians chose, will hopefully make decisions that will improve our lives. My hope is for a Federal Integrity Commission that will have 'teeth' in order to weed out those who make decisions based on self interest. We need a government that displays integrity and honesty, that sets an example and leads by example, that encourages young people to be engaged, that puts our future and the environment as a priority. We need leaders who lead for the common good.

Franklin Roosevelt had a few quotes I would like to share:- "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have little:- The truth is found when men are free to pursue it:-

We must scrupulously guard the civil rights and civil liberties of all citizens, whatever their background. We must remember that oppression, any injustice, any hatred, is a wedge designed to attack our way of life:- I'm not the smartest fellow in the world, but I can sure pick smart colleagues." A very thoughtful man! 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the U.S.A. 1933 – 1945.

I'd like to suggest a visit to our local service centre at the Old Bar entrance to Taree. Jen and I drove there recently and the road surface is appalling, potholes, I mean enormous potholes everywhere. What a welcome to our much appreciated visitors! Welcome to Taree! Who is responsible Mid Coast Council or the owners of the service centre??? A certain mob need to get their act together.

## WALL POCKETS

The first of the wall pockets were wall-mounted wooden boxes that held candles, matches, or eating utensils, as well as cloth pockets designed to hold sewing tools such as [scissors](#), [thimbles](#), or thread. Decorative wall pockets, or "wall vases," first became home fixtures in the late 18th century when porcelain potteries were popping up all over Europe. [Staffordshire](#), [Minton](#), [Wedgwood](#), [Royal Worcester](#), [Royal Doulton](#), and [Meissen](#) all produced elegant wall

pockets made out of fine porcelain. More recently, wall pockets meant for flowers experienced a revival in postwar Australia, when the demand for fun, novelty ceramics like [head vases](#), [cookie jars](#), and [salt-and-pepper shakers](#) exploded.

Some of these ceramic pieces, which hit their peak of popularity with homemakers in the '50s, were made in England, Australia, the U.S. and at Japan potteries, like those by [Rookwood](#), [Roseville](#), [Weller](#), [McCoy](#), [Hull](#), the California Cleminsons, [Frankoma](#), and Holt-Howard. Others were produced in occupied Japan and imported by Lefton, Napco, and PY. In Australia potters such as Diana, Melrose, Fowler, Pates, Bendigo, Mashman, Alba, McCredie, Newton and many others produced very collectable pieces. While clay is the most popular material for collectible wall pockets, they've also been made out of wood, glass, cloth, plastic, and metals such as copper or tin.

While untold thousands of ceramic wall pockets were made between the '40s and '60s, their tendency to drop from walls and crack or break has made them scarce today. Vintage and antique wall pockets come in every shape imaginable: You can find full figures or busts of realistic men, women, and children, as well as fantasy characters like mermaids,

on. Enjoy your finds!

Collecting is 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 a most pleasurable pastime. Find an area, of collecting, that interests you get out there and make discoveries.

Every household seems to have a selection of old, interesting items that have accumulated over the years. Whether in the back of the cupboard, an inheritance or in the storage lock-up, we seem to have them. From jewellery to old tools, things of value or simply things that bring us pleasure. All your interesting items have a story and it is our responsibility to pass on that important information to others.

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!**



# OPINION - WHY THE BIGHT CEMETERY MATTERS!

(Opinion of The Blight of the Bight Group)

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

## IT MATTERS TO FAMILIES

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

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

## IT PROVIDES AN INSIGHT INTO HOW COUNCIL OPERATES

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

There are three key questions to ask: the first question is one of performance, has the Bight Cemetery matter been dealt with competently? The second question is one of compliance: has the Bight Cemetery matter been dealt with in compliance with regulations, policies and codes of practice, etc.? The third question is one of values and business ethics: has Council's actions reflected the values and business ethics they espouse?

## COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE

A crisis, such as the desecration of the Heritage Golden Cypress tree line and monuments at the Bight Cemetery shines a spotlight on how well a business is operating and what gaps there are. It quickly became

apparent to the Bight families that Council's performance fell short. They did not appear to have any policies, processes or procedures for the cemetery business, nor a published business plan, nor an approved plan for the Monument Risk Assessment Program. It seems that the staff who knocked down the graves at the Bight cemetery had not received any training in monument assessment. It seems that planning and environmental regulations were ignored or not given due consideration, as was the licence for the endangered Donkey Orchid. This list goes on.

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

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

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

Council has questions to answer about whether it breached its responsibilities relating to the registration and transfer of interment rights. Council is required to keep an updated register of interment rights for all graves for which it is responsible, but it took an alert from Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW in November 2020 to get Council to address this issue in relation to the Bight. Only in June 2021 did Council approve and make available on their website, the necessary forms for the transfer of an interment right. At this point many Bight Cemetery families do not know who Council has on their records as the interment rights holder to their family's graves.

Despite a 25 March 2020 reso-

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

## COMPLY REGULATIONS, POLICIES AND CODES OF PRACTICE

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

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

## VALUES AND BUSINESS ETHICS

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

## BE ACCOUNTABLE AND ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fact that it appears that Council has not called tenders for the assessment of damaged monuments after being directed to do so by Council resolution (25 March 2020) makes one question whether Council has any intention to proceed with the independent assessment of the damaged monuments' condition and the specifications for the required repairs.

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

Does the Bight matter? Yes!

**Tim Crossley**  
**For Blight of the Bight**





# How to start a vegetable garden:

## Tips and tricks on creating a veggie patch

### WHY BOTHER?

No doubt everyone's been impacted with the rise of the cost-of-living and its pressures. Everything from lettuce to fuel prices are reason enough to get into the garden, save, and grow your own.

In my household, the best reason to grow your own, is the satisfaction of sitting down to a meal made up of produce you've grown yourself – and if that doesn't get you in then the superior taste will.

There is nothing like the taste of freshly picked food. You know exactly how it was grown (no pesticides!), you know when it was picked – and you'll really taste the absence of cold storage and repeated handling. In fact, for sweet fruit and veggies like tomatoes or berries, the moment they're picked their sugar begins to convert back to starch to give the produce as much natural longevity as possible. Moral of the story? They will never taste sweeter than straight from the plant!

### THE BASICS

Your veggie patch can be a raised bed, a patch of soil or a scattering of pots – so long as you can meet the plants' needs:

**Sunshine:** Veggies need a full sun position, and that means 8 hours per day of direct sunlight, though they will cope with a minimum of 6. If you don't have much sun, try sticking to leafy veggies like lettuce and spinach that will cope better with a reduced level of sunshine.

**Soil:** Your veggies need loamy, well-drained soil. See the 'Testing Your Soil' section below for how to scope out whether your soil fits the bill. If you're growing in pots, select a good quality herb and veggie growing mix.

**Water:** If Mother Nature doesn't come through with regular watering, your veggies are going to need a good soak from you at least once a week. Remember, the closer you position your patch to your water source, the less of a chore this will seem.

**Competition:** If you're planting into the ground or an existing bed, make sure you don't plant

near tree roots or other plants that are hungry feeders. Weeds will also compete with your veggies for water and nutrients, so make sure you remove them as soon as they pop up.

**How many?** When you're choosing your seedlings, don't get carried away. Planting too many may cause crowding, which will be a nightmare for maintenance and harvest, and you may end up with more produce





than you can handle or even eat! Also take note of the label information for whether plants will provide multiple crops throughout the season (like tomatoes or capsicum) or just one (like corn or carrots). You may want to leave some space to plant a second batch of single-cropping varieties so that your harvest is staggered.

### TESTING YOUR SOIL

Just like Goldilocks, your veggies will be happiest in soil that's 'just right'. To test the current condition of your soil, give it a good soak with the hose. Leave it for a day, and then dig up a handful of soil and squeeze it to form a ball. Does it:

### STREAM WATER?

The drainage in your soil is poor. Add compost or organic matter (like manure) to help improve the structure or drainage.

Fall apart at the slightest touch?

Your soil is too sandy! Adding organic matter will help to improve the structure and hold the moisture a little longer.

Hold together, even if you poke it fairly hard?

Sounds like too much clay. Organic matter will improve clay soil too, but you may also want to try adding some gypsum to help break down the gluggy bits.

Break into crumbs when you poke it, like a chocolate cake?

Your soil is perfect, get planting!

Loosen your soil with some digging and give it a good water a few days before you're planning on putting your new garden in, to give your plants the best possible start.

### CHOOSING YOUR SEEDLINGS

If you've been buying the same type of tomato at the supermarket for years, you might be a bit overwhelmed when you shop for seedlings. The different varieties available of almost every vegetable can be mind-boggling – tomatoes, for example, range in size, texture, and taste, so you'll need to think about how you like to eat them and what you're most likely to use.

This is one of the most exciting things about growing your own, so take the time to read the labels and find the right plants for you. Think about the size the plant grows to, how far apart they need to be spaced, how many weeks until harvest and whether they'll provide a single or repeated harvest through the season.

### PLANNING YOUR PATCH

Pots are a great option for edible gardens because you can fit a lot into a small space, create perfect conditions for soil and watering and even move pots around to adjust how much sunshine your plants receive.

If you've opted for a garden bed, take a moment to plan how you'll plant up the bed to make things easier on you and make your plants happy.

Row cropping is when you plant your seedlings single file in a row, leaving space either side for a walking path. This makes it easy to access each plant for maintenance and harvesting but can use quite a bit of space – meaning less plants if you're working with a pint-sized patch.

Intensive cropping is when seedlings are planted without space between them, but in a bed no more than one metre wide. This allows you to fit more plants in and is a great way to mix produce with ornamentals but remember to make sure you can reach the plants in the centre of the bed from the sides!

Whichever you choose, you'll need to plant tall-growing veggies (or those growing onto tall climbing frames) furthest from the sun. This will stop them from hogging the sunshine and shading the other plants in your patch.

### MULCH, CARE AND FEEDING

After planting, put down a layer of mulch. It will help the bed retain water, keep out weeds, and - if you choose an organic mulch like sugar cane - it will add nutrients back into your soil as it breaks down. Learn more about mulching here.

In dry conditions, you'll need to water your veggies once or twice a week. Stick the length of your finger into the soil and if it feels dry, give it a water. Remember that your plants are looking for a good soaking, not a light sprinkle.

Weeds compete with your plants for sunshine, water, and soil nutrients. With the ideal conditions you've created for your veggies, you're sure to have a few popping up. As mentioned above, laying down mulch at the time of planting can help to deter them, otherwise pull them out by hand as you spot them.

To really get the most out of your veggies, keep the nutrient levels up. This may be as simple as adding compost, but many gardeners like to use a liquid fertiliser as it provides nutrients in a way that is very easy for your plants to access.

### HARVESTING

Your hard work has paid off and your plants are bearing scrumptious-looking veggies! Leafy vegetables can be picked when the leaves are young or fully mature, or you might be watching for the colour change of varieties that ripen. The general rule of thumb is, if it looks good enough to eat, it probably is! Get picking and enjoy.

**Wingham Nursery & Florist**  
(02) 65534 570  
Find us on Facebook



Your care is central  
at the HealthHub

### TWO LOCATIONS

#### HealthHub Taree

15 Butterworth Lane, Taree

02 6552 5533

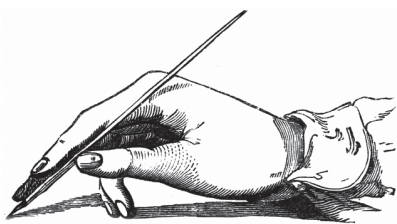
#### HealthHub Harrington

4, 1-5 Caledonia Street, Harrington

02 6556 1855

24/7  
care





# Your Say...

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

Dear Editor,

**W**hy is a housing development of 2000 homes being planned for Tuncurry that will destroy more native habitat and bush, when we have already lost two key wetlands in the past few years, and the development would impact a pristine beach, crowd our already crowded roads, choke the one main road coming in and out of Forster/Tuncurry, choke the bridge, choke the now choked parking spaces, choke the Tuncurry Woolworths which is already over-burdened and has inadequate parking, over-burden an already choked GP medical system, and build housing unaffordable for young families, teachers, trades people, nurses and hospitality workers and would just be snapped up by rich retirees from Sydney? And why isn't less intense cheaper housing being planned in the Nahiic and Wingham regions where there is plenty of already cleared land available to be government acquired?

Council and ratepayers need to block this development and provide a cheaper housing alternative north and south of the Forster / Tuncurry region which has less impact on already stretched roads and services and is less destructive to the environment on already cleared land.

These are not trivial questions but urgent, highly important issues of town planning and development. Local ratepayers are all concerned about these issues and feel that property developers have many local councils in Australia in their 'pockets.' I hope that the is not so here. Some current examples of these impending disasters are Byron Bay and Noosa. Both destroyed environs. We are loving our coastlines to death. Developers frequently make their cash and leave, with no improved infrastructure or facilities, just an overcrowded human and environmental disaster. The Council has a number of internet pages where you can register your protest. I invite you all to use them ASAP.

Chris Beal  
Forster

## HOW TO REVIVE STALE BREAD!

Heat oven to about 150 deg.

Take loaf or part loaf and swish quickly under running water just to wet the outside.

Place bread on a baking sheet and heat until it is dry and crusty on outside – approx. 6 to 10 minutes, depending on size and wetness.

Enjoy while warm.

If it doesn't work out, soak in milk in chunks and make bread and butter pudding!



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