

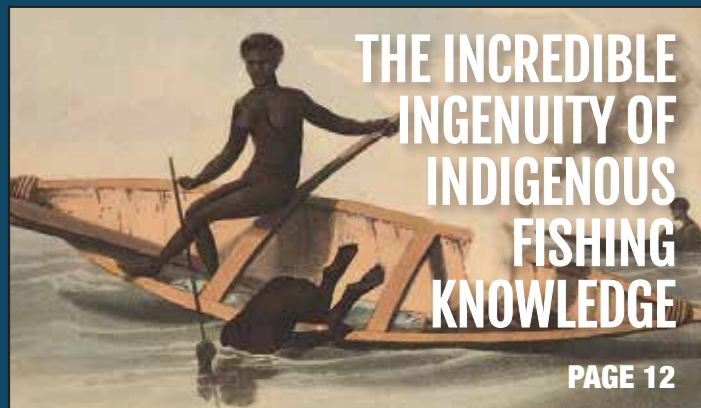
The Manning Community News

OCTOBER 2023

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

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



THE INCREDIBLE
INGENUITY OF
INDIGENOUS
FISHING
KNOWLEDGE

PAGE 12

THIS IS OUR MOMENT TO STAND UP P 7

TIM FLANNERY'S P 4
MESSAGE TO US ALL



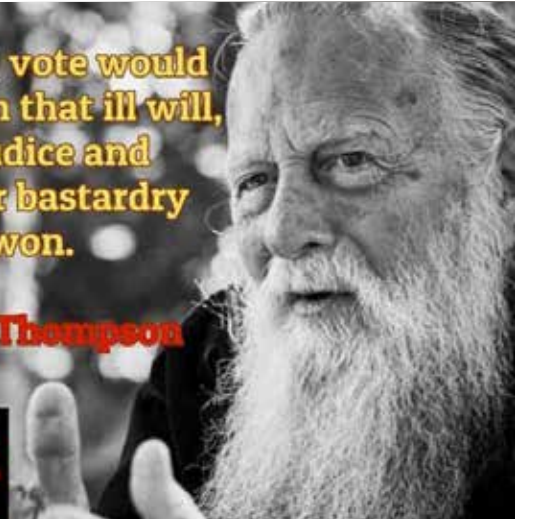
Plus PAGE 18
Book Review

THE FIRST
ASTRONOMERS

HOW INDIGENOUS ELDERS
READ THE STARS

A NO vote would
mean that ill will,
prejudice and
sheer bastardry
had won.

Jack Thompson



QUIET ACHIEVER DAVID UNAIPON

Scholar, preacher, speaker, spokesman, musician, inventor. The man on our \$50 note.



"You can play a tune of sorts on the white keys of the piano. You can play a tune of sorts on the black keys, but for harmony you must use both the black and the white." David Unaipon.

And quite possibly the congregation in Wingham's St Matthew's Church of England in April 1925, heard those very words to encourage positive thinking amongst the local congregation to change peoples' attitudes.

David Unaipon was born in South Australia, raised at the Port McLeay Mission. He played the organ in the mission and served

there as a preacher. He frequently gave organ recitals of Mendelssohn's masterpieces in Adelaide churches. He educated himself with theological works as well as evolutionist books written by Darwin, Wallace and Huxley.

He travelled around the country preaching that in his view Christian principles had parallels with Aboriginal beliefs and myths.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

JAMES JOHNSTON

has just released a smashing album of 20 songs that pays tribute to his home town (Wingham), to country ways, and to his family.

"Raised Like That
"shares songs about the good but often less talked about side of country life," says James.



A NEW DIGITAL WORLD ORDER?

A new world order is emerging. The current world order is based on nation-states (such as Australia, USA and UK).

The new order is being based on global corporations that are derived from information technology (such as Google/ Alphabet, Facebook/ Meta, Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, LinkedIn, and Amazon). We probably have as many daily interactions with these corporations - via their products and services - as we do with our national governments.

This is just the latest manifestation of how information technology (IT) is transforming all our lives, for good or ill. IT is deeply embedded into our lives.

We have done that embedding ourselves. It has not been forced upon us by the giant IT corporations. We have voluntarily succumbed to their products and services.

The current world order is based on national borders, clearly laid-out territory, national defence forces, and national government control.

The emerging new digital world order is not as tangible and yet it makes modern life possible. For example, banks are disappearing from city streets, with more banking being done online. Throughout much of the COVID pandemic much schooling was done online. Committee meetings are now often held online – as are conference presentations.



As we make use of all those services, so those services are also learning a great deal about us.

The latest IT breakthrough is Artificial Intelligence (AI), which now does some of the thinking for us. For example, Chat GPT can now write a student's essays. The essays may not be all that good at present. But AI is now the dumbest it will ever be. Everyday it is becoming more and more intelligent, learning from its mistakes, and building on its strong points.

The good news is that AI will take some of the drudgery out of life, such as repetitive tasks. The bad news is that it will soon start to wipe out many jobs.

People may still be patriotic, particularly when it comes to national sporting events. But they are also even more loyal toward some IT products and services. Look how closely they guard their Phone, which now knows so much about them.

Algorithms get to know more about us than we know of ourselves. Citizens resent government interference in their daily lives, and yet they freely share all sorts of intimate information with IT providers. Every time a person does an online search, the algorithm gets to know a little more about that person's tastes and interests.

The big corporations are more

economically powerful than some national governments. Apple, for example, has a larger national turnover than more half of the member-nations of the United Nations.

All this is happening so fast that we have not yet had time to feel surprised.

We have international arrangements – albeit far from perfect – to regulate the behaviour of national governments, such as international law, and international institutions like the UN, European Union, and NATO.

We need to think about how we are going to govern the emerging new digital world order. Or have we left it too late?

And what about the future of humans when, by about the year 2050, we will have AI as intelligent as human beings?

Will the computers keep us on as pets – or will they declare us redundant and so surplus to the planet's needs? Have we created our own replacements? Possibly, as computer generated "people" appear on our screens reading the news or such.

And as the Writers Strike in LA showed, actors' images, voices and performances are being used without permission or payment in other projects.

Interesting times indeed.

Keith Suter
www.globaldirections.com.au

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The famous editor of the Wingham Chronicle, F.A Fitzpatrick (well-known for his intense interest and sympathy for Aborigines), wrote how Unaipon, also an avid inventor, claimed to have invented a means (based on the flight of a boomerang) by which aeroplanes could rise vertically from the ground.

Unaipon wrote for the Sydney Daily Telegraph and began to publish myths and stories based on legends of his own people. His "Native Legends" (1921) is considered to be the first book directly

authored by an Australian Aborigine.

His aspirations led him in many directions. He was labelled in the press as "Australia's Leonardo da Vinci."

David Unaipon died, ironically in 1967, just before the referendum "Yes" vote which included Aborigines in the national census, therefore making all Aborigines Australian citizens.

Since 1988 the David Unaipon Award – an annual literary competition – has honoured his memory with a prize for an unpublished book-

length manuscript by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander author.

David Unaipon always spoke firmly *that "colour and racial prejudice should be laid aside and equal rights given to black and white Australians."*

Compiled with permission from "Custodians of the Soil" by Manning Valley author, John Ramsland.

A POO FROM THE LOO COULD SAVE YOU

In early 2011, a package arrived in the mail, unsolicited. It was from the government and they were here to help. Really. It was from a free government program to screen for bowel cancer.

Doctors call the test 'FOBT': faecal occult blood test -- a search for hidden haemoglobin.

Ever ready to harvest the benefit of some of my taxes, I complied. Sampling one's stools is a somewhat icky business, but if you have changed your kid's nappy you've been there before, though some precautions are necessary to avoid contaminating the samples with urine or any of that blue stuff people like to add to the flush.

The results came back a week or so later. It was positive: something was leaking inside. So, off to the GP I went, test in hand, and was promptly referred to a gastroenterologist, with the reassuring words that what ever it was it had been detected early.

A week or so later, the gastro-man assured me that there was nothing to worry about. Two polyps had been found, removed and sent for biopsy to confirm his diagnosis. And I should return in two years for a second colonoscopy. All this delivered in a measured tone that one suspects he would use, equally, to announce the birth of a child or the impending end of the world.

Two years later: nothing.

But come back in two years to make sure that is the way things might stay.

Twenty-five rolled around and mid-year's routine plumbing inspection was delayed by overseas travel and general busy-ness, so it wasn't until October that I was back at the same hospital for a check-up. With that same imperturbable manner, gastro-man said he had found two polyps: one he removed but the other he had sampled and tattooed. For easier later identification he said. It was Saturday October 10.

The biopsy report was back on Wednesday, it was bad news. I was in front of a specialist in laparoscopic surgery, key hole surgery of the abdomen, on Thursday, and on the following Tuesday afternoon, I was wheeled into an operating theatre at



a large city hospital.

Medicine moves fast when it has to.

It was the opening chapter in an almost six year long story, a journey I am pleased that nature compelled me to take. I found you don't fight cancer: the fight, if there is one, is with yourself.

This laparoscopic surgery is an amazing business. A two or three centimetre incision, crossways, below the navel, and three one centimetre cuts at the three other cardinal points, a team of creepy-peepy cameras and long, thin instruments. Three hours later my bowel was a hands-span shorter and the cancerous polyp gone.

I spent the night in intensive care and the following five days in the surgical ward. Apart from the pharmaceutical regime, the unexpected part of the therapy was elastic stockings to ward-off deep-vein thrombosis (I kept them for future long haul flights), and being directed to walk several kilometres a day, around and around the corridors of the ward, dodging traffic, other patients, nurses, doctors and visiting chaplains.

There were two further stays in that same hospital. A month later, feeling a bit unwell, I checked into the hospital's emergency depart-

ment and flashed my 'should be seen in 30 minutes card'. It was: into a bed, onto a gurney and I was conducted on a tour of the underground labyrinth that knit that inner-city, multi-campus hospital together. A dose of *Staphylococcus aureus*, 'golden staph', common on the skin and in the respiratory tract, had invaded the wound. It is potentially fatal inside the body, so I was on intravenous antibiotics and under observation for the next four days.

And it seems I may have not treated recovery and avoiding heavy lifting with due seriousness. Weeks later an haematoma broke through on the site of the primary incision staining my shirt front with blood. My GP strapped it to stop the bleeding and sent me back to that same emergency department. But here happened a high point of humour in the whole saga.

The emergency department of any inner-city hospital on any Friday night is scene of barely contained chaos. Road accidents, drug overdoses, knife fights and bashings are all on the go.

So I had to sit there after my 'should see in 30 minutes' assessment while more urgent cases were treated.

About 9pm, a well-dressed wom-

an and her husband, similarly well attired and out of company with others in the room, sat down next to me. She kept making furtive glances towards me, with particular attention to my blood stained business shirt. Finally, she exclaimed in an accent straight out of Anglosphere Toorak, or a Noel Coward play, 'Have you been fighting?'

I never found out why they were there as a booth had been found and the tedious business of cleaning and controlling the haematoma was done. Another couple of days in hospital was needed to repair the damage.

But the journey was not half over, more only half begun. Six months of increasingly arduous chemotherapy was to come then five years of half-yearly monitoring.

All this triggered by that simple, but doubtless life saving blood test. All this is six years in the past and my risk profile for reoccurrence is now the same as any male of my age. But the key message in my story is early detection. My bowel cancer was at early stage one. At stage four I would likely be dead within weeks and bowel cancer is the second biggest cause of cancer death here. More than 4,000 Australians die annually. Detection at stage one means your chances of a total recovery is 90 per cent plus.

These early detection kits are sent to all citizens with Medicare cards, every two years from age fifty to seventy-four. But, according to a paper published by the Australian College of General Practice, the take-up rate is barely 40 percent. Sixty per cent of recipients are not just wasting their tax dollar, they are risking their lives.

So when you get a kit in the mail from the National Bowel Cancer Screening program, do use it. Invest a poo sample in your future. Better than buying CSL at the Initial Public Offer.

Vincent O'Donnell

TIM FLANNERY'S MESSAGE TO US ALL: RISE UP AND BECOME A CLIMATE LEADER — BE THE CHANGE WE NEED SO DESPERATELY!

As humanity hurtles towards a climate catastrophe, the debate has shifted — from the science to solutions. We know we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. But progress has been painfully slow.

It's clear the world is lacking climate leadership. So what makes a great climate leader and why are we not seeing more of them?

For two years now I've been on a journey, a quest if you like, to find good climate leaders. This is the subject of my new documentary, *Climate Changers* with director Johan Gabrielsson.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND WASTED TIME

Saul Griffith is an engineer who wants to "electrify everything". The co-founder of non-profit group Rewiring Australia decried the "dearth of political leadership" when he told us:

"We haven't had any head of state, of any major nation, positively and proactively engage on climate as an emergency, as an opportunity [...] we haven't had a Churchill or Roosevelt or John F Kennedy 'let's go to the moon' that says: 'here's a threat, here's an opportunity, here's a vision for how we collectively get there.'"

If we'd been on the right emissions reduction trajectory a decade ago, we'd have more time to deal with the problem. But we've wasted ten years

Over that period, probably 20% of

all of the carbon pollution we've ever put into the atmosphere has been emitted.

A lot of money was made creating those emissions, and that has only benefited a few. But of course the consequences of the emissions will stay with humanity for many, many, many generations.

A DIFFERENT STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

Unfortunately, modern Western politics doesn't select for great leaders. But there are a few scattered about.

One such example is Matt Kean in New South Wales. In 2020, as state energy minister and treasurer during the Liberal Berejiklian government, he managed to get the Nationals, the Liberals, Labor and the Greens all supporting the same bill, on addressing climate change through clean energy. In my opinion, that is true leadership.

As Kean told us:

"What you've got to do if you're going to try and solve the challenge is find those areas of common ground. [...] it was about finding the big things that everyone could agree on and designing policy that brought everyone together. And I think that

was the key to our success."

Climate leadership requires humility. It requires listening to your political antagonists as well as your allies.

That sort of leadership is rare in our political system. And yet you see it in Indigenous communities and in the Pacific nations where I've done a lot of work over the years, that sort of leadership is much more common. Because people understand they need to be consultative. And transparent.

West Papuan activist and human rights lawyer, Frederika Korain, and Solomon Island Kwaio community leader and conservationist, Chief Esau Kekeubata, are shining examples. They show individual bravery and diligence, but they're also humble and listening.

On the subject of leadership, they share similar sentiments with Australia's Dharawal and Yuin custodian and community leader Paul Knight.

It's about bringing other people along with you. It's not some strong-arm thing, like you often see at our federal level, in our politics. It's about listening, developing a consensus. It takes time, a lot of effort, and you'll probably never get full consensus, but we'll get most of the way there, convincing people.

I've seen Chief Esau work. He says very little in the most important meetings, but when someone says something he thinks is on the right track, he'll say, "Oh, that's really interesting. Can you tell us a bit more". He directs the conversation.

So in a species like ours, that's what true leadership consists of. Intelligence, persistence, bravery bordering on heroism sometimes, because climate change is the enemy of everyone.

WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

There's a very strong relationship in Australia between political power and fossil fuels. The links are interwoven, with people moving from the fossil fuel industry to politics and back.

And we still allow people to become extremely rich at the expense of all of us. I think that's what's holding us back.

I expect those who are very wealthy, who have made their money in fossil fuels, imagine they'll be able to retire to some gated community and live their life in luxury.

But we all depend on a strong global economy and trade, which is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

under threat as the climate breaks down.

The idea that you can somehow isolate yourself from the environment and the rest of society is one of the great failings of human imagination that has brought us so close to catastrophe.

RISE UP

I do see individual people rising to the occasion. And the story is usually somewhat similar: people realise they could lose something very precious. We heard it time and time again in the making of this documentary.

For community campaigner Jo Dodds the trigger was the Black Summer bushfires, the near-loss of her house and the loss of her neighbours' houses. For former US Vice President Al Gore it was having his son in critical care for 30 days, having to put aside his politics and think about what his life was really about. Those sort of moments do bring out great climate leaders. Even Kean

talked about bringing his newborn son home from hospital, shrouded in bushfire smoke.

The level of public awareness is far greater now than when I came to this issue in the early 2000s.

The most important thing I can do now is inspire and enable others to be climate leaders. Because we need a

diversity of voices out there. We need women. We need younger people. We need people from the Pacific Islands, and First Nations people.

This documentary is about trying to inspire and encourage emerging leaders to give us the diversity of voices we need to make a difference. It's never too late – we can al-

ways prevent something worse from happening.

Climate Changers will screen in cinemas and at community events.

Tim Flannery,

The University of Melbourne

(This article is republished courtesy The Conversation)



Tim Flannery credit Totem Films

PUT YOUR HEART INTO YOUR LIFE

An article in the UK Times made a claim, based on results from research, that loneliness is the health equivalent of smoking half a packet of cigarettes per day.

Really? That simile seems like a long bow, but other studies indicate that loneliness causes chronic stress in the body systems, resulting in an increased level of cortisol flowing from the adrenal glands into body organs. In turn this evokes a chronic inflammatory response, now generally recognised as unfavourable for continued health.

In common with other risk factors, like poor nutrition or a lack of physical activity, a feeling of aloneness can create body changes that can increase the risk of stroke by 37%, and heart attack 29%. Don't forget dementia. It's all tied in.

Part of a self-perpetuating round robin of damage to mind and body is like Hemingway's character Mike, in the novel 'The Sun Also Rises', who comments about bankruptcy - "Two ways," he says, 'first gradually, then suddenly'".

Health deterioration is similar. Nearly always, prevention works better than repair. Of course there are no guarantees.

Figures From 1981-2021 indicate that single person households grew from 18% to 26%. That's over 1 in four people who now live alone. That's one household in four.

Does that mean living alone is a risk factor for health? Not necessarily. While many are forced into aloneness through loss of partner or economic reasons, some people prefer to live alone. After a dysfunctional or abusive relationship it may come as a relief.

If it is a choice to be alone, it's less of a risk factor. There are other risks, such as falling over and not able to summon help.

Single women are more likely to have a positive situation with better education and prestige than middle-aged men, less often by choice than women.

Some people in marriage feel alone. . Maybe Elvis hit the question in his song, 'Are you lonesome?'

A remedy is to feel a sense of belonging, as in a tribal sense. For example, community volunteering offers a remedy for loneliness. Men's sheds are booming all over the country.

It's hard to measure issues that involve emotion, feeling or energy but there is one risk common factor just as risky for multi-organ damage that can be measured and treated by medical science.

Before the great Tina Turner died recently, she left us a message with a warning. She was diagnosed with high blood pressure in 1978 and was not informed it was a risk factor to life and health. She thought it was her 'normal'.

This measurable and treatable condition caused kidney failure and unnecessary death in this active woman in her early 80s. It's danger-

ous because it's clinically silent.

From direct experience over about 20 years, I agree that it can be a good idea to keep blood pressure in 'the sweet spot'. It's a very mysterious condition. The great danger is its silent operation in damage to many organs including brain and kidney, gradually, then suddenly. High blood pressure is not something to flirt with and is important business between patient and their GP.

We know that life is a risky business but there are some known risks that we can deal with. Loneliness and high blood pressure are both high risk factors and both are treatable. Become a volunteer, play cards, walk a dog and have your blood pressure checked. Oh, and don't take up smoking.

David Miller

Brunswick heads

(Dr Miller is a retired GP)

AN OPEN LETTER

TOGETHER YES, WE'LL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

So what do you reckon about the Voice Referendum?

We Lyne locals will be voting YES because as mainly non-Indigenous people, we've been living on land for 235 years that First Nation people have taken care of for 65,000 years.

Last November, National Party Leader David Littleproud said "What every Australian should do, in the sanctity of their own home, is to make a decision about what's the best way to close the gap quicker. Let's not bring vitriol into this. Let's keep this sensible and respectful." (Source: The Guardian Nov 22)
We agree.

If enough of us vote YES, it'll be a step closer for First Nation people to enjoy the same health, education and housing standards as we do. It'll recognise First Nation people's unique place in our history, and it'll give them a chance to have a say in what matters to them.

We accept First Nation people's invitation to "walk together" by voting YES because it has little risk or impact on us, but it will have massive positive outcomes on their lives.

All past governments have failed to make a substantial difference.
By voting YES, you'll make a difference and make your kids, and grandkids, proud.

**Some of us will be out and about at market stalls, information booths
and other events to listen and have a chat.**

So let's talk.

LYNE LOCAL SIGNATORIES

John Hume	Peter Alley	Mary Browne	Clare Donnellan	Victor Hoisington
Erica Hume	Cr Claire Pontin	Judy Gagg	Trevor Walshe	Louise Collins
Michael Fox AM	Niko Campbell	Clare McKay	Sandra Kwa	Coralie Hindson
Owen Carroll	Lesley Walter	Cr Dheera Smith	Kerry Reynolds	Mikala Reilly
Susan Saxby	Clive Walter	Cr Jeremy Miller	Linda Gill	Shane McKay
Judy Woolstencroft	Lesley Bond	Susan Carmody	Julie Brady	Jo Budge
Cathy Arena	Sophia Romano	Julia Dunstan JP	Melissa Day	Robyn Sparke
Margaret Gardner	Deborah Nicholas	Saima Hayes	Rob Butler	Elviza Kravtchinskaia
Graham Gardner	Stephen Nicholas	Maxine Wright	Karin Brueggemann	Shirley Robinson
Graham Robinson	Caroline Byrne	Phil Wright	Brenda Sheargold	Dave Sheridan
Karen Robinson	Thomas Broadfield	Kahrina Richardson	Jean Graham	Marion Hosking
Helen Tompson	Sarah Lulu Faith	Michelle Lowry	Ken Brown PhD	Geoff Martin
Stan Bolden PhD	Felicity Carter OAM	Kym Kilpatrick PhD	Elaine Chalker	Andy Coulter
Peter Liebmann	Lyall Kennedy	Carmel Spark	Phillip Miller	Daryn Poulden
Kari Liebmann	Helen Bryan OAM	Judith Pellow	Chris Thiering	Vickie Pratt
Bettina Bettington	Noni Pratt	Michele Glossop B.Tax	Lisa Thiering	Graham Pratt
Anne Sattler	Tim Prescott	Rod Cooper	Libby Ryan	Tony Dummett
Heather McLaughlin	Greg Byrne	Caroline Allenby	Anke De Reuver	Bruno Bouchet
Sandii Chan	Anne Townsend	Kay Le-Roi PSM	Julie Lyford OAM	Margo Kingston
Carmel Perks	Mick Townsend	Kasiel Westle	David Bass	Geoff Beatty
Helen Watt	Patsy Browne	Adam Heathcote	Denis Duval	Dr Sally Hunter
Helen Halpin Dureau	Paul Browne	Michael Adams	Gillian Calvert AO	Warwick Nichols
Lisa Clancy	Rhonda Hannay	Eleanor Spence	Eric Hudson	David Emery
Max Dunn	Sarah McFadden	Kerrin O'Grady	Mark Vanstone	Chris Jones
Loretta Dunn	Paul McFadden	Barbara Richardson PSM	Helen Lyons-Riley	Phillip Costa

THIS IS OUR MOMENT TO STAND UP

Whether you are an elite athlete, or just a Saturday ref at the kids footy, or someone who admires those who step up when it counts, we can all do one thing that speaks of kindness, acknowledgement of past wrongs, of sportsmanship and camaraderie.



The infamous black power salute



"Salute!" - Movie chronicles famous moment

One such person was Australian Olympic runner Peter Norman. When you're at your first Olympic Games it's easy to be swept up in the moment and focus on it being about you versus the world. But not Peter Norman.

Peter Norman went to the 1968 New Mexico Olympics and ran the fastest race of his life, setting a new Australian record and became Essendon Athletics Club's first (and to this day only) Olympic medallist by securing silver in the 200m.

He could have focused solely on this fantastic personal achievement, something he'd spent years dreaming about, but he didn't. He chose that moment to showcase a brave stance in support of human rights and racial equality.

1968 was a big year in the human rights movement – Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy had both been assassinated and the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) was causing headaches for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as it continued to protest against racial segregation and racism in sport. Athletes had been warned ahead of the games by the IOC that those protesting in support of human rights would risk being thrown out of the games.

Two athletes who were not deterred by these threats were African-American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who finished first and third alongside

Norman in the 200m.

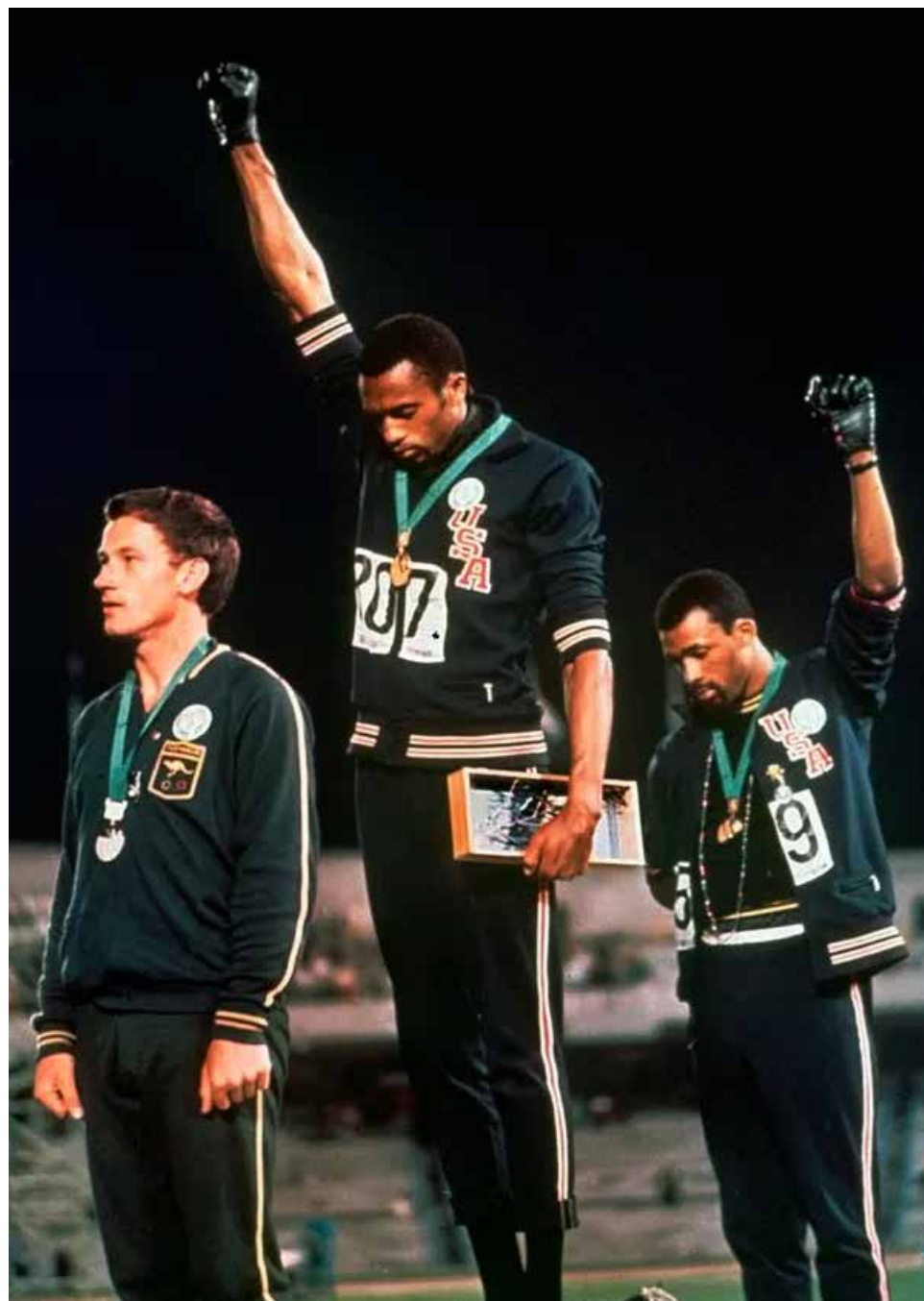
Their stance was an act that scandalised the Olympics. Smith and Carlos were sent home in disgrace and banned from the Olympics for life. But they were treated as returning heroes by the black community for sacrificing their personal glory for the cause. History, too, has been kind to them.

Yet few know that the man standing in front of both of them, the Australian sprinter Peter Norman who shocked everyone by powering past Carlos and winning the silver medal, played his own, crucial role in sporting and human rights history.

Norman knew that both Smith and Carlos were planning on making some kind of statement on the podium to draw awareness to their fight against racism. He told them he wanted to stand alongside them in solidarity to show his support as he believed in the cause they were fighting for.

So on his left breast Norman wore a small badge that read: "Olympic Project for Human Rights" – an organisation set up a year previously opposed to racism in sport.

But while Smith and Carlos are now feted as human rights pioneers, the badge was enough to effectively end Norman's career. He returned home to Australia a pariah, suffering unofficial sanction and ridicule as the Black Power salute's forgotten man. He was never included in the Olympics again, nor welcomed at the Sydney Summer 2000 Games.



Peter Norman proudly wears the badge "Olympic Project for Human Rights" to protest against racism ... and paid a high price for his stance – which he never regretted.

1968 was a very different time to what we live in now. It was a time where standing up for racial equality could put a target on your back; something that was evident from the assassinations of King and Kennedy earlier that year. Despite the known risks, three brave men, two Americans and one Australian proudly wore the Olympic Project for Human Rights badge as they stood silently on the podium to showcase their belief in human rights and racial equality. Together Smith, Carlos and

Norman showed that there are more important things in life than winning medals. Their actions at the 1968 Olympic Games have become one of the most recognisable moments in modern Olympic history.

Peter Norman ran the fastest race of his life to become part of something that transcended the Olympic Games.

Each of us has an opportunity to stand up and be counted. Vote YES.

DM

THE HEARTBREAKING COST OF A DRY SEASON LOOMS

As our country warms to blisteringly hot days of 40 degrees or more during the months ahead, which the climate scientists are predicting will contain little or no rain, are you and your family well prepared?

Countries north of the equator who are emerging from brutal summer encounters caused by unexpected climate events, have not been able to manage very well.

Insufficient spring rain and rising daily temperatures are already causing plants to wilt, grass to die in parks and yards, plus sudden high winds promise days of breathless humidity and danger to come.

Such conditions have been building across the Mid North Coast during Spring and into summer and it's not looking good for another possible damaging bush fire season.

Days for burning off have been limited. There are fears growth in National Parks is out of control due to limited clearing.

Therefore, before making plans first consider the conditions where you live. Are you in an area surrounded by bush? You are at risk, bush fires can be hot, intense and throw out burning embers. If you live in grassy areas and built-up areas bush fires can start off small, send out sparks which quickly ignite unseen under roofs. (Some fires have started in homes and garages from exploding lithium batteries. Because where bikes items with one are stored.)

If you live along coastal places like Old Bar, Forster/Tuncurry, fires can catch onto coastal scrub and move quickly into bonfire proportions if not contained.

If you live on a farm with large acres such as those outside our towns, fires spread, aided by strong winds, over great distances



and if you live on the sides of hills, think Old Soldiers Road and Tallwoods at Blackhead. Remember fires travel uphill very fast. It is an accepted fact that for every 10 degrees of slope the fires can double in speed.

How some previous black summer fires escaped and got out of control range from; a fellow burning rubbish who went indoors for a quick bite to eat, someone welding outdoors and sparks caught in dry grass, to oily rags and cans of petrol in a shed that overheated and exploded. A floating ember landing on a rooftop or in a gutter filled with dry leaves can go up in minutes before being noticed.

Given the conditions so far this year and last, fire reduction burns have been limited.

Are there enough fire fighting planes to "bomb" water in remote areas?

Volunteers are valued and needed. The ADF personnel should be utilised and trained as ancillary support.

Volunteer fire Captain Rob Derbyshire at the Rainbow Flat brigade, says that despite our continuing dry weather he still hopes the bush fires threatening us now may not be as bad as they were in October 2019.

"That's because the fuel load is not as big as it was then," he says. "However, we were backburning at Bulahdelah not long ago, assisting their local brigade and NSW National Parks and found that already the undergrowth is very dry so the fire quickly took off." Not wishing to scare us, he is implying there's no need to be complacent, just be aware.

"We must be well prepared because we hope a fire doesn't develop like the 2019 bush fires which were so intense after so many drought years," he adds.

Fire warnings on mobile apps, a newsletter in the letterbox or a 'get ready' day with your local bush fire volunteers, written information and mini radios supplied by MidCoast Fire Control by

ringing 1300 643262, are all good preparations because this year we simply must do better.

Rob also stresses taking responsibility for your property as much as you can is absolutely essential.

I watched 23 fire trucks rush up the Rainbow Flat estate where I live in October 2019, on a day that recorded 40 degrees. Wind was blowing in all directions and we lost 12 houses with a further number severely fire affected. It was devastating. What was particularly difficult for the firefighters was having to choose what properties they could save and those they had to leave.

This showed me you can't just sit back and rely only on your local volunteer fire brigade. It is important to begin by drawing up an evacuation plan including keeping your precious papers and family pictures packaged so you can grab them and run if needed.

Check regularly that your property is free of rubbish and fallen branches, make sure trees and undergrowth are well clear of the walls of your house. Clean the gutters, block their outlet with sand-filled socks and if embers are being driven by wind, water your roof and fill up your gutters. Preparation like these will hopefully save your house from burning down.

New fire danger rating signs are now installed throughout our state and are an effective reminder. "Moderate" means plan and prepare; "High" means be ready to act, "Extreme" means take

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

action immediately to protect your life and property, "Catastrophic" means leave bush fire risk areas immediately.

If you have a water supply like a swimming pool, tank or dam, tell the firefighters by displaying an SWS plate at your property boundary which is visible from the road. The brigade will supply these signs.

For residents who are elderly, disabled, those with limited support from nearby family, relatives, friends and other services, are eligible for a one-off free service called AIDER. This enables you to have work done on your property including pruning, mowing or slashing, cleaning gutters, thinning and removal of vegetation. Ring 87414955 to check if you qualify.

Another important contact for everyone is the Bush Fire Information Centre on 1800 679737. Hazards Near Me is one of several useful mobile apps.

Before the fire arrives sit down with your family and discuss when you might leave if fire threatens your property, decide where you might go, how you will get there and what you plan to take. Think blankets, pillows, first aid kit, medicines, water, food and any personal items including towel,

tooth brush, tooth paste and any essential personal items you may need.

Decide who will call relatives to tell them you are leaving and who will ring once you arrive safely.

If you are planning to stay, turn off gas mains and any gas bottles, move your large animals on to well grazed or ploughed acres, put your domestic pets, cats in one room, dogs in another with water bowls, or take them with you.

Keep an eye out for any spot fires near your house and connect your hoses so as to put them out immediately. As the fire creeps closer disconnect hoses and put them somewhere safe with any other fire fighting equipment until the fire passes.

Inside your house, close doors, windows and vents, fill baths, sinks, buckets, and any bins with water. Place your ladder next to the roof hole so you can climb up with a torch and check there are no embers or sparks in the rafters. Soak towels and rugs and lay them across external doorways and move any furniture away from the windows.

If you are determined to save your house as I was during the last big fires, then move to the room on the opposite side of the house as the fire approaches and make sure you know which exits are close by. For goodness, sake,

don't forget to release your dead lock doors and large windows if you need to escape.

The fire front will pass over within 5 to 10 minutes depending on the wind, so when it's safe to go out, check round the house frequently for fires, including under the house, deck, stairs and windowsills.

Keep your small free solar powered radio tuned to local ABC midcoast radio, 95.5 on the dial, to stay informed during the crisis.

Whatever you do don't think the emergency is over when the firefighters have gone and everything around you appears burnt to cinders.

This is false safety. Fire spotting can spring up suddenly the next day or following evening. Use the hoses to spray your house, roof and nearby gardens with water and make sure you put those fires out, even if they appear harmless and far from the house.

Just remember 90 percent of homes are said to be destroyed or seriously damaged by burning embers which can travel many kilometres from the actual fire. Think Hillville and Possum Brush when huge fires sent flames and embers up and down the Pacific Highway and then further inland in all directions including jumping the highway during the summer of 2019/20.

It might be a wise idea to carry a fire extinguisher in your car. Spotting a small grassfire at the side of a road, you can extinguish it asap!

Our volunteer bush firefighters are an important defense and without hesitation rush to help each other wherever fires spring up throughout our region. It is not unusual to see half a dozen brigades with their trucks in one location. They also willingly help with problems during the year in their communities.

Though members are often older these days, younger people are also registering to join local brigades. Cathy Baker, the Captain at Tuncurry, started when she was 12, Isabella May from Rainbow Flat signed up this year and she's just 14. Other captains like Bruce Annetts at Tinonee, Leo Fransen at Diamond Beach and Rusty Donnelly, at Green Point have been long standing members of brigades for years.

We thank them all including the regular fire brigade units from the bottom of our hearts.

However as the Boy Scouts know and say . . . "Be Prepared."

Sherry Stumm.

PS Please report any suspicious activity or persons of interest who maybe an arsonist. You'd be surprised who can be!



WITHOUT WATER WE HAVE NO FUTURE

Dear MCC Councillors,
Re: 'Our Water, Our Future 2050' Strategy

We have three grandchildren living in the council area who are currently aged 8, 6 and 1.

We are thinking of them as we write this to you.

Council has rightly focussed our attention on the finite freshwater issue in our area. We welcome this as it is the most important issue because it is fundamental to our existence, specifically these grandchildren now and in the future. This strategy affects us now. What we do or do not do today will affect us tomorrow. It is one of the council's major priorities, that is, "increasing the long-term security of our water supply systems."

Council called a 'Climate Crisis' in 2019. We are very concerned about the future of our grandchildren, our environment, our water supply, and the impact this 'crisis' will have on them.

A 'crisis' which includes global worsening outlooks and locally increased variability in weather patterns, including drought, heat, bushfire; less and inconsistent rainfall; poor, inconsistent, or non-existent river flows leading to diminished supply overall; increases in population and more demand.

"A recent report for the UK government by Chatham House on climate risks concluded that before 2050 it is likely that impacts will "become so severe they go beyond the limits of what nations can adapt to". (quoted by David Spratt, 7.8.2023, downloaded from Are we failing to see the wood for the trees on climate risks? – 'Pearls and Irritations' see, johnmenadue.com)

Despite all the 'good stuff' in this strategy, it just does not do enough or go far enough, quickly enough.



We need to be more adaptive now.

If we are in a crisis then this strategy has a distinct lack of urgency about it. Council has a duty of care to protect the health, welfare, and the well-being of current and future generations. Council has a vital and essential role to develop and implement policies, plans and strategies to help protect us from the impacts of climate change.

In 10 years, our grandchildren will be 18, 16, and 11 respectively. Yet according to this strategy, we have not come round to doing anything about moving to the recycling and reuse of wastewater creating purified recycled water (PRW) for human consumption.

Has the crisis disappeared?

The community needs leadership now. You are our leaders. You must lead. If we are in a crisis there is no room for hesitancy, There is no time for excuses. There is no waiting for others to move first. It is time to make effective decisions which will meet this crisis head on. Council can develop its own regulatory structure regarding PRW.

In 20 years, our grandchildren will be 28, 26, and 21 respectively. Yet according to this strategy, we

have not come round to doing anything about moving to the recycling and reuse of wastewater creating PRW for human consumption.

Has the crisis disappeared?

Yes, there are significant costs associated with sustaining existing infrastructure, let alone developing other critical features of it. Budgeting for this will require ingenuity and sourcing of funds from outside this community. No doubt, figures touted for, say storage construction, will blow out over time. However, as water is fundamental to our continued existence, it demands both a financial and physical priority. We need action now.

In 30 years, our grandchildren will be 38, 36, and 31 respectively. Yet according to this strategy, we will only just be coming round to doing anything about moving to considering the recycling and reuse of wastewater to create PRW for human consumption.

This makes no sense whatsoever. Has the crisis disappeared?

In order to meet the crisis now you must review and revise this strategy. Council needs to demonstrate leadership in this area and take the initiative and make

research about PRW a priority today. We need action now. Consequently, the strategy's timeline needs to be altered by accelerating it. 2050 is just too far away to start doing anything about PRW. This needs to be today's, not tomorrow's focus, because we need to work with what we have.

Concurrently, we need more storage facilities sooner than later, that is, in the next 5-8 years. Water security will mostly come from recycled water stored in such facilities and treated to a PRW standard. Reliance on rain, river flows and bore fields will be insufficient.

Your own community consultation showed that significant numbers of respondents said recycle what we already have and 60% indicated they were open to the development of PRW. The community is clear that this needs to be the focus.

We need dramatic, immediate action now; not in 10 years, not in 20 years and not in 30 years.

We think the council needs to view this matter through a worst-case scenario lens as many of the historical measures continue to be blown away in the crisis we find ourselves in today.

Living in a crisis demands an effective response today. Recycling and reusing what we have needs to be the focus today.

We suggest that before this strategy is adopted by council it be reviewed in the light of the matters raised by us.

Our grandchildren will thank you for your leadership.

Heather and Chris Abbott Taree.

QUESTIONS STILL BEING ASKED ABOUT THE TRUE STATE OF MIDCOAST COUNCIL FINANCES

The August edition of this paper gave disturbing details of an adverse report about the MidCoast Council finances by the NSW Audit Office. The Report suggested that “MidCoast Council has not met all legislative and policy requirements for long-term financial planning,” and was critical of Council delays in finalising a reliable Long-Term Financial Plan.

The poor financial position of the Mid-Coast Council and the need for significant action was again highlighted by the ‘Draft’ 2022/23 Financial Statements which Council recently voted to refer for audit.

The figures in the Draft Financial Statements were significantly different to what was projected in either the ‘Original’ or the ‘Projected’ Budgets. Total expenses exceeded the Budget by \$41 Million, nearly 14%, whilst income only exceeded the Budget projections by \$32 Million.

Council’s Net Operating Result for the year before Grants and Contributions for Capital purposes showed a deficit of \$45 million, when the ‘Original Budget’ projection was a deficit \$10.3 Million, and the later ‘Projected Budget’ deficit was adjusted to \$24.7 Million.

The Net Operating Result for the year, before Grants and Contributions for Capital purposes for the General Fund, which is the main Council trading account, (excluding Water and Sewer), showed a deficit of \$47.979 Million, a new record.

A review of MidCoast Council’s Net Operating result before grants and contributions for capital purposes for the period 2018 to 2023 shows:

- 2018/19 - Deficit \$5.5 Million
- 2019/20 - Deficit \$11 Million
- 2020/21 - Deficit \$20.9 Million
- 2021/22 – \$8.9 Million
- 2022/23 - Deficit \$45 Million

(a swing of \$54 million from the previous year.)

The recent ‘Re-vote and Carried Forward’ details, which relate to projects previously approved, but not yet completed, shows a figure of \$53.9 Million for over 187 projects. Projects which were either not commenced, or not completed within the Budgeted Year.

No doubt there are reasons for projects not to be commenced or completed as planned, but on its face, this does seem to be quite a large number.

Each year since its inception, MidCoast Council has not completed many budgeted projects requiring them to be carried forward. This can often result in additional costs and time to complete such projects.

The Re-vote and Carry Forward figures since 2016 are as follows:

2016/17	\$39,954,903.00
2017/18	\$49,209,748.00
2018/19	\$46,376,670.00
2019/20	\$30,515,672.00
2020/21	\$53,205,167.89
2021/22	\$49,975,420.00
2022/23	\$53,924,437.65

The review of the Delivery and Operational Plan for the 2022/23 reported to Council in August showed that 58% or only 53 of the 91 originally planned actions were achieved.

In May 2022, Council resolved to produce a Plan by 22 September 2022 that would have Council’s General Fund return to a surplus position within a 4 - 6-year time-frame.

When September 2022 came around, and there was no Plan, Council then resolved that a ‘Financial Sustainability Strategy’ (same thing, different name) be developed and finalised in early 2023, and exhibited for community consultation in conjunction with the 2023/2024 Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents (IP&R).

These IP&R Documents, along with the 2023/24 Budget, were publicly exhibited on 12 April 2023, but in the absence of any Financial Sustainability Strategy.

Council’s 2023/24 Budget was approved on 28 June 2023 but still with no Financial Sustainability Strategy.

The 2023/24 Budget projected the General Fund Net Operating Result before Capital Grants and contributions for capital purposes of a Deficit of \$45,512,240.

As at the present time there has been no public advice as to precisely when the Financial Sustainability Strategy, which is going to “turn

around Council’s General Fund in 4 to 6 years” will be unveiled and made public. The Mayor has commented that “the strategy is currently being worked on and will be reported at the end of this (2023) calendar year.”

It is clear from the NSW Audit Office Report, and the financial statements discussed above, that the Council is presently not in a strong financial position with, as yet, no clear plan as to how the budget might be repaired and returned to surplus. There are a number of unanswered questions such as:

- Will there need to be a significant increase in Council rates?
- Will there need to be cuts to Council staffing levels?
- Will some Council assets need to be sold? And,
- Will there have to be cuts to Council services?

In a statement reported in this paper in August, the Mayor said:

“...Council is undertaking service reviews with a view to optimising service delivery to our community, eliminating unnecessary expenditure, and identifying opportunities to generate additional non-rate revenue streams.”

No doubt there is likely to be some community anxiety about what and how services might be impacted until more details are provided.

It does seem that a Long-Term Financial Plan, explaining how and when the situation can be turned around, is more necessary and urgent than ever.

Comment was sought from all Councillors and the Mayor but not received by the necessary deadline, except from Councillor Epov who said:

“The figures for the Net Operating result before grants and contributions for capital purposes show an average annual deficit since 2018/19 of \$14.7 million. That’s unsustainable.”

And:

“The 22/23 Financial Statements are actually above all expectations. I didn’t think they would be so bad.”

THE INCREDIBLE INGENUITY OF INDIGENOUS FISHING KNOWLEDGE

Standing on a ferry chugging across Sydney Harbour, it's still possible to imagine the city as it was in 1788 – before the span of the bridge, before the marinas and yachts, before buildings were planted onto that sloping, rocky landscape. Pockets of bush still reach down towards the water, where gums and angophoras curl around sandstone coves carved out by the sea water.

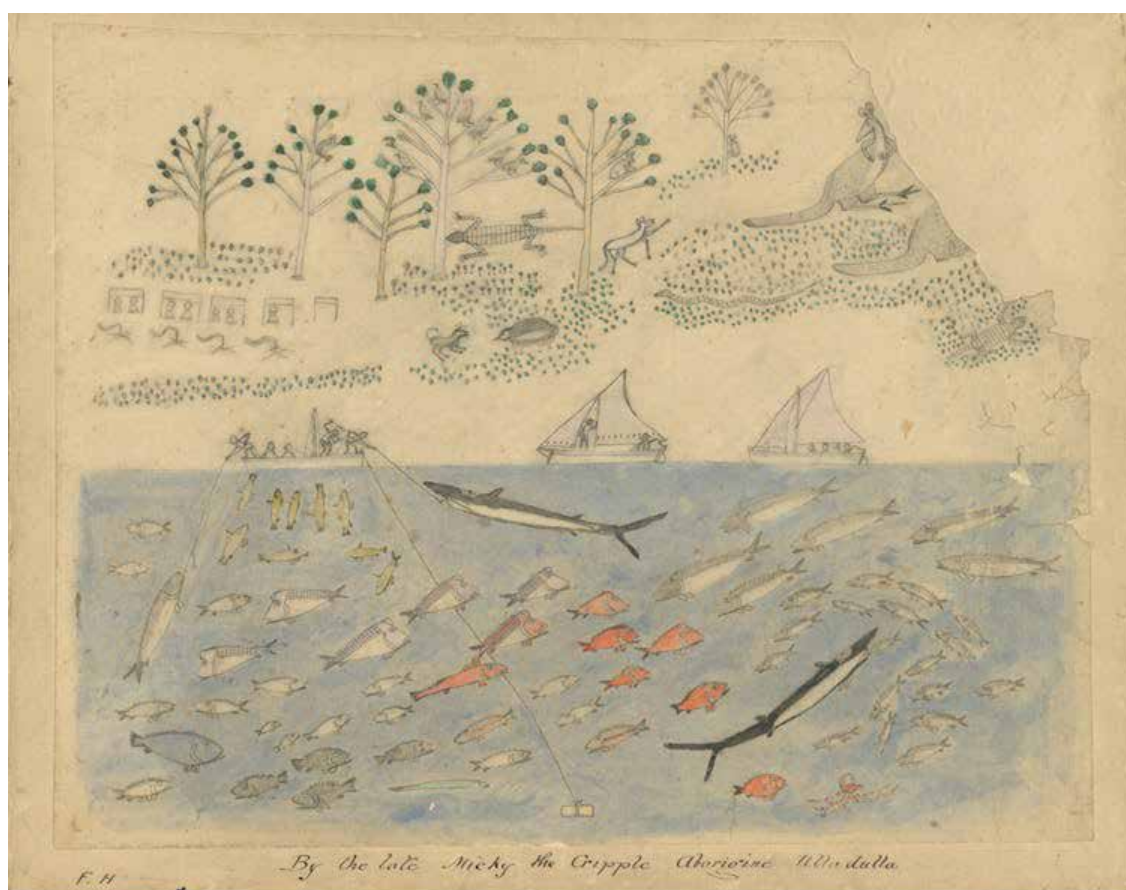
Yet these places were also occupied, named and fished, long before “Sydney” appeared on any charts.

Across the continent, diverse and adaptable fishing practices, recipes and rituals were a cornerstone of Indigenous life at the time of first contact – and many remain so to this day.

Gadigal fisherwomen used the bark or the tender fibres of young kurrajong trees, which they soaked and pounded or sometimes chewed, scraping off the outer layers with a shell. The pliable strands were then worked into fine strong thread. The women cast their handlines and quickly drew them back in on the strike, hand over hand, before the fish could shake off the hook.

At the end of these lines, elegant fishhooks, or *burra*, made from carved abalone or turban shells were dropped over the side of their canoes, or nowies. In other parts of Australia, hooks made from a piece of tapered hardwood, bird talon or bone have also been found.

Despite the nowies' apparent flimsiness, the fisherwomen were master skippers. They paddled across the bays and out through the Heads, waves slapping at the sides of their precarious little vessels. Small fires were lit in the nowie on a platform of clay and weed before the craft was



Mickey of Ulladulla, Fishing Activities of Aboriginal Australian People and Settlers Near Ulladulla, New South Wales, Approximately 1885, c. 1880–1890. National Library of Australia, nla.obj135516869. National Library of Australia, nla.obj135516869

launched into the water from a snug harbour cove.

When the fisherwoman threw the line overboard, she waited for that strike and tug from a whiting, dory or snapper, which would be quickly hauled aboard and charred on the waiting fire

While women were the anointed shellfish gatherers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,

as well as line fishers in the areas where that was practised, spearfishing was largely the preserve of men. Hunters stalked the water's edge or stood in a canoe, looking for the tell-tale shadow of a dusky flathead or the flash of silver from a darting bream.

When the water was calm and clear enough, Aboriginal men around Warrane-Sydney Harbour and Kamay-Botany Bay were fre-

quently seen lying across their nowies, faces fully submerged, peering through the cool blue with a spear at the ready.

At night, Aboriginal fishermen took the canoes out onto the water with their flaming hand torches held aloft. The light lured the fish to the boat's side, where they were speared by a barbed prong whittled out of bone, shell or hardwood. In the muddy mangroves of northern Australia, fires were sometimes lit on creek banks to attract barramundi, which swam towards the light and suffered the same fate.

While early colonial sketches and paintings give wonderful snapshots of Aboriginal fishers, they do so from a European perspective. Written accounts are similarly revealing, and we can be grateful for the faithful record

of fishing practices and winning catches they've produced. But these people viewed First Nations societies through a distinctly colonial lens.

The early colonial view of Australia was mostly curious and enlightened, and colonists were often captivated by the extraordinary skills of Aboriginal fishers, as well as their depth of knowledge about their Country. Yet they were also people of their time, who saw the British

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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expansion in Australia as inevitable, and viewed Country as a resource awaiting exploitation.

Sometimes, scars on the mighty trunks of river red gums, or canoe trees, along the banks and flood plains of the Murray River reveal an Aboriginal presence long before any European record. Enormous engravings of whales, fish and sharks etched into sandstone platforms around Sydney and into the rugged iron ore of Murujuga-Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia have a provenance thousands of years older than any colonial etching or journal entry. Elaborate fish traps across the continent and the Torres Strait demonstrate intricate knowledge of seasonal and tidal fish aggregations.

Paintings in smoke-stained caves across northern Australia show equally distinctive Aboriginal readings of fishy feats and feasts. And the remnants of literally millions of seafood meals can be seen in middens around the continent that cascade through dirt, sand and mud at the water's edge.

These Indigenous archives give us a glimpse into fishing before European colonisation. They also reveal the ingenuity of pre-industrial First Nations communities, long before fish finders, weather apps and soft plastics.

Remnants of vast, curving fish traps, or Ngunnhu, made from river stones still lie near Brewarrina in central New South Wales. (There were even more Ngunnhu once, until they were pushed aside to make way for paddle-steamers taking the wool clip down to Adelaide in the late 19th century.)

In the early spring or during a large flow of fresh water after heavy rains, enormous numbers of fish would travel upriver, swelling the eddies and currents with a mass of writhing tails and fins. Aboriginal fishers kept watch from grassy embankments above the river and, as soon as enough fish had entered the labyrinth of traps, they rolled large rocks across the openings, ensnaring them for a seasonal fish feast.

These traps and weirs were also an early form of fisheries management and remnants can be seen right across central and western New South Wales. Juvenile fish were carried in curved wooden coolamons and released behind the barriers on the smaller tributaries as a way of boosting stocks and ensuring fish

for seasons to come.

The Budj Bim eel traps at Lake Condah in southwest Victoria were designed, built and maintained by the Gunditjmara people, who operated the series of channels, locks and weirs. Built at least 6,600 years ago, the traps have been redeveloped several times over several centuries, and they demonstrate an ecologically sustainable management of this freshwater eel fishery that was adapted and lasted for thousands of years and can still be seen today.

The ill-fated explorer William John Wills described a similar "arrangement for catching fish" somewhere north of Birdsville around the Georgina River, where he camped with Robert O'Hara Burke and the rest of their party in January 1861. The trap consisted of "a small oval mud paddock about 12 feet by 8 feet, the sides of which were about nine inches above the bottom of the hole," he wrote. The "top of the fence" was "covered with long grass, so arranged that the ends of the blades overhung scantily by several inches the sides of the hole."

Periods of drought and seasonal dry weather could change rivers from torrential, turgid flows to the most meagre trickle – a chain of muddy holes through the landscape. Across northern Australia, seasons of wet and dry charged the landscape with weather cycles that pushed water across the floodplains of the northern savanna in great sheets, and then inevitably dried them out again.

But even low water could mean good fishing, since the fish would be forced to aggregate in particular

waterholes, where they could be readily trapped and caught. While the grass might be parched and brittle up on the banks, the water below was teeming with life; that was the time when Aboriginal people walked along the creek bottom, muddying the water and forcing the fish to rise and take in air where they were easily speared, clubbed or netted.

In the Kimberley, when the dry season came and the floodwaters finally receded, rolls of spinifex were used to entangle fish that had been trapped in the remaining waterholes.

FISHING OBJECTS AND ARTEFACTS

Artefacts such as spears, hooks and nets also help reconstruct some of the changing ways and means of Indigenous fishing that predate European colonisation and continue to be used and modified long after it. These relics are as beautiful as they were effective.

Kangaroo tail tendon was used to bind fishhooks in northern Australia. The prongs of spears (fish gigs or fizzes) were hardened and polished and then attached to the long shaft using pieces of thread daubed with resin.

Nets made from lengths of finely twisted twine were so carefully knotted together that when Governor Phillip showed them to the white women in the colony, the elegant loops reminded them of English lace. To strengthen the nets' fishing powers, Aboriginal people sang to them: their music and words, literally singing in the fish.

Coastal tribes used small hoop nets to pick up lobsters, which hid in underwater crevasses on the edge

of the harbour and along the beachside cliffs. Catch-and-cast nets trapped small numbers of fish in creeks and waterholes near the coast and could also be used to carry a feed of fish as families walked back to their camps along the well-worn walking tracks.

Further inland, Aboriginal people made large woven river nets, which could be held by hand or propped up along the bank. Once fixed in place, groups of people waded through the murky water, loudly beating the surface and driving the startled fish into the mesh.

Stories of women diving deep underwater for shellfish, walking out across the rocks at low tide pulling off abalone, or wading through billabongs to pick up turtles, are common in accounts

from the time and these practices are still maintained by many Indigenous communities around Australia and the Torres Strait Islands.

Given such longstanding fishing connections, "sea rights" have been increasingly recognised by governments in legislating fisheries management. Some of the environmental knowledge used by Traditional Owners seems astonishing in today's context of mass-produced fishing lures and frozen bait from the local servo.

One account from northern Australia described a particularly large Golden Orb spider carefully killed to preserve its abdomen, which was then gently squeezed to milk its adhesive goo. Small fish, attracted to the carcass, would then get stuck to the dead spider before being delicately lifted ashore by nimble hands.

Fish poisoning, using various berries, roots, leaves and stems, was also common throughout Australia. In parts of the Kimberley crushed leaves from the freshwater mangrove were used to poison their prey, sweeping branches through the water until stunned fish started floating belly up.

Along the east coast it was wattle leaves that did the damage. The sunny, fragrant puffballs of two common acacias belie their potency as a fish poison. There are even accounts of eels gliding out of the water and into the bush along the Clarence River in northern New South Wales in an attempt to escape poisoning from Aboriginal fishers.

Although these poisoning methods apparently had no effect on the



M. Dubourg, Fishing No. 1, 1813.
National Library of Australia, nla.obj135898881

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edibility of the fish, the trick was to carefully manage the immersion of these toxic branches in the water – giving just enough poison to stun the fish, but not enough to knock out the whole waterhole.

It was knowledge that came slowly to the colonists, over several generations. William Scott, the New South Wales colonial astronomer from 1856 to 1862, observed how the Worimi people were able to anticipate fishing seasons around Port Stephens on the New South Wales Mid North Coast. “By some unerring instinct the blacks knew within a day when the first of the great shoals [of sea mullet] would appear

through the heads,” he explained.

For the Yol u in Arnhem Land, flowering of stringybark trees coincides with the shrinking of waterholes, where fish can be more readily netted and speared, or poisoned. And when the Dharawal people of the Kamay and Shoalhaven region in New South Wales see the golden wattle flowers of the *Acacia binervia*, they know that the fish will be running in the rivers and prawns will be schooling in estuarine shallows.

In Queensland the movement and population of particular fish species have their own corresponding sign on land. The extent of the annual sea-mullet run in the cool winter months can be predicted by the numbers of rainbow lorikeets in

late autumn; if magpies are scarce in winter, numbers of luderick will also be low; and when the bush is ablaze with the fragrant sunny blooms of coastal wattle in early spring, surging schools of tailor can be expected just offshore. Although climate change may shift these fishing markers in the natural world.

This knowledge was acquired by Australia’s Indigenous peoples through generations of observation and practice. What’s more, that deep understanding was as much about the spirit world as the natural. Neither can be properly comprehended without reference to the other – although our own contemporary insights are often sketchy, since the sporadic observations of colo-

nists are frequently the only available historical sources we have of Indigenous fishing practices.

Practical understanding was intimately entwined with spiritual readings of the land. First Nations Dreamings are systems of cultural values and observations: they created the world and are reflected in day-to-day observations of that life. These “spiritscapes”, as the archaeologist Ian McNiven has called them, infused Country with cosmology. The natural and spirit worlds were one and the same. Country wasn’t inanimate – it could feel and do. And for many Aboriginal people to this day, that knowledge remains a shaping, dynamic belief system.

There are accounts on the South Australian coastline of Aboriginal people ritually singing in dolphins or sharks to herd fish into man-made or natural enclosures on the Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas. In Twofold Bay, in southern New South Wales, dolphins were similarly used to herd fish, and a totemic bond between killer whales and Aboriginal people was also observed and documented.

In Lutruwita-Tasmania, archaeological excavations of middens suggest Palawa people mysteriously avoided eating finfish altogether for the 3000 years prior to colonisation, hunting mammals and scavenging shellfish instead. Was it spiritual? A response to some sort of poisoning event? Or an economic decision to harvest easier resources (such as seals and abalone)? Did the community lose their knowledge of fishing, as some have argued? Or did they perhaps dispose of the bones somewhere else? No one really knows.

Some forms of Indigenous fishing inevitably became lost as Traditional Owners were dispossessed and disenfranchised of their lands and fisheries following the expansion of the colonial frontier post-1788. Many Indigenous practices were eventually superseded by new technologies. Other Indigenous fishers became active in the establishment of the commercial fishing industry in Australia, maintaining strong links to traditional knowledges, as well as adapting to modern fishing approaches and technologies.

Indigenous peoples have played and continue to play a prominent role in the history of Australian fishing. They remain a visible and vital part of Australian fishing culture as commercial and recreational fishers, industry partners and Traditional Owners of the vast natural resource that is Australia’s fisheries.

This is an edited extract from *The Catch: Australia’s Love Affair with Fishing* by Anna Clark (published by Penguin). (FIRST PUBLISHED ONLINE BY THE CONVERSATION)

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Rosemary's bread-stuffed eggplants

On special occasions like a birthday or Christmas Eve dinner, my mum would always ask us what we wanted to eat and, without fail, my brother and I would respond with 'Rosemary's'. What I can tell you is that 'Rosemary's' is bread-stuffed eggplants. What I can't tell you is why we call them Rosemary's. We have no memory as to why they were affectionately given this name, it's just one of those things. Made with the most delicious stuffing of eggplant, breadcrumbs, oregano, egg and garlic, our family secret is to create indents in the stuffing and pour olive oil into them. The olive oil further flavours the bread stuffing and also helps to create a beautiful golden and crunchy crust. Paired with my tomato and basil sauce, this meal has been on high rotation in our family for years, and I promise it will be in yours, too.

3 eggplants
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,
plus extra for drizzling
sea salt flakes
6 slices of stale white bread
(about 300 g)
1 tablespoon dried oregano
3 garlic cloves, crushed
2 eggs
freshly ground black pepper
500 g (2 cups) Tomato & Basil
Sauce (page 47), warmed,
to serve
Pecorino Romano, grated

Preheat the oven to 200°C conventional (180°C fan-forced). Line a baking tray with baking paper.

Cut the eggplants in half lengthways. Place them on the prepared baking tray, cut-side up, and lightly drizzle with olive oil and a sprinkling of salt. Bake for 20 minutes.

Take the eggplants out of the oven. They should be soft to touch but still have a slight spring to them. Leave to cool slightly. Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C conventional (160°C fan-forced).

Using a serrated knife, cut the flesh out of the eggplant shells – follow the shape of the eggplant around the edges, then peel out the eggplant flesh. Don't worry if a few holes or tears are made in the skin. Set five eggplant shells aside, then finely chop the remaining eggplant shell and set aside.

Place the slices of white bread in a blender and process until you have a fine and crumbly texture. Place in a large bowl with the oregano, garlic, eggs, a pinch of salt and pepper, the eggplant flesh and the chopped eggplant shell. Combine all the ingredients by mixing them together with your hands and using a squeezing motion.

Place the five eggplant shells on a clean pre-lined baking tray. Evenly distribute the eggplant filling among the eggplant shells – fill them as tightly as you can. Using your index finger, make three indents roughly 4 cm deep in the filling in each shell and drizzle the olive oil into them.

Bake the eggplant shells for 30 minutes or until golden and crispy on top.

Serve immediately, with the warm tomato and basil sauce and a sprinkling of Pecorino Romano.

SERVES 5



WIFEDOM — MRS ORWELL'S INVISIBLE LIFE



ANNA FUNDER.

Hamish Hamilton (an imprint of Penguin Books)

Rrp. \$36.95

Why was this woman airbrushed from two of the twentieth centuries most influential books? Author

Author Anna Funder spent two years searching for the “voice” of the wife of George Orwell . . . and the result is an intriguing story of an extraordinary woman whose life is cut short too soon.

George Orwell's actions may seem unfair today as he was writing in the 1930s when women had rattled the public cage of convention and won the vote.

Eileen O'Shaughnessy Orwell at the start of her 9-year marriage to George, (who penned “Animal Farm” and “1984”) gave her considerable support and dedicated editing of his manuscripts, unaware that she would be forgotten, unacknowledged by her husband and subsequently ignored by his many biographers.

When Eileen marries Orwell, he takes her to live in a county house with no electricity, running water or a suitable toilet, surrounded by animals that need constant feeding. Orwell sits upstairs in comfort working while Eileen cooks, cleans, shops and by night strains her eyes in candlelight to type his daily output, editing his finished manuscript and then sending it to the publisher.

It took forensic research and a stroke of luck by Anna Funder to unearth six letters from Eileen to her best friend, Norah Symes Myles in 2005, to discover what sort of person she was and her life with George Orwell.

None of Orwell's biographers have bothered to consider her influence on his work, never alluding to the input of her light hearted humour, the animal characters they created in “Animal Farm”, the long

bedtime discussions they had and her many suggestions on style and content.

Orwell had tuberculosis for most of his adult life and Eileen died young from cancer and an operation gone wrong, unable to enjoy the immortality the books bought her husband. These two books have never been out of print.

In *Wifedom* Anna Funder searches for scraps of Eileen's voice, did George Orwell drop any mention of his wife?

Eileen loved Orwell and believed in his talent. He possibly loved

her as much as his sexual exploits outside their marriage and self-belief would allow.

For Eileen all this doesn't matter now she is married.

When Orwell casually announces he is off to fight in the Spanish civil war, Eileen sets about obtaining a job in the office of the revolutionaries as a secretary while Orwell sits bored on an inactive front line with a small brigade of left-wing Lenin/ Trotsky fanatics whom Stalin despises and vows to wipe out.

She types secret messages, attends meetings and as the months

pass her name along with her boss John McNair is added to the Gesta-po/Stalin list of those to be hunted, caught and executed.

Even this threat is no reason to leave without her husband, so she battles on using clever ways to hide the passports of her colleagues from raids by the Spanish authorities. She even finds time to type up Orwell's notes on the war for his manuscript which becomes *Homage to Catalonia*, his account of his time in battle and then fleeing for his life.

Did he ever thank her for all she did? Probably not. Was he grateful for the way she helped him escape across the border back to England safely?

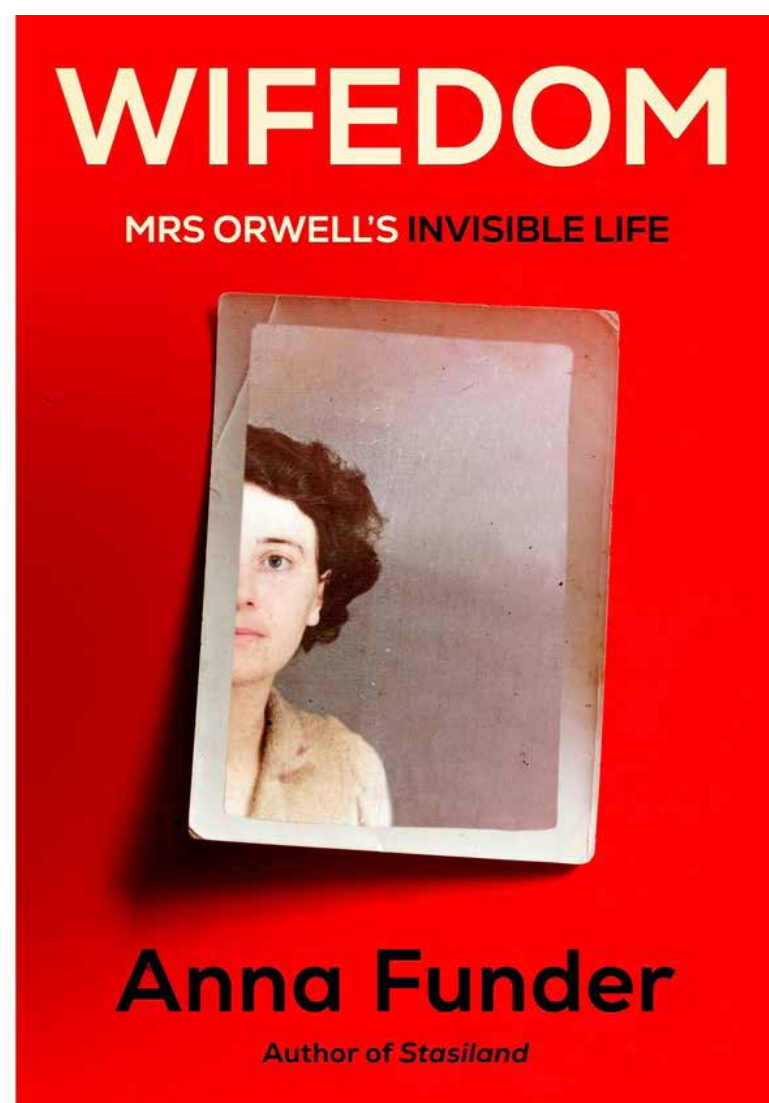
After Eileen's death, Orwell finds he can't talk to the surgeon to find out what went wrong with her operation, nor does he read the coroner's report. Instead, he appears to have devised a narrative in his head he can live with - It is one in which he tells himself he did not mean to remain in Europe when he knew she was seriously ill, nor did he abandon her by focusing on his work for he believed her operation was minor. After her death he tells her friend Lydia, “at least she didn't suffer, she never recovered consciousness.” Small consolation for not being a comforting presence at her bedside!

When the poet Stephen Spender writes to Orwell to say how sorry he is, Orwell replies; “Yes, she was a good old stick”. Spender is shocked. It may have been Orwell's way of distancing his feelings for Eileen, for he was well aware that she held his world together.

As women do.

A thought provoking book.

Sherry Stumm.



ONE ILLUMINED THREAD



Sally Colin-James,
Fourth Estate (Harper Collins imprint)
RRP. \$32.99

As you read this book let your imagination take you back five hundred years to when the mad friar Savonarola ordered the destruction of art and sculpture in Florence saying it was the devil's work.

Now travel back further to before the birth of Jesus, as Elisheva, mother of John the Baptist escapes to the hills to save her child from the Roman soldiers who have been ordered by Herod to kill all male children.

The characters are so compelling and the research meticulous, it is easy to travel two thousand years on the wings of the author's vivid imagination, for this book is based on real people and some historical events, leaving fiction and our imagination to fill in their day-to-day lives.

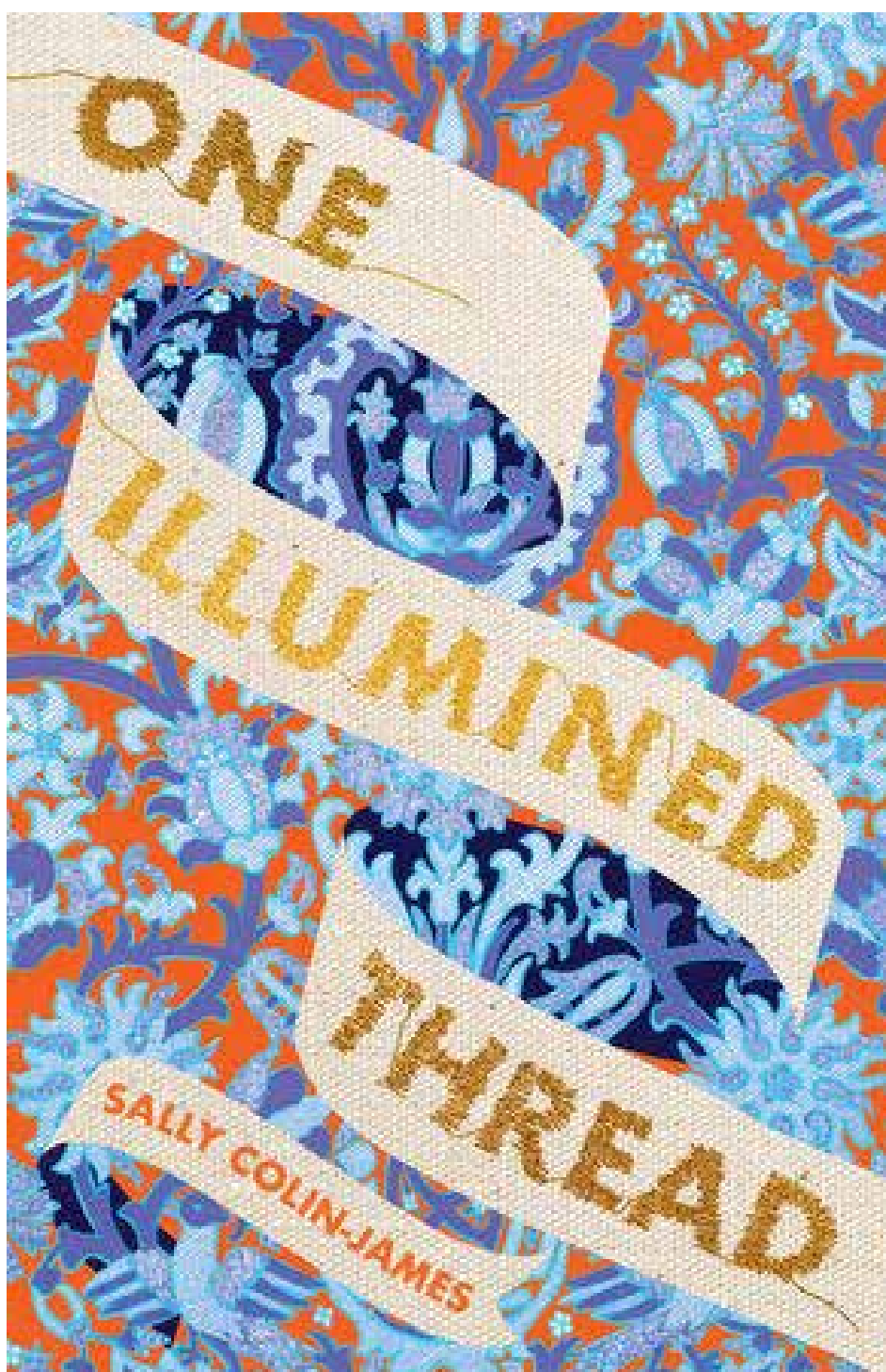
As Einstein points out, "For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the whole world."

The plot sets out to celebrate the power and creative spirit of the female heart through the life of three women from different eras. They are joined by what the author calls the "illuminated thread" of a special painting which depicts two historical characters, the mother of John the Baptist and her cousin Mary, mother of Jesus.

It was inspired by the life size masterpiece by Renaissance artist Mariotto Albertinelli, who lived in Florence during the great flourishing of art in the 16th century.

His painting called *La Visitazione* which now hangs in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, depicts the figures of Elisheva who lived in ancient Judea in 38 BCE in the valley of Beit HaKarem and her young cousin Maryam, the Aramaic names for St Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary.

Mariotto is friends with a number of fellow artists including Raffaello, Fra Bartolomeo and the great



sculptor Michael Michaelangelo who carved the famous marble statue of David.

However, Mariotto's hard drinking, whoring and fighting cuts short his life and he leaves his young wife Antonia with a mountain of debt so she spends the rest her life trying to repay it.

On Mariotto's death, Antonia tries to find the elusive white paint

that artists like her husband insist is the colour they need as a base for the true skin colour of their subjects, which for centuries has eluded artists.

Meanwhile Elisheva, a skilled glass blower strives to fall pregnant to her husband Zakhariya year after year, until in middle age she gives birth to Yohanan who will become John the Baptist.

Maryam's child is born several months after and both women are said to have had prophetic dreams that their sons will both die horrible deaths while still young.

It is this knowledge that Mariotto Albertinelli has chosen to paint on the faces of the women who look at each other with love and sadness. As a result, Antonia falls under the spell of the painting, while Dr Elizabeth Reed, a world renowned restorer of ancient cloth who lives in Adelaide and suffers from anxiety attacks, is also uplifted and inspired by the painting.

Dr Reed has lost her adult son in an accident and has just managed to muster the courage to escape an abusive husband and a clinging mother, both of whom play on her sensitivities using emotional blackmail. She has been offered a six-month residency in Israel to help restore garments found in a cave near the Dead Sea, estimated to be two thousand years old.

Thanks to the friendship and support of her boss at the Art gallery where she works, Dr Reid struggles to get her life back on track and it is her intense devotion to her work and this sudden offer to leave Adelaide which will save her, if only she will take it.

This is an emotional, well written book about the different paths these three women take according to the customs of their time. It is about female friendship, ambition and resilience, even though each woman can sense that the outcome will, or has already, resulted in loss.

Sally Collin-James purposely sets out to celebrate female power and creativity as we learn how each character strives for the apparent unattainable. Her timing with this story is pertinent as the "me too" movement continues to inspire and slowly change all areas of female life.

Sherry Stumm

THE FIRST ASTRONOMERS HOW INDIGENOUS ELDERS READ THE STARS



Duane Hamacher with Elders and Knowledge Holders
Allen & Unwin RRP \$34.99

When people hear or read about some indigenous “myth, legend or story”, some react with scorn, whilst others with a respectful, albeit somewhat patronising smile. Few people seem to ever consider that such stories might be factually accurate and based upon years of careful observation.

When studying science, school children in Western societies are taught about the “scientific method” which Wikipedia describes in these terms:

“The scientific method is an empirical method for acquiring knowledge that has characterised the development of science since at least the 17th century. It involves careful observation, applying rigorous scepticism about what is observed...It involves formulating hypotheses, via induction, based on such observations; the testability of hypotheses, experimental and the measurement-based statistical testing of deductions drawn from the hypotheses; and refinement (or elimination) of the hypotheses based on the experimental findings.”

This unusual but brilliant book, which concentrates on astronomy, is really an eye-opener in which the author, in association with six First Nations Elders from various backgrounds, “takes us on a journey across space and time to reveal the wisdom of the first astronomers”. The book challenges the common view that Indigenous ways of knowledge are not scientifically based. It also suggests that “Indigenous knowledge demonstrates that science can be understood to have a much broader scope than what is usually considered to be Western science.” We are told that “Indigenous scholars conducting research combine formal academic training and personal lived experience that bridges Indigenous and Western

ways of knowing.”

In the book’s foreword, Professor Marcia Langton has this to say:

“Significant to understanding the interconnectedness of Indigenous knowledge is recognising the important role of story, song, dance and ceremony. Many dismiss these cultural expressions as *myth* and *legend*, but they are not. *They are interwoven narratives that bring together systems of knowledge.* The interconnectedness of star knowledge with understandings of patterns and phenomena in nature, including seasons, weather, plant and ani-

mal behaviour, is revealed in each of the accounts provided by Elders herein.”

Duane Hamacher was born in the Mid-West of the United States who now lives and works in Australia. He is Associate Professor of Cultural Astronomy in the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne.

The six Elders are all from Australia, mostly the Torres Strait, but the book draws upon the knowledge and learning of Indigenous peoples from other parts of the world including North and South America, Africa, the Pacific and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapter 1 deals in a general way with Indigenous knowledge of the stars and the role of Indigenous cultural practices, and makes the important point that:

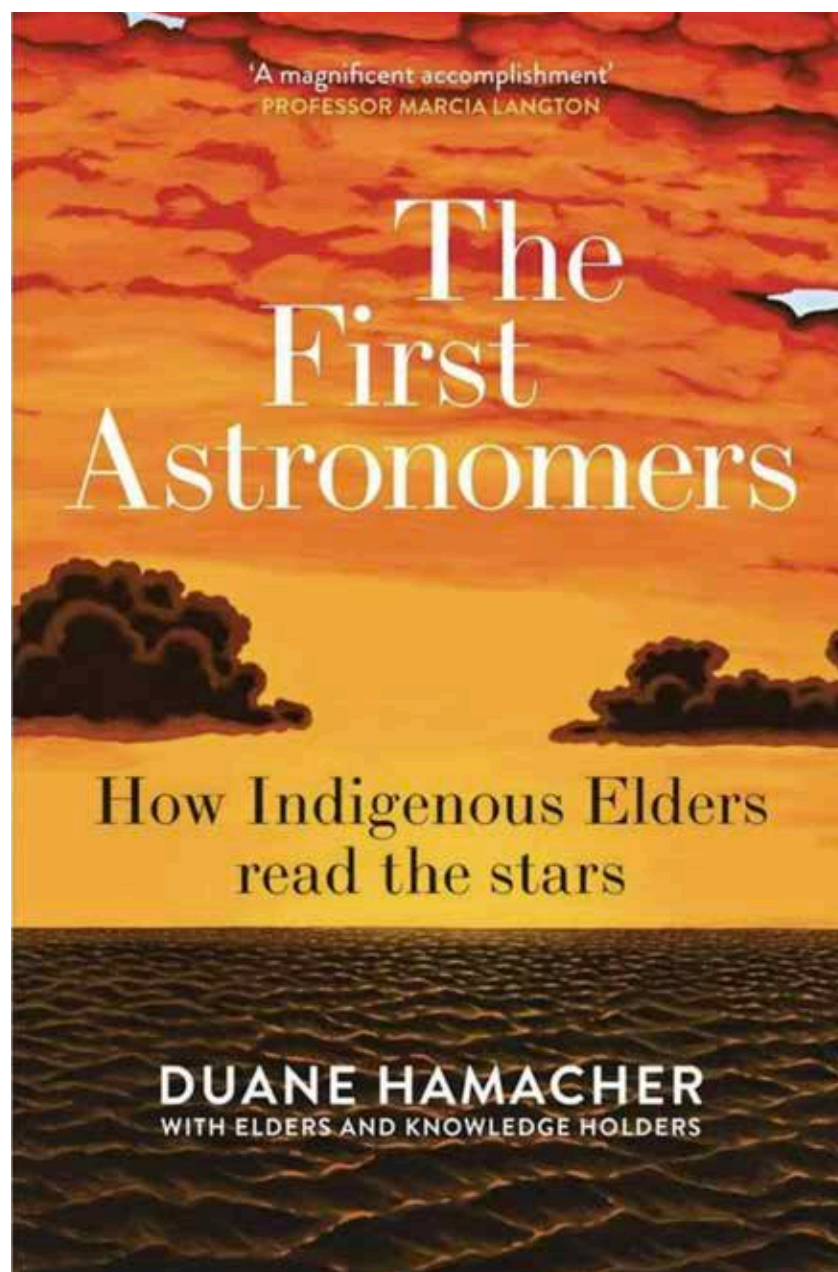
“Those who criticise the notion of Indigenous science will argue that culture is irrelevant to science, that the behaviour of atoms or the formation of galaxies is not based on culture. But the rules that govern nature are distinct from the process by which we come to learn about them. As a human endeavour, science is inseparable from culture.”

Western scientific knowledge is shared through formal education, learned papers and conferences whilst Indigenous knowledge has traditionally been shared via story, song and dance.

Chapter 1 also makes the point that Indigenous sciences are all highly connected which contrasts with modern Western science which is highly compartmentalised.

The book provides many examples of an apparent myth having a sound scientific basis. One interesting early example is as follows:

“In Zambezi traditions of Mozambique in Southern Africa, the Moon is a woman who was deeply jealous of the Sun-man, who was adorned with glittering feathers of light. One day, when the sun was looking away to the other side of the world, the Moon-woman took advantage of this and stole some of his feathers to decorate herself. When the Sun-man discovered her transgression, he threw mud at her. This stuck to her face as the moon’s maria (dark basins) and has remained there ever since. Seeking eternal vengeance, the Moon-woman perpetually waits until the Sun-man is distracted. Utilising the element of surprise, she throws mud back at his face. The people say that when this happens the Sun has large spots and has some difficulty



CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

shining. But the sun does not retaliate, as this only happens every ten years or so."

This is of course describing sunspots and their cyclical nature, something that Western science only discovered in the eighteenth century.

Several First Peoples tell stories about strange sounds being associated with auroras and that the brighter the aurora, the stronger the sound. For years this correlation was dismissed by the scientific community as nothing but 'folklore' until 2016 when a team of Western scientists found that the sound was being made by an 'overload' of electrical particles in the lower atmosphere discharging.

Chapter 3 is titled The Moon, and in it we read that Indigenous peoples from Alaska to Zimbabwe use the rings around the Sun and the Moon as a weather forecasting tool. A ring around the moon is a sure sign of bad weather, of wind and rain.

Chapter 4 which is titled The Wandering Stars deals with the planets. The word planet is derived from the Greek word *planetes* which means 'wanderer'. The difference between planets and the rest of the stars was recognised by Indigenous peoples all over the world, and their properties "are important in understanding the role they play in culture and how they are conceptualised."

The subsequent chapters of this fascinating read examine different particular astronomical aspects, with titles such as The Twinkling Stars, The Variable Stars and the Falling Stars.

Chapter 9 is titled The Navigational Stars, and explains how stars have been used by Indigenous peoples to navigate over long distances over land and sea and that this requires knowledge of positional astronomy as well as mathematics. Most of us are familiar with the way that the Māori travelled over the sea to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Was this just sheer luck? It was not. We read:

"The Pacific Islanders' traditional systems of science and knowledge about the stars, for instance, enabled them to navigate sea-voyaging craft across the vast Pacific."

Australia's Astronomer-at-Large, Professor Fred Watson AM had this to say about The First Astronomers:

"The thorough exploration of Indigenous Astronomy reveals a deep understanding of celestial events and what they can tell us – a brilliant and inspiring read."

I certainly agree with his assessment. This book is a very accessible and enlightening read which I highly recommend.

John Watts.



ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

"In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future." Uluru Statement from the Heart, May 2017.

By voting YES in the upcoming referendum, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will finally have a say on the policies and laws that affect their communities.

Together, Yes invites people from all walks of life to gather in small group discussions and engage in how a Voice to parliament can make a difference.

For 235 years, since first white settlement, policies affecting Indigenous peoples have not worked effectively. It is time to give a Voice a chance to work and lead us towards a better future together!

It is a great time to collect the past and invest for your future. Invest in history, invest in knowledge and invest in your own enjoyment. Enjoy a great hobby that will last you a lifetime. Now is a great time to collect in the antiques line as prices are not strong and bargains are there to be had. Like all things, antiques have their troughs and peaks but, they always come back into vogue. Now is the time to get out there and make finds!

Remember to visit our local haunts – Barry at "Isadora's" in Victoria Street Taree, Clancy's Emporium in High St Taree, Col in Commerce St Taree just up from Taree West Newsagents, Sue at Delinquent Funk in Isabella Street in Wingham also Rex at Antiques and Old Wares 12 Isabella Street in Wingham – next to the Newsagents. If you wish to go further afield The Coliseum Antiques at 118 Maitland Road in Mayfield (Newcastle) has around thirty different dealers, each with their own selling space.

Remember too, our wonderful Regional Museum, in Bent Street Wingham. It survives through donations and people coming through the door. Please visit as you will enjoy the great experience of one of the best Regional Museums.

The story of Australia's European settlement and the pioneering era



An interesting bell collection

cannot be known in fullness until one understands the significance of the humble animal bell. These tools allowed the settlers and drovers to manage their herds and flocks in a land of open plains and unfenced pasture. For almost two centuries, the clunk, tinkle and knock of these bells connected man and beast in a bond of interdependence. The Condamine bells, one of Australia's most famous, was made by A.H. Ormand. We know this because it bears the maker's stamp. There were a number of prominent makers who marked their bells, however a vast number of other unmarked bells also exist. These are known as 'cleanskins'. Bells of this type were made by hundreds of individual blacksmiths across the country and they vary in quality from rudimentary to very good. The bell era in Australia started with European colonisation and continued through the 1800s until the early 1900s.

Some bells still remain in use today, but generally as novelty items or hanging from the belly of a rodeo bull. Prominent Bell makers **Samuel Williams Jones** was accredited with making the first Condamine bell. His design was not completely original as

his inspiration was from what he had seen in his youth in Britain. However, his bell was generally larger and more suitable for the Australian conditions, and became very popular with drovers and cattlemen. **Christy Andersen, Fred Andersen, Alf Ormand, James Ormand and Alf Ormand Jnr, Thomas Beckett** continued in the tradition of the Condamine shape, whereas southern bell makers like **August Menneke and Anthony Mongan** preferred Pot and Kentucky-shaped bells. All makers listed here made iron bells and used identifying stamps on their products. Bell shapes and sizes varied greatly, with the Condamine only one type. **Kentucky, Texas, Pot, Cluck, and Canister** were other iron bells that are common in collections today. Then there were the

brass bells and these came in many shapes and sizes also. Most of these were imported from England where the foundry industry was well developed in the 1800s.

Some bells were known as "one milers" or "two milers" because on a still night that is the distance drovers could hear movement in their cattle.

Bells of all shapes and sizes make a great collection.

If you have interesting antique items you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals and/or sales. I am still collecting and I love the history and stories of old and unique items (from old shed goods to household gems). Come and say hello at our shop at 12 Isabella Street in Wingham, right next to the Newsagent.

Take care and stay safe. Happy collecting!

Remember your vote is important. Whatever the outcome, we need to live together with respect and keeping our eyes on making Australia the best place, in the world, for us all to live!

Phone Rex – 0427 880 546

MIND OF THE NATION

UNIVERSITIES IN AUSTRALIAN LIFE



Michael Wesley

La Trobe University Press 2023

RRP \$34.99

More Australians than ever now have university degrees, or are attending university, and yet we still regularly hear of criticisms of them. Some well-informed, but many not. It does seem that quite a few Australians, even those who have attended a university, have mixed, and perhaps contradictory, feelings about them.

In this well written, eloquent, and easy to understand book, Michael Wesley analyses what is behind this attitude, and he is more than well qualified to comment, being deputy vice-chancellor global, culture and engagement at the University of Melbourne. He was formerly dean of ANU's College of Asia and the Pacific.

The introduction explains:

"This book examines the complex, ambiguous, ambivalent place that universities, as increasingly consequential institutions, occupy in Australian life. It focuses on six aspects of Australia's universities where they sit at tension points of conflicting expectations and pressure in contemporary Australia. What they all reveal are significant gulfs between what Australian society sees, and what universities want society to understand about them, between what higher education is trying to achieve and what role universities should be playing in contemporary society."

And:

"This book is intended to provoke and open up a broader discussion about the role of universities in Australian life."

The chapters cover six topics related to universities, variously titled: Money; Value; Loyalty; Integrity; Ambition and Privilege. The concluding chapter is titled Transformation.

One interesting, and to me, surprising fact, is the huge size of Australian universities relative to universities in some other western countries. Australian universities have an average of 35,579 students, whereas the average in the United Kingdom is 13,740, and 4,500 in the United States. Wesley discusses

'Michael Wesley's thought-provoking book shows how rising and conflicting expectations of universities create controversies that will not go away.'
—Andrew Norton, professor of higher education policy, ANU

MIND of the NATION



Universities in Australian Life

MICHAEL
WESLEY

what impact this has on people's perceptions of universities. The growth has been phenomenal. In 1964 there were 76,188 enrolled university students. By 2020 that number had grown to 1,622,867.

In the chapter dealing with money, Wesley explains that the first Australian universities founded in the 19th and early 20th centuries were all public institutions funded by government. The chapter then looks at the way that funding models have changed over the years to the present time where there is such heavy reliance on fees from overseas students. It also considers how this

change has impacted upon public perceptions, with some people suggesting that universities have "sold out", and that money has perverted the very idea of what a university should be. Wesley suggests that:

"The choices, tensions, compromises and passions surrounding university financing in Australia reveal an important facet of this society's ambivalence towards them."

In chapter 2 the author examines the question of how much universities are valued by the community commenting that:

"In common with other English-speaking countries, Australia

has inherited a long tradition of scepticism about academics and universities. 'Academic' is widely used as an antonym for practical, relevant or important, and is often a trigger for derision or dismissal."

The chapter explains that universities in Australia inherited a tradition of self-government, but that in the 1980's they came under significant pressure to reform their structures and management practices. Wesley looks at how this was done and the consequences.

The chapter titled Loyalty looks at the huge growth of full fee-paying overseas university students and the implications of this growth. By 2019 Australia had captured over 18% of the international student market.

There have also been huge pressures on academics to internationalise. We read:

"The pressure to publish and collaborate internationally, and the lure of international conferences and research, have steadily dragged academics' gaze beyond Australia's borders."

Wesley notes that the rise in the numbers of international students has been accompanied by a rise in community anxiety about such things as whether they are taking the place of Australian students, and "that international students erode the academic standards of Australia's universities and compromise the experience of local students."

In chapter 4 the author turns to a thorny issue that often generates heated debate between those with differing world views:

"When a controversial event on a campus hits the headlines, two tribes take to the field, each having honed now familiar interpretations and culprits and sharpened accusations against the other side. What has now become widely referred to as 'culture wars' is animated by two incompatible views of the broad social purpose of the university in modern Australia: one which sees the university as the last bastion of traditional Western values; and the other that

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believes the university is a vehicle for progressive social change.”

Fascinating stuff indeed.

In the chapter headed ‘Ambition’, Wesley discusses the way that Australia’s universities have adapted, and are further adapting to “the beginning of a global transformation that is characterised by the convergence of digital, physical and biological technologies...”. It is posited that there is “considerable evidence that universities’ framing of their central role in Australia’s knowledge economy has gained traction.” One example provided is the contribution made by university expertise to Australia’s response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Chapter 6 deals with the important question of social equity in relation to universities, suggesting that for “much of their first century, Australian universities were unashamedly places of social privilege.” However, despite the huge growth in the numbers of Australians being able to attend university, significant inequities remain. Wesley well illustrates one practical outcome of such inequities with the tale of students Phoebe and Connor. Phoebe, from a background of wealth and privilege and Connor from a more working-class background, who struggles to fit his studies around work and other commitments.

In the final chapter Wesley summarises the various issues and challenges facing Australian universities and their role in Australia, and how difficult it seems to be to have a non-acrimonious discussion, but that such a discussion is necessary. In the final chapter we read:

“It will also be difficult to have a discussion about the intrinsic, non-remunerative elements of universities amid the current obsession with the utilitarian benefits of higher education. Then there is the low political salience of universities in Australia: what politician is going to be prepared to sacrifice time and political capital on rethinking higher education in Australia when the electoral stakes are so low? Consequently, it is the universities that much lead the discussion. They must overcome their collective action problem and adopt the perspective of the higher education sector as a whole, rather than from interests of their own institutions. This will be the ultimate test of whether they really are Australia’s intellectual leaders – the mind of the nation.”

This is a well-timed, thought provoking and important book that deserves a wide readership stretching well beyond the university community. I hope it does provoke a “broader discussion about the role of universities in Australian life.”

And let’s hope that the discussion is courteous, respectful and civil.

Highly recommended.

John Watts

AZALEAS FOR AN ABUNDANCE OF COLOUR



When it comes to flowering shrubs, it’s difficult not to be stopped in your tracks by the ravishing beauty of an Azalea in full bloom.



Azaleas are one of the most striking of flowering shrubs for any garden, yet have attracted a rather unfair reputation of being “fussy” or difficult to grow.

With drought conditions experienced over recent times in many parts of Australia, azaleas have been somewhat overlooked as being able to withstand difficult times. Yet with a small amount of understanding, azaleas can become an amazing, colourful and drought hardy addition to any garden, patio or courtyard space.

Most modern hybrid azaleas relish a partly shaded site in the garden while some older varieties simply prefer the full sun for strong flowering. Yet they all have only a few common requests that should be addressed.

SOILS FOR AZALEAS

Although all plants will be happiest in a neutral pH zone (6-7), all azaleas enjoy a compost enriched soil that is slightly on the acidic side of the pH scale (5.5).

If you have a pH test kit, it’s essential that you take a reading to indicate if the location will be appropriate. Be guided by some of the other plants in your garden as they can be indicators if the

location is suitable. For instance, if you have roses, rosemary, olives or lavender doing well in your chosen area, then most likely the pH will be a little more alkaline and azaleas may struggle to become fully established. Species such as camellias, gardenias, ixora, brunsfelsia, magnolia and tibouchina will naturally indicate acid soil conditions and the chances of azaleas doing well amongst them are far greater. Nevertheless, if you’re unsure, pop into Wingham Nursery with a small soil sample and we can test the pH for you.

ESTABLISHMENT

Azaleas have quite slow-growing, fine root systems and can often take several months to become fully established in the garden. While young, they are not strong competitors with neighbouring trees and shrubs for soil moisture and are easily robbed of this vital resource. To help with this, consider using (hydrated) water storing crystals at the base of the planting hole. Deep watering should be done at least three times a week during warm weather and once a week during the winter months. The addition of a Liquid Seaweed at time of planting and again at three-week intervals will encourage strong root development and alleviate transplant shock.

To lock in moisture, especially with high summer temperatures, always remember to mulch the surface of the soil. Tea tree or red cypress mulch looks very much at home with azaleas and all woodland shrubs, but fine-grade sugar cane will also suffice. Allowing a generous establishment period for azaleas will undoubtedly be the most important step anyone can take in ensuring strong, healthy

plants able to withstand drought periods when older.

AZALEA VARIETIES AND CORRECT POSITIONS FOR PLANTING

Varieties such as (azalea indica) cv: Alba Magnifica (white), cv: Exquisite (mid pink), cv: Magnifica (magenta), and cv: Alphonse Anderson (light pink) are total sun-lovers and enjoy being out in the open, exposed to full sun and climatic conditions. These forms are most commonly seen in older style gardens and can reach substantial heights of over two metres in the garden and should be granted the space to fully develop. If you take the time to place your nose close to the blooms, you will also be surprised at the delightful perfume that they exude which is something that most garden azaleas are not associated with. If space is limited, these taller “sun tolerant” forms can be easily pruned to shape to fit in with most spaces.

Some strong cultivars such as cv: Red wings and the miniature flowering Kurume forms such as cv: Kirin (light pink), are happy in both sun and shaded sites. The Kurume forms are striking by their prolific flowering of smaller size that seem to completely smother the entire plant. Red wings carries the added advantage of spot flowering throughout the entire year and is highly regarded as one of the very best flowering azaleas in most countries.

Without a doubt, it’s high time that all azaleas deserve a strong revival and allow them to bring vibrant colour, texture and most importantly, longevity to all of our gardens.

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Azalea Alba Magnifica

AZALEAS IN POTS

If space is at a premium in your garden, then consider getting the most from your azaleas by growing them in pots. Searles Azalea & Camellia Mix is a perfect choice for all potted azaleas as it is specifically designed for all acid loving plants. Make sure to choose a glazed pot as your choice as this will reduce moisture loss from the sides and also reduce lime, (which is alkaline) from seeping into the mix over time.

Azalea Pests & Diseases

Contrary to popular belief, azaleas aren't plagued by a long list of concerns that other plant species such as roses seem to attract.

The biggest and most common problems that azaleas seem to battle are from sap-sucking insects such as mites and azalea lacewing. They are easily spotted when the foliage turns from bright green to a mottled, silver patterning on the leaves. If left uncontrolled for several years they can certainly weaken the plant and prevent them from producing enough chlorophyll to naturally sustain their health and growth. Both can easily be controlled by using Searles Conguard and Wettable Sulphur when the plants aren't in flower.

The major fungal problem associ-

ated with azaleas is petal blight. This is primarily caused by excessive moisture in and around the plants while in full bloom. This is evident from the rapid browning of the flowers turning them slimy and limp while remaining on the plant and will affect the entire plant and any (possible) neighbouring azaleas. The sun tolerant forms (as mentioned earlier) seem to have much greater tolerance to this disease and are rarely affected. Spraying a trusted fungicide such as Searles Mancozeb Plus in the weeks prior to flowering will control this outbreak. Removal of all fallen foliage and flowers around the base of the plant is also highly advised as the spores of the fungal problem can remain viable in the surrounding soil. Petal blight is mostly witnessed in regions with high rainfall levels during the spring flowering season.

We have a huge selection of azaleas at the nursery, all of which we grow on site; so you know that they'll thrive in the local area. Best of all, they're loaded with flower to help with your choice, or simply admire on a stroll through the nursery.

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24/7
care

Fair
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A FAIR SHARE FOR REGIONAL NEWS

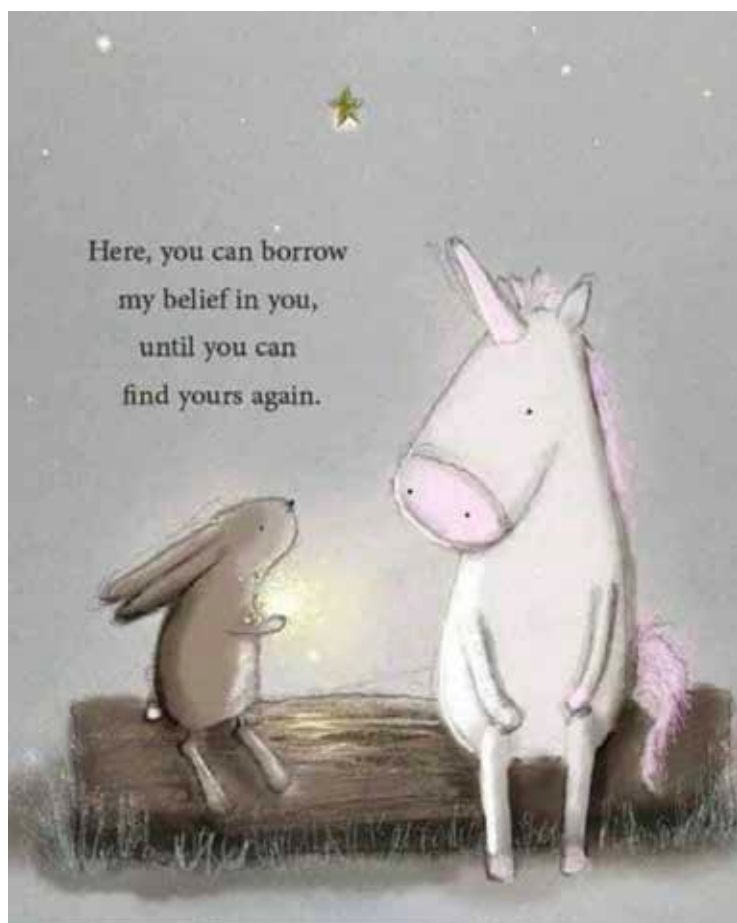
Regional Australian communities deserve local news as much as our big cities do.

Local independent newspapers still connect more than 80% of the country, but currently the commonwealth government invests close to 0% of its advertising budget here.

The federal government could help secure the future of regional news with zero extra cost by simply allocating a fairer share of government advertising to local and regional news services.

One page per week of important government information in regional newspapers would be a great start. This shouldn't be controversial. It's a simple and fair solution for the future of regional news.





ADVERTISE WITH US!

You may have noticed that MidCoast Council advertise heavily with all local media... except the most read newspaper in the area – this one!

According to a recent survey by the MidCoast Council The Manning Community News is the Number 1 most read newspaper in the electorate!

Email editor@manningcommunitynews.com for rates.

Pass this paper to a friend or neighbour before recycling

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.

editor@manningcommunitynews.com



This photo, from the collection of the late Ken Magor, shows an Eggins bus in Taree, showing a Wingham destination. www.phototimetunnel.com

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

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