

# The Manning Community News

FEBRUARY 2024

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

## HOW GOOD IS YOUR SUNSCREEN?

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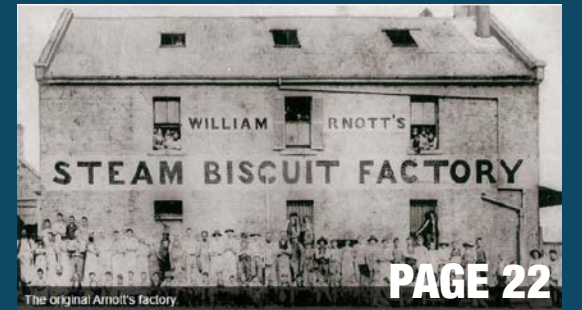


## USA 2024 CHAOS

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Plus *Book Review*  
**THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH**  
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## The original Arnotts biscuit factory in Morpeth



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# OLD BAR'S TURN TO FIGHT DEVELOPMENT ON FLOOD PRONE LAND

The vast gated Old Bar Resort development approved years ago along the coast south of the Meridian at the end of Lewis Street has now been purchased by Palm Lake Resorts Holdings Pty Ltd. (a company with a sophisticated ownership structure) based in Queensland but has almost 40 developments in Australia.

**T**he historic resort will now be vast, with homes stretching from beachfront, over the wetland and inland all the way to Bluehaven with Palm Lake Works P/L as the developer.

This project is unique, different from the many new developments springing up around Old Bar because it is beachfront and marshy. This will be up-market resort living for a privileged few.

Four major precincts have been re-zoned to accommodate the future growth of Old Bar. See (<https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Development/Plans-policies-and-controls/Future-planning/Areas-for-future-development>). Hundreds of new homes are planned for new and existing developments. While additions are currently being made to our sewage sys-

## DAISY COMES HOME!

Editor Di Morrissey (right) bought Daisy the cow to support the Taree Lions Club. Artist Pauline Roods from Port Macquarie (left) brought Daisy to life in her quilt of many colours. As you may have noticed Lions have quite a herd around the Midnorth coast now. Just a pity Daisy was "bred" in China. (We can't make a plastic cow in Australia ????)



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tems, what about other essential infrastructure, such as the hospital? The hospital is already overcrowded and the influx of over 55s will overburden the emergency services as medical practices are already closed to current residents. As the new over-55 owners age and their needs become serious, access to local medical services will be strained.

The new over 55s are not likely to bring much business to the local community. What will be their net contribution?

The PLW development has a significant, vital concern in addition to those of other new developments. The PLW will provide a select few with ocean-front views. These private luxury homes will be on land that should be accessible to everyone.

It is unwise that PLW be allowed to build near the beach considering its original grandfathered approval had no inkling of the current regional growth plan.

Several safety and environmental issues include the safety of children attending Old Bar primary school and senior activities at the VFW Memorial Hall. Rose Street has the only stairway beach access in Old Bar other than Main Beach and the neighborhood enjoys numerous walkers along the beach.

Allowing PLW to move heavy

construction machinery and eventual development traffic through the tiny, pedestrian Rose Street neighbourhood could invariably result in personal injury and an accident. It is litigation and lawsuits just waiting to happen.

Palm Lake Works has three times assured the Rose Street Neighborhood Group that their intention is to make construction access via Forest Lane, and that PLW is currently in the process of preparing such an application to MidCoast Council.

However, Council's intention is not clear. Council at the 13 Dec. meeting added a condition so that heavy vehicle movement during after-hours care at the school is restricted, except for heavy vehicles operating within Lewis and George Streets involved in public infrastructure works.

Council's response to this expanding community safety issue is, "They are public streets." And, Cr Tickle's blunt response to our concern was, "Traffic issues will be uncomfortable for those living there."

When the next PLW Modifications come before Council, it is important that concerned and affected residents of the Old Bar community attend the meetings and submit comments. Council notes the ratio of positive vs negative submissions to their projects.

Old Bar residents want to work together with Council, PLW and all our community for the best possible outcomes to this inherited "zombie" development. (The term refers to approvals made by past councils no matter how long ago. Approvals are passed along when property is sold, even if conditions such as fire, flood, erosions, etc. have changed.) Many of these historical developments would not be approved under today's requirements.

Only residents in an extremely limited immediate vicinity to the proposed development are given notices by Council. To learn in advance what is being considered and to be able to give input, the rest of us must keep an alert eye on the page: Have Your Say (<https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/>).

The most recent PLW modifications approved by Council are available on MCC's website. See Council Minutes Agenda and Attachments for 13 December 2023, 15.3 Changes to the Configuration of Manufactured Housing Estate—Lewis Street, Old Bar (MOD2022/0253) (<https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Your-Council/Council-meetings/Agendas-and-minutes>).

In addition to safety, coastal erosion is a major issue.

By 18 February 2024 we

must give our input into Council plans for the coast from south Crowdy Head to Wallabi Point (Have Your Say (<https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/>)).

Agenda item 15.10 discussed the Old Bar-Manning Point Coastal Erosion Hazard Mapping Update Report. The mapping ran simulations over various time periods and uses probabilistic, non-Bayesian statistical procedures that "smooth" information from Wallabi to Old Bar Beach.

The "MCC Items of Interest" summarises the Report that North of Wallabi Point to approximately south of Old Bar Public School will continue to recede and be vulnerable to coastal erosion with significant impacts on private properties, Council assets and essential services like telecommunications, water and sewer.

We would like to be assured that the Hazard Mapping numerical model specifically includes points along the proposed development area. An important issue is that earlier conservation reports had forecast heavy erosion due to previous Rutile Sand Mining specifically in the proposed PLW development area.

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# HOW GOOD IS YOUR SUNSCREEN?

Although times are a'changing, tanned skin still symbolises health, activity, and dynamism – despite warnings from our Australian of the year – pioneering melanoma researchers Professor Richard Scolyer and Professor Georgina Long – people still sit in the sun to tan, relying on sunscreen for protection.

**B**ut how good is your sunscreen? Are you protected from skin cancer?

Sunscreens have been around for over 80+ years with the current SPF or sun protection factor being introduced in the 1970's. It is estimated that the market is worth 14 billion dollars globally and is set to increase on the back of global warming between 2020-2030.

## NO IMPACT

The sun emits three distinct type of rays UVA, UVB, UVC. UVC rays are unable to penetrate the ozone layer, so they have no impact on our skin. UVB can penetrate the basal layers of the epidermis and can damage the DNA resulting in the reddening or burning of the skin.

UVA rays are nasty. They typically range from 320-400 nanometers of solar radiation and penetrate deeper into the skin to cause damage to the DNA through free radicals. They are the rays that are responsible for causing skin cancer. They do not burn the skin; You can't see the damage that they cause.

Australia has the worst instance of skin cancer in the world primarily due to our love of the outdoor lifestyle. But our sunlight yields a darkness that is invisible to the eye. Once the skin is damaged it no longer protects it from the sun in the same way

There has never been a more important time to ensure that you are protected from the harmful sun's rays.

## HOW IS SUNSCREEN TESTED?

For a sunscreen to have an SPF



Smart girls cover up at the beach!

50+ rating the sunscreen must provide 33% protection against UVA rays and 66% against UVB rays. They test is usually conducted on people who have differing skin types.

Sunscreen is applied to the skin at a rate of 2 grams per square centimeter and then a measurement

is taken identifying the perceptible reddening of the skin or MED (Minimal Erythema Dose) up to 24 hours after the exposure to the UV rays.

## WATER RESISTANT

It is interesting to note that your 50+ sunscreen only offer

16.5% protection against the harmful UV rays and to get this level of protection you would need to apply it at a rate of 2 grams per square centimeter.

For testing UVA rays manufacturers use an ISO test conducted in a test tube. UVB rays are tested on people. For a water-resistant claim, the same test is conducted however subjects are placed in a spa anywhere from 40 minutes to 4 hours and then are tested.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Sunscreen has two primary methods of protecting your skin. The first being chemical protection or organic protection which uses ingredients like octylmethoxycinnamate to absorb UV light. Do not be fooled by the classification of Organic as whenever you see the letters "eth" it implies a synthetic component of manufacture.

The second classification is regarded as physical protection or inorganic, using ingredients to reflect light such as Zinc Oxide or titanium oxide. Interestingly these ingredients are used in Natural or Organic sunscreen products but are not at all natural or organic. They go through synthetic processing, but regulators regard them as natural.

To formulate a sunscreen usually two ingredients are used in synergy - one that has efficacy data to inhibit exposure of UVB rays, the other, UVA.

In Australia a product that has a SPF of 15 or lower or the SPF claim is the secondary function of the product, it is classed as a cosmetic.

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But if the SPF is over 15 or the SPF function is primary, then they are classed as a drug and have for more legislative requirements from the manufacturer to be compliant.

**HOW NATURAL IS SUNSCREEN?**

Most consumers want a sustainable product with no impact on the environment. However, using a completely natural or organic ingredient can significantly impact the performance of a product.

By definition most sunscreen products utilise synthetic ingredients or natural ingredients that have gone through synthetic processing.

**IS SUNSCREEN DAMAGING OUR REEFS?**

It is true that there are some significant concerns about the impact of certain sunscreens on marine organisms. This concern comes from the active ingredients used in sunscreen which have been identified in marine eco systems.

A report conducted in 2022 from (the) nationalacademies.org web page identifies that more research is needed to identify the impact of the ingredients used. However, there are some countries around the world that have identified certain ingredients: -benzophenone-3, ethylhexyl methoxycinnamate, octocrylene, methylbenzylidene camphor as potentially impacting marine ecosystems.

**NOT CORRECT**

Some companies are claiming that they do not have these potentially impactful ingredients in their products, so they are safe for marine environments. This is not completely correct. These companies are still subject to marine toxicology tests and water resistance testing.

For a sunscreen to be deemed safe for our reefs it must be water resistant for 4 hours with both In Vitro and In Vivo efficacy data to substantiate the claims made by the manufacturer. It must have a marine toxicity test conducted by the relevant authority including micro algae Cell division, Sea Urchin Larval development, and Fish Larvae development.

**WHAT ARE NANO PARTICLES? ARE THEY HARMFUL?**

The primary ingredients in a sunscreen that protect us from UVA/UVB rays by either reflecting or adsorbing light are called zinc oxide and titanium dioxide which have been used for over 30 years. The only issue with these ingredients is that they mass together and causing white ghosting on the skin. To counteract this issue, they

reduce the particle size to roughly 1-100 microns which removes the ghosting when applied to the skin and for the most part is the most effective protective aspect against the harmful UVA/UVB rays.

When these ingredients are ground down to this size, they produce chemical properties that react to light and are catalysts in the production of reactive oxygen species (ROS). This means they have the ability to turn on and turn off biological markers in animals, including dangerous genetic mutations.

To stop this manufacturers' coat the nano particles with aluminum hydroxide which has been highly effective in reducing the ROS. But when these particles come into contact with chlorine (such as sea water) these nanoparticles in the presence of sunlight can produce free radicals which may lead to cancer.

**DIRECT CAUSE**

It has also been discussed that certain types of nanoparticles used in sunscreens are also used in some exterior paints which has proven to be the direct cause of rapid deterioration of painted surfaces on steel roofing.

More study is required to make an absolute determination on the potential of nano particles leading to further health concerns.

**THE BEST WAY TO BE PROTECTED FROM THE SUN**

Sunscreens do work, however to get the advertised performance from these products you need to apply them extremely thickly (2 grams of product per square centimeter) though I have never seen anyone using a sunscreen this diligently.

They do provide significant benefit in protecting us against the harmful effects of the sun but do not offer the level of safety that we think. Many consumers assume applying a 50+ sunscreen makes them safe from sun damage.

But if you're out in the sun best advice is to use an SPF 50+ "reef safe" sunscreen and apply it every two hours plus wear a hat and a T-shirt. You can buy full cover protective swimsuits for little children but don't forget a hat!

We have the worst instance of skin cancer in the world. It can go undiagnosed for years often until it is too late. While there a brilliant skin cancer specialists and surgeons, the safest prescription is to slather on the best sunscreen regularly during the day and cover up.

**Jason Tylor**  
**OCEANNA Australia**

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**THE LAND WILL GO UNDERWATER**

**Councillor Peter Epov spoke warningly about the findings;** *"This Report has very serious implications. It gives scientific evidence that significant portions of our coastline will be inundated with water by the year 2100. Grave consequences will happen before that time, within 20 or 30 years; damage is happening now."*

**Regarding this Palm Lake development, Epov spoke emphatically saying it is reprehensible and hypocritical to knowingly allow people to build and sell in an area that will be covered with water by 2100 or most likely much sooner.**

**A lawsuit by another Council (Ballina) against Palm Lake Works called out many of the same safety, flooding and ecology issues; and to which PLW had to submit numerous (5) re-Applications, none approved by Ballina Council (Palm Lake Works Pty Ltd v Ballina Shire Council [2019] NSWLEC 1479 (<https://jade.io/article/670168>)).**

Palm Lake Resort Pty Ltd only owns the land. When there is inevitable inundation, it will be the responsibility of the house owner to remove his/ her house. To where? At what cost? Moving the 'relocatable' homes will have nothing to do with PLW. It is not a responsibility for Council either, apparently.

Class actions are underway in Sydney's Northwest against Councils that allowed development in historically known flood prone land. The marshy land of the proposed PLW development is a natural absorption region for the entire area. Paving it over could very plausibly lead to overflowing of Racecourse Creek and nearby homes. **We encourage Council to work with PLW, the State Government, environmental groups and the local community.**

It is time to consider environmental impacts noted in other PLW developments, as in the lawsuit cited above: the stormwater discharges from the site; net deterioration of estuarine water quality; insufficient measures to protect ecological integrity of the wetland, including whether the extent of the saltmarsh community on the site has been correctly or under-assessed; and post-development impacts to downstream ecology and groundwater. It must be clarified whether PLW Modification Applications have satisfactorily addressed these development safety, ecological or watershed issues.

The land on which PLW plan to build is now rich in plants, insects and birds. Many nights we see wal-

labies, echidnas, bandicoots, brush turkeys and other wildlife visit the front and back yards of Lewis and George Street residents. **The area is home to a wide variety of birds, some of which may be on the International Migratory Bird Route. PLW must be required to provide wildlife corridors along the ocean (Council land), along both sides of Racecourse Creek or other areas of significant biodiversity concern.** Pretty but isolated pockets of trees on a golf course are not the same as a wildlife corridor.

The PLW plan includes a private golf course, only for PLW residents (cane toads love golf courses and are steadily moving south in NSW). Artificial turf laid over sand dunes is injurious to human and animal health. The pesticides and fertilisers keeping a golf course green will be detrimental not only to land animals, birds and plants, but to surfers and ocean life. Street/garage lighting is also a pollutant to bats and birds and other animals.

**Council must check that the latest, most current environmental requirements are met. The PLW plan includes no discussion of cane toads.**

**We must do more than shed a tear for our fragile, doomed sand dunes. We must keep an eye on future PLW Modification Applications (Have Your Say <https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/>) to ensure that PLW applies for proper ocean access across Crown Land to the beach.**

**While Council has responsibility to verify that all developments comply with the Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) which requires homes to be built to be more energy and water efficient, we encourage Council to do more. In addition to the mandatory water tanks, Council could require solar panels and perhaps even community energy storage batteries, for example.**

**Our Council can be a leader in showing the rest of Australia and the world how we conserve biodiversity, protect ecosystems, and reverse pollution. We say we are committed to principles such as Save the wetlands! Protect the animals! Nobody wants to come to Australia to see what they could have seen in a zoo at home.**

Let's get our neighbors together and be a physical presence at the Council Meetings! We voted for them. We can make a difference in their service to us and future residents.

**Frances Rosamond, Old Bar**

# MIDCOAST COUNCIL 2024 – IS THERE ANY HOPE?

Seems these days that many have a complaint about MidCoast Council.

(ie –) Here are some so far:

\*communicating with Council

\*failing to fix roads or potholes, grading, lack of roadside maintenance and verge trimming,

\*the length of time to get anything approved,

\*significant delays in the commissioning of grant funded community projects (some delayed as much as five years, resulting not only in cost blowouts, but the need to re-design those projects),

\*the Christmas tree disaster,

\*inaccurate water meter readings,

\*spiralling council rates, water and sewer rates,

\*furious complaints about zombie DAs,

\*over development, especially destruction of habitat.

**I**n January 2023, the NSW Ombudsman released Council complaint statistics (2021/22) and MidCoast Council was listed in the top 5 most complained Councils in NSW.

In the second half of 2023 MCC announced that they were undertaking a 'Community Satisfaction Survey', which has apparently been completed and presented to Councilors but not published, nor made available to the people who pay the rates!

## FAILURE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There are also complaints from knowledgeable businesspeople about the lack of tangible support from Council for economic development, with Council introducing superficial or cosmetic projects, which sound great but are just public relations exercises which in practice deliver very little substantive benefit to the business community.

All this when the commercial sector of the region is struggling judging by the number of empty shops in some local towns.

## RATES

Council Rates continue to spiral with the current Rate Peg for this year being a 3.9% increase and in December our Mayor welcomed the early announcement of the 2024/25 rate peg of 4.5% - 5.5% which will hit residents in 6 months time.

Water and Sewer rates are also tipped to substantively increase in the next Council Budget to cover the deficit.

These continual rate increases will clearly impact on the budgets of many thousands of residents, particularly families and retirees in what is essentially a low socio-economic region, reducing spending on essentials goods with very little left for discretionary expenditure.

## MATCHING PRODUCTIVITY AND

## SERVICE LEVELS?

While Council's rates and charges to residents and ratepayers continually spiral one has to wonder if these rate increases are matched with improved service and or productivity. Anyone attending the recent roadshow of hurried 'Community Conversations' (which were generally poorly attended unless there was a burning issue such as Council's proposal to close down a number of community swimming pools) the message seems Council could be preparing to introduce an SRV (Special Rate Variation). Judging by the deficit in the Council's General Fund, Council could increase rates of 50% over a period of three to four years to cover the haemorrhaging General Fund, unless the serious systemic root causes are addressed and resolved. Given the information presented at the Council meeting in December, one could assume that very little

work on Financial Sustainability will be completed before the next Council Elections in September.

## YET ANOTHER CONSULTANT

Council recently commissioned yet another consultant last September 2023 to deliver a Report on 'Financial Sustainability', to tell them what most people already know, ie - stop wasting money needlessly; manage the business better and more efficiently; reduce the escalating administration costs, manage their human resources better, stop feuding with the unions over matters which not only embarrass the Council across the entire state which results in deep divisions and significant loss of staff morale. Is it too hard to start delivering programs and projects as promised in the Annual Operational Plans, on time and budget?

Instead of looking to continually

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tax the community more, or cut or reduce services, the Council needs to focus on the single largest cost area -Administration. Council's income has been steadily increasing over the past 6 years, but it seems there has been no focus on reviewing and reducing the expenditure efficiently.

Council's overall income has been heavily dependent on Government Grants to prop up its cash flow, which can't continue indefinitely.

## AMALGAMATION A DISASTER

The Council's financial sustainability has been at issue ever since the amalgamation. In 2017 after the new Council was elected, the departing Administrator, John Turner, submitted a Report to Council which cautioned that there were serious financial challenges to the tune of \$15 million which needed to be addressed. Despite this, the newly elected Council plunged ahead into the abyss of moving HQ into the costly revamped Master's building in Taree resulting in a needless three year distraction from addressing the root financial sustainability issues at that time.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In 2022 the Council's Administration recommended upgrading the Council's computer system. This \$25 million 'Digital Transformation' to make the existing 2017 system work has cost in excess of \$10M as of last year, but heck, who's counting.

## PLAN OF ACTION

In May 2022, Council resolved for a 'Plan of Action' to "return the General Fund to a surplus position within a 4 to 6 year timeframe". That deadline was not met and no 'Plan of Action' was produced, so at the 28 September 2022 Council Meeting a 'Resolution' was adopted to push back the deadline for the 'Financial Sustainability Strategy'.

Key clauses in that Resolution were:

*"That Council note the proposal to develop a Financial Sustainability Strategy with the aim of the Strategy being incorporated into Council's*

*Integrated Planning and Reporting documents for 2023-2024."*

*"That further workshops with Council be scheduled as required to enable the Strategy to be finalised in early 2023 and exhibited for community comment in conjunction with 2023-2024 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents".*

This deadline was also not met and the Strategy was not produced nor exhibited with the 2023-2024 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. No public statements were made.

However, in April 2023, squirmed within the Council's 2023/24 Operational Plan that was placed on public exhibition was a reference under "Major Project Activities" to an item 4.1 - "Develop a MidCoast Financial Sustainability Strategy Council for Council's Consideration" to be presented to Council December 2023.

## STILL NO PLAN

At the 13 December 2023 Council Meeting a Report by the General Manager indicated that the Report from the Consultants, AEC Group, had been submitted to Council, and that the Action Plan and AEC's Financial Sustainability Report will be reported formally to Council in the first Quarter of 2024. (Would a private business operate at this snail pace? Just asking.)

**Council's Net Operating Result before Capital income has now grown and stands at minus \$50,132,764 after 5 months into the financial year, from the minus \$45.5 million in the original Projected Budget.**

## DELAYS AND PUSHBACKS

Also revealed at the December Council Meeting was the news that the 'Service Review' has again been pushed back till after the next Council Election in September with the explanation that it is not required to be completed by the NSW Office of Local Government FAQ sheet issued to Councils, ignoring the fact this was work previously identified, and essential in order to provide accurate data to inform the Financial Sustainability Plan.

The Asset Management Working Group Program Plan, which is

taking years to produce, has also now been pushed back to 30 June 2024. The Roads Strategy has also been delayed. It may be reported to Council in February and placed on Public Exhibition for adoption in the middle of 2024.

## DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

In 2018, the then Council approved a proposal to change the structure from 5 divisions to 3, clearly that has failed and is perhaps one of the root causes, in the lack of performance, the cost blowouts and the delays in delivering projects. Each year that Council fails to complete promised budgeted projects (currently around \$40 million) they are then transferred to the following year and /or eventually dropped.

One only needs to read Council's Monthly Budget Review Reports to see how many promised projects are deferred, or abandoned, but the administration costs remain the same. How can the community have any confidence in Council's planning processes and budgets, when so many projects are not delivered within the allocated time?

A review of the Reports on the past 3 years of Annual Operational Plans shows Council regularly fails to achieve 75% of promised programs and projects, but the administration costs are still incurred.

## GREATER FOCUS

Clearly there are serious productivity issues. Surely by changing back to 5 divisions there could be greater focus on performance and a clearer chain of responsibility and accountability.

This would result in greater oversight at a senior level on the management and implementation of all programs and projects particularly infrastructure and community capital grants projects.

## STAFF

Council employs over 1000 staff and DEPA claims that MidCoast Council has had 300 staff resignations in the past 12 months.

The conservative estimate to recruit and replace a single staff member is around \$20,000 (and even more for managers and spe-

cialists) so to replace 300 staff in one year would cost well above \$6 million dollars. This revolving door has been operating since 2017.

DEPA reports that almost 500 of Council's USU (*United Services Union*) members rejected proposals to the salary system proposed by MCC. Not good for staff confidence and little wonder this loss of information, experience and the knowledge bank, results in ratepayers and businesses not being able to speak to people who can competently deal with their issues.

## SO, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The Council Administration will tell you it's the elected Councillors, the NSW Government will tell you it's the elected Councillors, the community believe it is the elected Councillors, but it seems it's not that simple:

The Reports are produced by Council Staff, most of the recommendations are produced by the Council Staff, all the background within those reports are produced by the Council Staff. These Council Reports often do not argue both sides or put all the facts before the Council. It seems Council Staff dominate the council workshops and one notes how councillors gush and thank the staff at every council meeting, to keep them on side, no doubt.

**Councillors should also be held accountable for their statements and their promises.**

So where do we find and persuade people to stand for council who are knowledgeable and experienced? Who understand how business and government should work? People who are not influenced nor intimidated, people who are prepared to ask questions and make the administration transparent and accountable?

**Or do we call for an Administrator to be appointed?**

Given the results of the last election and our knowledge of who might be standing, our money is leaning towards an administrator.

*(Compiled from numerous sources, public information and informants. Ed.)*

## MAYOR'S THOUGHT BUBBLE CAUSES CITIZENSHIP DAY RUCKUS

MidCoast Mayor, Claire Pontin's sudden change of plan to cancel the Citizenship ceremonies from the Australia Day public holiday to the following Monday (a work day) is still rumbling around in council particularly amongst the councillors, whom it seems, were not consulted. It might seem a bit routine to the mayor who conducts many of these ceremonies, but to the individuals concerned, receiving Australian citizenship is a very important day in their lives. They want family and friends to be there and share such the day. People make plans for such a big event in order to celebrate. Holding the ceremony on a public holiday, as has been the norm, makes sense for everyone, except perhaps the mayor and the General Manager. The mayor apologised to the councillors and says it won't be changed again. However to many in the community it shows, once again, the councils "Self interest thinking" as opposed to "Customer centric" thinking.

DM

# ELECTRIFYING NEWS!

Saul Griffith is an engineer and entrepreneur specialising in clean and renewable energy technologies and the author of 3 books including *Electrify* and *The Big Switch*. He is the founder of Rewiring Australia, a non-profit organisation dedicated to electrification, decarbonisation and the associated policy towards meeting climate goals.

‘Australia has the opportunity to lead the world. We are the first nation where, using all electric zero emission appliances and vehicles will save every home money. We have access to the cheapest delivered electricity in the world - our rooftop solar - and this abundant energy can electrify our industries and generate an abundant future.’

The best way to run your home - for your wallet and for the climate - is to have all-electric appliances and cars powered by clean electricity. *It's half the running costs of a fossil fuel home and it's how we'll have the biggest impact on climate this decade.*

The majority of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions come from energy use - machines that burn fossil fuels. 60% of Australia's emissions are domestic emissions, the direct result of our daily lives. They are our direct responsibility and under our control.

The largest portion of domestic emissions is from our households (42%). Almost all of these emissions come from the machines in our daily lives. Petrol cars, gas heaters, gas

water heaters, gas stoves, and the fossil fuel power plants supplying most of Australia's grid network electricity.

## REPLACE THEM

The solution to these emissions is switching our fossil fuel machines to efficient electric versions and powering them with clean electricity, including lots of rooftop solar. As your fossil fuel-powered machines age, you can gradually replace them with electric machines.

In Australia we have access to the cheapest home energy in the world - our rooftop solar. Over its lifetime, rooftop solar costs about 3 cents per kWh, cheaper than any other source of home energy. Combined with a home or community battery, it's still cheaper than the grid. The cost of sending that energy over powerlines alone is more than the cost of the energy that comes from your roof. The best option is to power as much of your home off your own solar system as you can. Using rooftop and no energy emissions.

## LESS OIL IMPORTED

The story gets even better into the future. For the last 30 years fossil fuel prices have risen roughly alongside the consumer price index. Following this trend into the future shows the savings continue to grow for electrified homes.

Simultaneously, the prices of solar, batteries, and electric vehicles continue to drop with manufacturing cost curves, or 'economies of scale'.

At a community level, this means less oil imported from overseas, thousands of jobs in installation and maintenance for the next decade, and millions in energy savings for homes, a lot of which will be spent in the local economy, improving the community even more.

It's a story of community economic abundance, and a once in a lifetime opportunity for Australia.'

*Many thanks to Saul Griffith and Rewiring Australia for this edited version of his PowerPoint. For more information, please go to <https://www.rewiringaustralia.org/>*

*(this article first appeared in In-*

*klings Summer Edition.)*

Local group Energy Forever along with Rotary Enviro, Climate Change Australia and Electrify Australia will run a forum / Q&A, 'ELECTRIFY 244X', plus an electric vehicle showcase on **Saturday 17th February** at the St Columba Anglican School in Port Macquarie.

Keynote speakers: Giles Parkinson from Renew Economy, Dr Ken Henry, Chairperson of Accounting for Nature, Jarra Hicks from Community Power Agency, and Ian Askill from Essential Energy.

The forum and Q&A will focus on electrifying the local areas (with postcodes beginning with 244-) by discussing these topics:

- Saving money and the environment with household and community solar and batteries.
- EVs and charging.
- Heat pumps for heating, cooling and hot water.
- Carbon accounting benefits for local government and communities.

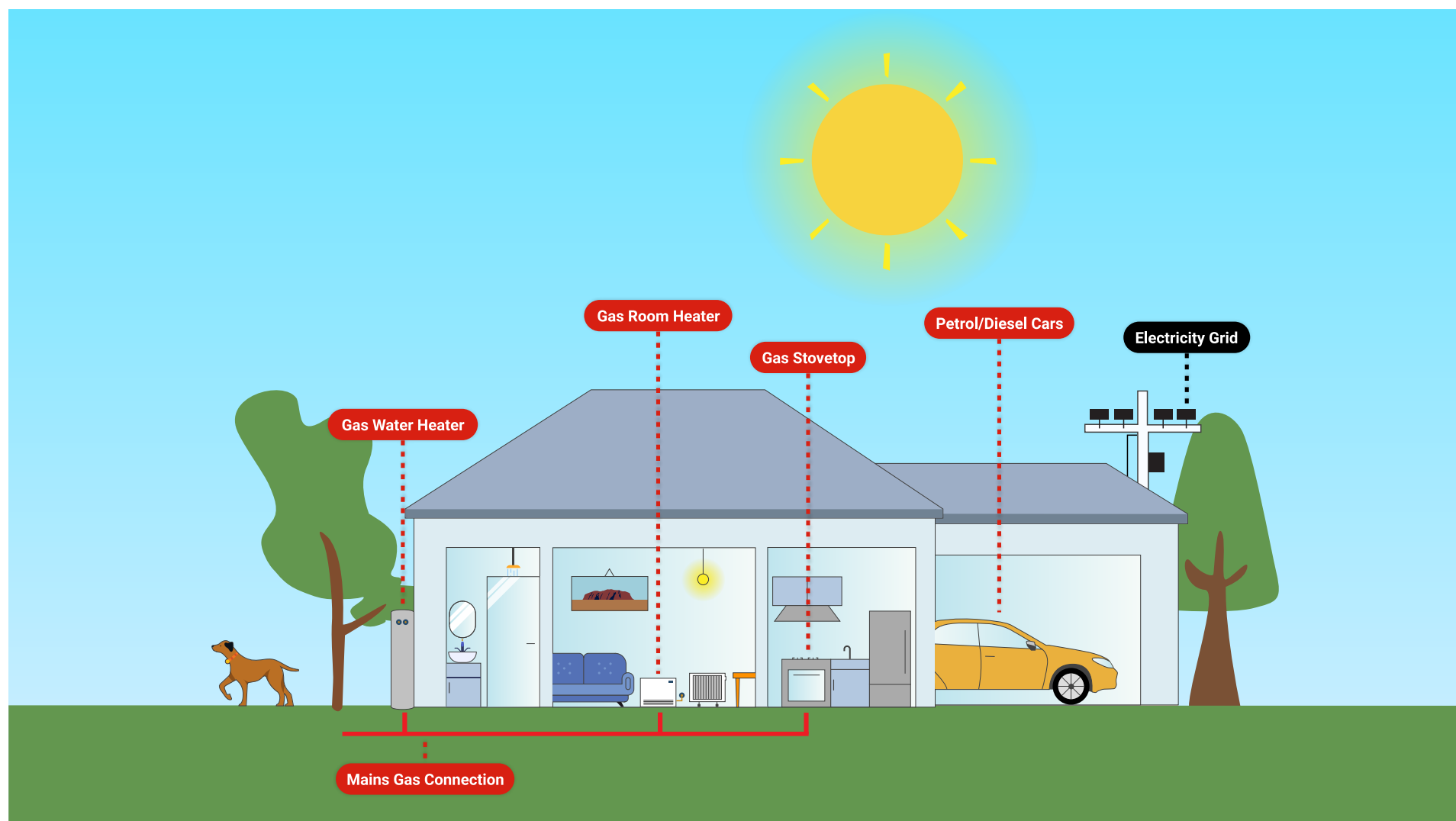


Illustration courtesy of Rewiring Australia



# GOOD ON THE KNITTING NANACS)

Mild mannered Gloucester resident, and recently retired pre-school educator Dominique Jacobs, made legal history recently when the NSW Supreme Court ruled that some significant parts of the draconian anti-protest laws passed by the NSW Parliament were constitutionally invalid.



**T**he laws were rushed through the Parliament in May 2022 by the then

Liberal/National Government with the cheering support of the Minns Labor Party. The

laws were a kneejerk reaction to a few environmental protesters, including Dom, who had

caused some traffic disruption.

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The laws as passed meant that protesters, such as Dom, would be treated as criminals and fined \$22,000 or jailed for two years if the protest caused disruption to a major facility, a main road or a highway.

It was, so it seemed, OK to close the Harbour Bridge for a whole week-end to make a film, but a criminal offence to block traffic for a short time by a protester concerned about environmental destruction.

Dom and fellow protester Helen Kvelde, who are both Knitting Nannas, courageously decided to challenge the might of the NSW Government and, with the help of the Environmental Defenders Office, launched Supreme Court proceedings alleging that the laws infringed the Australian Constitution by interfering with the right to political communication.

On 13 December 2023 Justice Walton upheld their argument, saying: (as follows:)

*"In my view, the adverse effect ... on the implied freedom in terms of deterring otherwise lawful protests significantly outweighs the benefit sought to be achieved by more effectively deterring any conduct that may disrupt major facilities themselves."*

*And that the laws represented an 'overreach from the legislative purpose.'*

He also commented (that):

*"They have a chilling effect on political communication via protests and public assemblies."*

A few readers might disagree with the actions of some environmental protesters, but the impact of the anti-protest laws was not restricted to environmental protests. Recently some residents of the Mid North Coast were outraged by a plan by the MidCoast Council to close or restrict access to several local swimming pools.

Understandably protests have, and will be held against this ill-thought-out proposal. Most people taking part would be horrified to learn that taking part in such a protest might have, depending on the circumstances, resulted in a two-year prison stretch, if Dom and Helen hadn't successfully challenged the laws.

On the face of it, Dom might



Dom and Brett with a neighbour in their garden

be seen as an unlikely candidate for environmental activism. She is 59-years of age and has been married to Brett for 40 years with seven children and some grandkids.

Over the years she and Brett have fostered numerous children in need of love and care, and she also now also looks after injured wildlife - at the moment caring for seven wallabies.

### GENTLE GIANTS

Since she was a child Dom has had a passion for whales and she regularly visits Tonga to observe them. (She says:)

Dom describes her experience with the whales as follows:

*"I go out on the boat every day and hop in the water with those majestic gentle giants, but at an appropriate distance. I also love the place and the people and have developed some great friendships there. These enormous creatures are so gentle, graceful, curious and intelligent and being near them is always exhilarating."*

Consistent with Dom's values and passions, her visits to Tonga

are about more than the whales, important though they are to her. She has grown to love the peoples of the Pacific Islands and understands the pain they are starting to feel because of climate change threats.

### WALK LIGHTLY

She says: *"I often chat to the locals about climate change. They are always in my thoughts whenever I take part in any actions to fight the climate change crisis. I do what I do for my family and friends but, also, I do it for powerless peoples everywhere."*

*"My friends in Tonga walk lightly on the planet and yet they are the ones facing the worst consequences of climate change caused by the selfish consumerism of nations like our own."*

Former Gloucester Mayor Julie Lyford has this to say about Dom:

*"Dom and Brett Jacobs and their family have been a large part of my family's life for many years. The integrity, love and selfless devotion to their children, their community, and in protecting the places and wildlife*

*they care deeply about is inspiring and incredibly life-affirming.*

### DEDICATION

*"It was a wonderful privilege to observe Dom and the extended Jacobs family in NSW Parliament House when Dom was honoured and acknowledged as a nominee for Mother of The Year. Her dedication to love and care for children who needed a safe, stable, kind, and nurturing home has been, and continues to be, one of the most beautiful aspects of Dom as a person."*

*"Dom's deep sense of social justice for those who need care, coupled with a strong, loving family life, has garnered deep respect and admiration from everyone who knows her."*

Former head of the Environmental Defenders Office and now NSW State MP, Sue Higginson comments:

*"This is a massive win for protest and nonviolent civil disobedience. It is not every day two Knitting Nanna's take on the state and win. I commend the courage and tenacity of Dom and Helen - it takes true grit to be an applicant in these massive cases."*

### STIFLING DISSENT

"These laws, with harsh and excessive penalties, were introduced with the direct intention of stifling dissent and protest and punishing protestors who were simply calling for real climate action. The laws were widely condemned by over 230 civil society, human rights and lawyer groups.

"Since then, we have seen protestors targeted, searched, jailed and facing harsh and restrictive bail conditions under an anti-protest regime that is contrary to our fundamental right of political communication in this country and an assault on our democracy.

*"I have written to the Premier and the Attorney General asking them to seriously consider the decision and not only repeal the laws that the court has declared unconstitutional, but to use this as the opportunity to repeal all of the anti-protest laws that are sitting in our law books under the dark draconian shadow that they are."*

John Watts



# USA 2024 CHAOS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

At the beginning of 2024, US politics seems more fraught than ever. Presidential elections and Donald Trump's resurgence loom large. And echoes of history clearly reverberate.

**B**ack in 1860, Abraham Lincoln led the newly established Republican Party to victory. This prompted secession of seven southern states and sparked the devastating US Civil War. A looming question for 2024, is thus not so much who will occupy the Oval Office, but what seismic shifts will occur as a result.

A Trump victory in 2024, as some analysts like former naval aviator Brynn Tannehill suggest, promises a nation on edge, teetering on the brink of chaos. Installation of a new cabinet by Donald Trump would be a mere prelude to ongoing and much deeper chaos, hate, upheaval and dysfunction. The spectre of protests and violent civil unrest would loom large. An incremental move towards a theocratic fascist dictatorship under Trump is a real possibility. Alternatively, a chaotic and Balkanised America could result from Trump's attempts at dictatorship. Ramifications of either scenario, both domestically in the US but also globally, are as unpredictable as they are profound.

In an alternative scenario where Trump lost to Biden, legal battles would take centre stage and the US would become equally chaotic. The *Make America Great Again* movement, incensed and howling for blood, would explode. Its refusal to accept the election results, especially if the margin were narrow, would polarise a nation already sitting on a powder keg. The 6 January 2020 attack on the Capitol Building could pale into insignificance compared to what

might happen. If Trump were convicted and excluded before the election, a cascade of events would also unfold. Forcing of states to exclude him from the ballot would intensify incentives for southern right-wing states to cease recognising and increasingly undermine and contradict federal authority.

If Trump loses, desperate measures could also unfold - such as fake elector schemes and refusal to certify the election in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, if the Republicans control either. All of this would push the US deeper into political turmoil. An increasingly fractured and democratically weakened society, marked by civil unrest and political violence is thus a real possibility either way.

Traditionally seen as a bedrock of stability and democracy, the US judiciary will find itself enmeshed more than ever in a highly polarised political landscape. The US Supreme Court's integrity will almost certainly be thrown further into question. Its decisions will increase the risks of Balkanisation, regardless of their political leanings and the election

outcome.

2024 will thus be a water shed moment for the US. And it's going to be ugly. Even if Biden wins and efforts to overturn his win don't succeed, autocratic and theocratic Republican states will move even further to the right. They will rely on the Supreme Court to bail them out where possible. And they will ignore its findings when not in their favour.

Australia can't afford to just sit back and observe the unfolding drama. The implications are far too reaching. Shifts in the US political landscape - either towards fascism or via Balkanisation - will have profound effects on us. As just one example, a Trump win will lock in worst case climate change scenarios for us and the rest of the world. Major uncertainties will also emerge for Australia in defence and strategic security, economic stability and prosperity, and for our reliance on the multilateral system. These are all real and major threats.

The influence of the US Republican Party on right-wing politics in Australia is also a major concern. A Trump victory would embolden and further validate right-wing popular-

ism and deceit as successful political tactics in Australia. This would shape domestic policies on issues like immigration, climate change, gender politics and international relations. It would risk destabilising the fabric of Australian society, especially our ingrained principles of non-discrimination and a fair-go.

When considering the US political abyss in 2024, one thing is clear: Australia must be prepared. Our long-time ally is at a crossroads. It will either adopt values misaligned with ours, and/or it will become more disintegrated, dysfunctional and domestically focused. Which ever path it takes, the US will become a much less reliable partner for Australia.

But perhaps there is a silver lining. Maybe we will realise that we're a grown up nation. That geopolitically, we are on the other side of the planet from the US. Maybe we will stand up and be ourselves. Maybe we will choose to invest more effort with our immediate neighbourhood.

Dysfunction and disintegration in the US might encourage Australia to find the courage to choose be the nation that we really are: an independent, confident

and multicultural Asia-Pacific democracy that can depend on itself and that invests the most in relations with its immediate neighbourhood.

*Gregory Andrews is the founder of Lyrebird Dreaming, Adjunct Associate Professor with the University of Canberra's Institute for Applied Ecology, a former diplomat and Deputy Board Chair of the Canberra Writers Festival.*





# ABC'S FORMER ARCHIVIST'S SUDDEN DEATH IN TUNCURRY A HUGE LOSS.

Wendy Borchers was a life-force. An inclusive and generous mentor to everyone who came through the ABC Archive Research area, she shared her knowledge across the Content Services areas and the wider ABC. Welcoming and flamboyant, she had a million stories to tell. Always passionate and loyal to the ABC, she'd been working at the ABC since the 1960's.



**S**he knew the faces and names of most of the staff, she had an encyclopaedic knowledge of all the programmes, she could decipher the old numbers and codes and helped develop the depth of information that we all use in our digital databases today. Wendy was the corporate memory that doesn't exist anymore and won't exist in the new digital AI future.

The Archive Researchers were unusual as an ABC workplace group, in that the core team largely got to work together, unstructured and uninterrupted for over 20 years. We learnt via an oral tradition of where to look for footage in what we would affectionately call the ABC Archaeological Dig Site, via a methodology which would horrify the HR qualitative, documented standards

of today. Pre-digitisation, there were so many places to look. We embraced lateral thinking. We were always encouraged by Wendy to do the deep digs. Referencing and cross referencing the various strata of systems that had developed at the ABC over the years. Learning to "read through" the records. Finding the gold. We all learnt a lot from her mentoring.

As John Williams – a fellow archive producer - says:

*"It was through [Wendy's] efforts that much of our Indigenous content was preserved and disseminated to the wider community (and shared with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, AIT-SIS), Wendy worked on an incredibly vast number of projects (documentaries, E&S programs) and in her final stint here, collated and itemised our*

*vast collection of Vietnam War related material (something she'd long wanted to do in the light of a comments made to the media by a former ABC employee re the supposed destruction of our Vietnam related material by the ABC - comment corrected).*

*Her enthusiasm, her professionalism, her constant work to enhance the collection, and her drive to give archival research the respect it deserved all helped to create the archives that we have today. We can build a twenty-first century, digital version, of our archives, but much of what we have today has been made possible via the tireless work of Wendy for over 40 years.*

All these years of experience culminated in the work Wendy did for *The ABC of our Lives*, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the ABC, and yet another great highlight of her career, the book which Wen-

dy co-authored with Tim Bowden, *Aunty's Jubilee – Celebrating 50 years of ABC TV*.

She deservedly received the Member of the Order of Australia Medal (AM) for her work preserving Indigenous heritage through TV and radio in 2015.

After retiring, she and her partner Max Donnellan (former Head of ABC Sport) moved to Tuncurry in 2013. In 2019 Wendy and her old ABC pal Tim Bowden, helped in the start-up plans for the Pacific Palms Writer's Festival, with the first Festival held in 2020. All involved agree it wouldn't have had happened without Wendy.

Her sudden unexpected death has shocked the local community and all her ABC alumni friends. She will be missed as a friend and as a huge source of ABC information.

**Michelle Baddiley**



# MUSIC IN AN OLD TIN SHED

There's a rusty old corrugated iron shed on a farm a few kilometres out of Gloucester on Craven Creek Rd which for 51 weeks of the year is home to a possum or two, a tractor, a few bales of hay, and the occasional snake.

**H**owever, on one weekend in September each year, Covid permitting, the shed hosts some of the nation's most accomplished classical musicians bringing top quality chamber music to the bush. Musicians whose paid job is playing with illustrious ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra or the Opera Australia Orchestra.

The farm, 'Kingfisher', is owned by Jenny and Greg Lindsay.

Jenny grew up partly in Sydney and in Parkes, but thinks that it was her time as a teenager in the country that had a huge influence on her musically. There was always music in the house, and when she was twelve her Mum, well known and much-loved Gloucester resident, Joyce Buswell, took Jenny, then aged 12, and her sister to a Musica Viva concert in Orange. Jenny comments:

'It was a big thing for Mum to do for us, but it was there that for the first time that I heard a string quartet and it blew my mind.'

Sadly, Jenny's Mum passed away just a few months ago.

As a child and young person Jenny played music, but her voice was her favoured instrument and she trained in singing for a few years, even on one occasion performing at the Sydney Opera House. However, as she says:

'I realised that although I loved singing, I was never going to be Joan Sutherland, and I completed an Arts and History degree before getting a job in retail store management, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Although I did stay involved in music and kept performing in, and stage-managing, amateur produc-



Greg and Jenny Lindsay

tions.'

Wikipedia has this to say about Greg:

'Gregory John Lindsay AO was until 2018 the Executive Director of the Australian think tank the Centre for Independent Studies, which he founded in 1976 when a young mathematics teacher in the western suburbs of Sydney.'

Lindsay initially studied agricultural science at the University of Sydney, but found that this was not his real interest and instead obtained secondary teaching qualifications in mathematics at Syd-

ney Teachers' College. A short four-year stint at Richmond High School coincided with further study at Macquarie University in philosophy culminating in graduating with a BA majoring in philosophy in 1977.

He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2003 for his contribution to education and public debate.'

Like Jenny, Greg has a deep love of classical music, particularly chamber music, but candidly says:

'I have zero music capacity. I wouldn't know a crotchet from a

quaver. There wasn't much classical music in our family, but from an early age I loved it, particularly the music from the Romantic period, with composers such as Wagner, Rachmaninov and Mahler. However, I became more deeply immersed in music when all our three children started to play in concerts. Our daughter Heather pursued music as a career and is now a professional cellist.'

Jenny adds:

'Even though Greg can't play, he has an encyclopaedic knowledge of classical music and can almost always identify a piece being played. His knowledge of music is amazing.'

Interestingly, Jenny and Greg did not meet only through their love of music, but through their shared interest in politics. They have now been married for 44 years.

Jenny and Greg bought their Rookhurst cattle property in 2012 and did the very common weekend commute from Sydney while still working. During the Covid years Gloucester became their main home. One of the attractions of their farm when they were looking to buy was that the shed contained a structure that looked like a stage, even though it was probably just built originally as a place to store hay.

Greg has always been entrepreneurial and Jenny is a great organiser. Together they make a terrific team, and soon after buying the farm they decided to put on their first concert in the old shed, having no idea how it might go or where it could lead. It was very much a family affair. Daughter Heather was then part of a string quartet and they agreed to come and perform. The first piece played was an

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# HOLIDAY SPIRIT CHRISTMAS MAY BE OVER... BUT THE SPIRIT LINGERS.

Early one Christmas morning long ago, during my shift as the emergency doctor in a hospital, a man in a Santa suit was wheeled in by the paramedics, seemingly unresponsive and soaking wet.

**H**e had been found at the beach, at the edge of the shore break, the night tide having risen around him.

In working out what sort of shape he was in, I tried the usual question, 'How are you feeling?' He surprised me with an answer. "Terrible. I had a few after my gig last night and don't remember anything after that."

At least Santa gave the staff some Ho- Ho -Ho that Christmas morning.

## HOLIDAY HEART SYNDROME

At the time it was all very funny, but more recently medical science has named a condition, 'Holiday Heart syndrome'. It is related to binge drinking and can cause an upset to the electrical circuitry of the heart.

It causes an irregular rhythm called atrial fibrillation. The person may experience palpitations, or may not even be aware of this disturbance. It can be dangerous and can induce heart attack or stroke by blood clot formation in the fluttery heart.

Everybody knows that booze is bad for the liver and affects the brain. We know of its long association with domestic violence, but less well understood, or accepted, is that alcohol, taken to excess, can be a deadly poison.



## HOLIDAY HAZARD

In the week between Christmas and New Year, the incidence of heart attack is higher than at any other time. There are other reasons for this, not all to do with alcohol.

Stress, for whatever reason causes

an increased adrenalin output in the body and, if chronic, causes damaging inflammation.

Travelling can be stressful, with airport delays, congested roads, crappy hotel rooms, lost luggage, rip-offs and theft - you know it. The

list of possible stressors can be long.

An old joke among doctors defines an alcoholic as someone who drinks more than the doctor. Looking back, it's little surprise that some of my cases were probably more linked to this problem than I realised at the time.

## LIKE A RAFT

Increasing age can bring an awareness that alcohol is not so easy to handle as once was possible. Our society is a raft floating on a sea of alcohol to the point where we hardly notice it.

An old friend with aches and pains told me he was diagnosed with metabolic syndrome and his doctor was doing more tests. When I enquired how much he was drinking, he told me, 'Oh, same as ever. Never more than five bottles a week'.

If you asked a fish, 'How is the water?' he might be puzzled and ask 'What is water?'

I suggested to my mate that a regular day a week off it might be a move to awareness. But can an old dog learn a new trick? His life may depend on it.

**David Miller**

**Is a retired GP in Brunswick Heads.**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

oboe composition by Ross Edwards performed by son Angus who also trained as a classical musician. Greg recalls:

'We had no idea how it might go. We leafletted the town and promoted it as much as we could locally. People had to bring their own chairs, and the entrance fee was just a gold coin. It turned out to be a great success and there have now been nine concert weekends. In 2013 we had just one concert. Now we have three. One on the Saturday and two on the Sunday, and we established the Craven Creek Music Association, a charitable body, to

formally manage the various aspects of the growing festival.'

As it turned out, the shed had quite amazing acoustics which was a real bonus.

I asked Jenny and Greg what was their main motivation for putting on the festival. They told me that they perceived that there was an unmet thirst for classical music in the area. A perception that has proved correct.

I also asked about their plans for the future.

Jenny:

'What we have here, in this setting, is a little jewel and although our seating capacity is limited, we

don't want to lose what we have by changing things too much. Rather than changing we hope to add more things. More events for children and young people. Perhaps making it part of a wider arts festival.'

Greg:

'I agree. It would be great if there was another good venue in the area. Perhaps something like an outdoor sound shell. We also need to think of ways that the festival can continue in some form after we pull up stumps, something that's not in prospect for quite a while yet I might add. Establishing the Association is part of the process.'

2023 was a sellout, and 2024 is

going to be better than ever with a strong local favour. Australia's most prominent composer Ross Edwards has been commissioned to set a poem by Les Murray to music. The poem is titled The Bulahdelah-Taree Holliday Song Cycle and it will be narrated by composer, conductor and broadcaster Guy Noble. Concerts are planned for Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 September, with perhaps something on the Friday night. It will undoubtedly prove to be another exciting and fascinating weekend of beautiful music.

**John Watts**



# RUNT



**Craig Silvey**

**Illustrations Sara Acton**

**Allen&Unwin, RRP\$22.99**

**J**acinta, aged 7, chats to her grandad John Watts, (whom she calls Da),

about Craig Silvey's new book called "Runt".

Craig Silvey is a bestselling author and screenwriter.

"Runt" won the 2023 Children's Book Council of Australia young readers award.

**Da.**

Good afternoon, Jacinta. Can you tell everyone how old you are, and what class you are in at school?

**Jacinta.**

I'm 7 and I'm in year 1 at Gloucester Public School. My class is called Bikan which is Aboriginal for platypus.

**Da.**

Do you like school?

**Jacinta.**

Yes, it is very fun and calm. I have lots of friends.

**Da.**

Do you like reading books?

**Jacinta.**

A lot. It's like my favourite thing in the whole entire world.

**Da.**

What's the latest book you've been reading?

**Jacinta.**

It's a book called Runt. I've just finished it. I didn't really like it when I started reading it, but then it got really interesting. The only thing is that I would have liked it to have a few more pictures.

**Da.**

What was it about? How come you found it interesting?

**Jacinta.**

I love dogs, and it was about a very clever dog called Runt. Runt was a stray but is now owned by Annie, who lives with her Mum and Dad, brother Max, and Grandma Dolly on a sheep farm in Upson Downs.

**Da.**

Upson Downs is a funny name. Is it a nice place?

**Jacinta.**

It used to be a nice place, but it hasn't rained for one year, and the town is pretty dry and sad. Also, a rich, but very bad and cruel man by the name of Earl has bought

lots of farms and has built dams on the creeks to keep all the water for himself. His farm is the only one that has any green grass and Annie's Dad's sheep all get through the fence to get to the grass, and Earl tries to keep them. He's mean and horrible, and I didn't like him one bit.

Earl tells Annie's Dad that he will only give the sheep back if the dad agrees to sell his farm but the dad won't sell.

**Da.**

Tell me more about Runt?

**Jacinta.**

He is a very trained dog who does lots of clever tricks and things.

**Da.**

Can you read me something from the book about Runt.

**Jacinta.**

"Runt is nimble and acrobatic

and swift. Annie is like a conductor with a baton, playing him like an orchestra. It's a remarkable sight to behold or it would be if anyone else was there to see it."

**Da.**

Jacinta, you said Runt was very clever. What do you mean?

**Jacinta.**

Well Annie teaches him how to do lots of clever things like rolling over, jumping things, crawling under things, weaving in and out and walking on top of a fence. He's also good at rounding up the sheep.

**Da.**

So, what happens to Runt?

**Jacinta.**

Upson Downs has a show called Woolarama, and this year Annie reads that they are holding a dog competition with a first prize of \$500. Annie is sad because she

knows that her dad's farm needs money. But Annie is also very kind and she thinks if Runt can win the money, it will help her dad keep the farm.

Anyway, Annie and Runt enter the competition and Runt is the fastest dog and they win the money. This upsets another horrible man called Fergus Fink who thought his dog would win. His dog came second.

**Da.**

Is that the end of the story?

**Jacinta.**

Oh no. Because they came first at the show Annie and Runt get to go to the dog competition called the Australian National Titles competition, and the dogs that come first and second there get to go to a big dog competition in London with a huge first prize.

**Da.**

Tell me about Fergus Fink.

**Jacinta.**

He thinks he's better than everyone else. He's like Earl. Fergus Fink does everything he can to stop Runt from winning. Lots of dirty tricks.

**Da.**

Does Runt get to go to London?

**Jacinta.**

Yes, he does.

**Da.**

How can they afford to go to London?

**Jacinta.**

The people in the town are excited that Runt is going and they help with the money.

**Da.**

Don't tell us all that happens in London but is it a happy ending?

**Jacinta.**

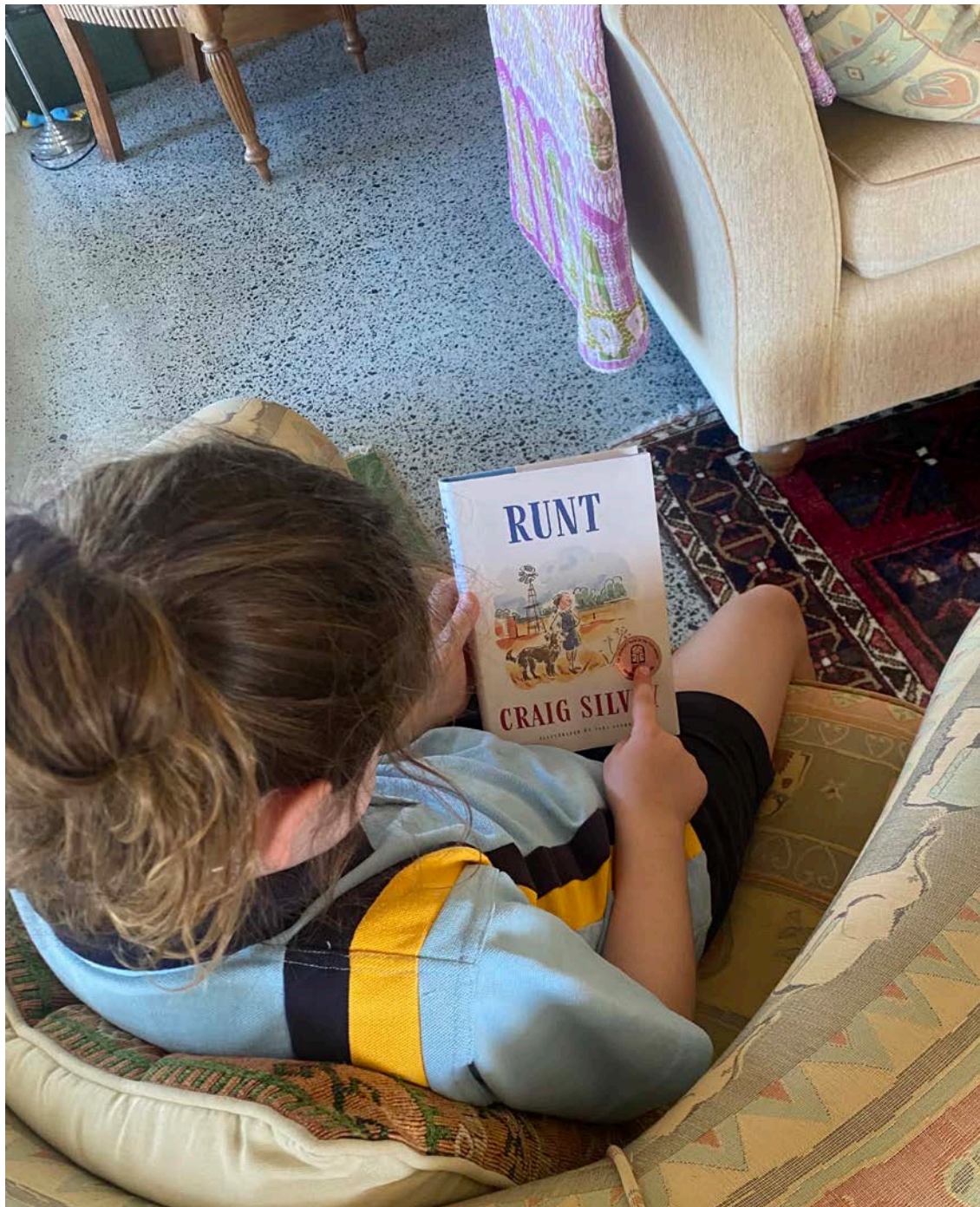
It is, and what I liked is that both Earl and Fergus Fink lose out. There is rain and Earl disappears and the farm is saved. Fergus Fink is disqualified for cheating, but although Runt does not win in London, he becomes very famous.

**Da.**

Do you think most children would like Runt?

**Jacinta.**

Yes, I do. I liked it lots.





# GREEN DOT



Madeleine Gray.  
Allen and Unwin.  
Rrp \$32.99

**T**his is an intriguing book written in a freewheeling style I've not encountered before probably because it has been specifically written for a generation of readers much younger than me.

It is a love story, with a slow, balanced build up to a compassionate exchange between an older man and a young woman, both relatively unused to subtle indications as to how either should proceed while needing to keep their love affair secret.

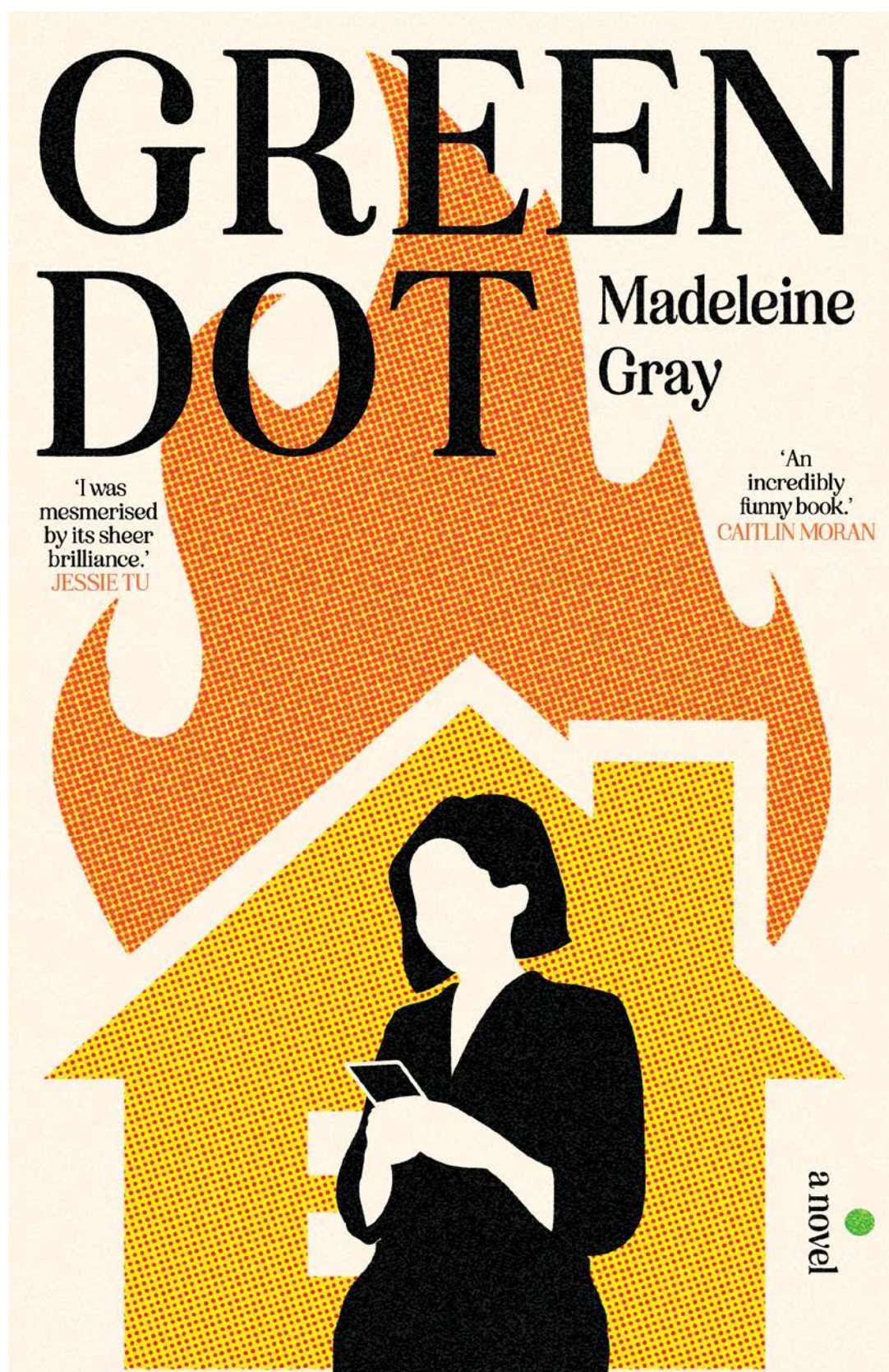
They work together as they don't want their relationship to become office gossip. In order to achieve this subterfuge, they do the "modern" thing and text each other constantly with clever quips to keep in touch while at work, hence the title "green dot" which lights up their computer screens when they are texting each other.

He's the boss of one section, she's a new worker in an adjoining division. She's a free spirit seeking to live a bohemian untethered existence with her friends, experiencing hangovers each weekend from heavy nights out, in order she tells herself, to let go of the dreary office work and routine she has forced herself to embrace.

He is a married man with a serious career as a journalist and a wife he's been faithful to for 20 years. The girl uses sex to relieve her boredom with different young men when she is not with him; he takes their coupling seriously and is determined not to hurt his wife by being careless.

They make a point of not prying into each other's lives as they build trust and enjoy regular trysts in small hotel rooms that cater for amorous discreet short bookings during afternoons or early evenings.

The characters are very much



grounded in what's happening in the moment and it is spelt out beautifully by the internal dialogue our heroine has with herself.

Well educated, but unsure of what to do with herself, she is reluctant to tether herself to meaningless work and yet she knows she deliberately sabotages these interviews with HR people who are seeking workers who show commitment and enthusiasm.

She has three degrees, lives with her divorced father and is aware that time is running out on her student life as it is well past the time for her to become independent and earn money to support herself.

Her relationship with this handsome, older man who is obviously going through a midlife crisis, though something he would refute, gives her feelings of being

"alive" and having purpose, even though in the back of her mind her friends have warned her she will probably end up getting hurt.

Who cares, she thinks, Scarlett O'Hara style. Tomorrow is another day, for now life is full of excitement for both of them as they enjoy their illicit liaison.

All delusions disappear over time and she reluctantly realises that blind love is not the answer to her youthful dreams, nor is self-sacrifice without pride in one's self-worth a price worth paying.

In my time it was called growing-up emotionally. It's a universal experience most of us have to face and author Madeleine Gray explores this through her strong-willed heroine.

This is an easy book to read, it pulls the reader through its short chapters, it's explicit in the way it tackles the different feelings experienced by its principal characters and there are lots of swear words most young people tend to use freely these days.

This is a first novel for Madeleine Gray and it is an impressive debut, moving as she does from writing arts criticism and non-fiction for a number of local publications.

The author lives in Sydney and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Manchester, researching contemporary women's autobiographical Liberty theory.

In contrast to her studies, she has made her novel appear light-weight reading which takes skill. The characters are very recognisable, they delve into some tricky moral issues and the illicit love affair is cleverly paced, designed to leave you wanting to know what happens next.

A book worth seeking out!  
**Sherry Stumm.**



# THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH



**Eddie Jaku**  
Macmillan. Rrp \$12.99

**E**ddie Jaku OAM was a remarkable man. A survivor of several German concentration camps during World War II he wrote of his wartime experiences after emigrating to Australia. This memoir was published when he was 100 years old and became an immediate best seller.

Not since *A Fortunate Life* by A.B Facey have I read such an inspiring autobiography by a man, who for seven years from the time of his arrest in November, 1938, faced unimaginable horrors at the hands of the Nazis.

Raised in the beautiful city of Leipzig, in Germany, he grew up considering himself a German first, and a Jew second. He felt so proud of his country where he was born and where his ancestors are buried.

All this changed overnight when he was arrested during the infamous 'Kristallnacht,' when Nazi thugs looted and burnt synagogues, rounding up Jews, sending thousands of them over subsequent months to concentration camps in tightly packed cattle wagons. Eddie was beaten so badly that night that when he arrived in Buchenwald, the commander panicked and sent him to the nearest hospital for several days to recover.

History has recorded the horrors of the concentration camps of the Third Reich and the images of Jews starved, tortured and traumatised, which led to the eventual death of six million people. Today, I wonder if Eddie was still alive and watching the slaughter of innocent Palestinians women and children in Gaza, would he have thought, 'not much of human behaviour has changed.'

What struck me about Eddie's story was his ingenuity which enabled him to survive the horrors of both Buchenwald and Auschwitz, particularly his ability to remember details and events that saved his life from one day to the next.

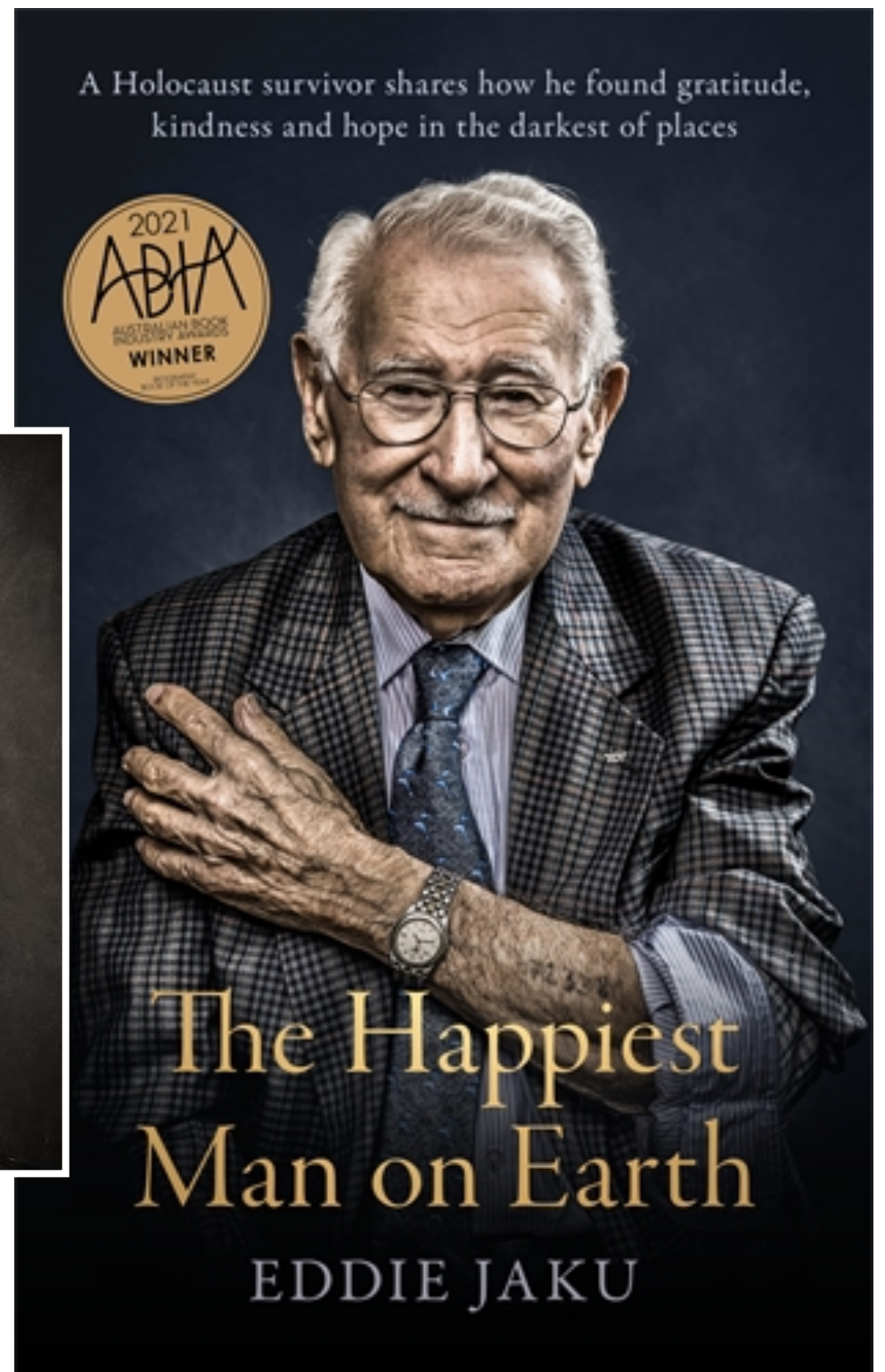
Inhuman Zombies

He continued to struggle and ask himself why the German populace had turned against their fellow citizens. He couldn't understand how



people he had worked with, studied with, played sport with could allow Hitler to turn them into inhuman zombies filled with hate.

Eddie tells of the many little actions he often took on the spur of the moment. For instance, he started carrying the heavy wooden lid of a discarded barrel while on a march to work. He had no idea what he would use it for, until he realised it was protecting him from the bullets of the guards, when he dropped into a large drain to make an escape.



He failed in his attempt. The trouble was he'd forgotten he was wearing prison clothing. This meant he was shot in the leg and wounded by a farmer when he approached him for help.

Eddie's quick thinking had him

rejoin the work team marching back to camp because he knew he wouldn't survive in the bitter cold. Luckily the guards were none the wiser and Eddie had the bullet dug

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

out by a doctor prisoner using an ivory letter opener who advised him to use his spit as antiseptic.

**CLOSE SHAVES**

Then there was the miracle which caused a guard to notice the tattoo number 172338 on Eddie's arm and who shouted to another guard to extract him out of a line of prisoners shuffling towards the gas chambers.

The guard knew he was classified as an 'Economically Indispensable Jew' of use to the Reich and profitable to the war effort. Eddie often experienced close shaves like these and worried each day would be his last.

He explains how he was grateful for the personal discipline and independence he learnt when his father sent him away from his family at age 13 to assume the identity of a gentile and study under a false name for 5 years in order to graduate as a highly skilled electrical and precision engineer. He remembers them as lonely years, for he was too scared to make friends and let down his guard.

**FORGOT LUNCH**

He credits believes his friendship with Kurt, a skill craftsman and shoemaker, also helped him survive. Kurt worked indoors, while Eddie had to walk in rain and snow to labour long hours in a factory where the guards often forgot to give them lunch. Kurt shared his food with Eddie and made him stronger shoes and whenever Eddie said he'd had enough and was "going to the wire" to electrocute himself on the fencing, Kurt talked him out of such a plan.

Eddie maintains he was not religious, but he finally made a promise to God to try and live the best existence he could, or else his parents' death and all the suffering would be for nothing.

Slowly he came to understand the Nazi regime; a German was not immediately an evil person, rather he was weak, easily manipulated and had lost all of his morals and then his humanity.

**FOLLOWED ORDERS**

Obedience too, says Eddie, was built into the German character which meant these men followed orders blindly and changed to become men who could torture others, take babies from their mothers and bash their heads against the wall and still go home, kiss their wife and cuddle their children.

Hate, he believes is the beginning of a disease, like cancer. "It may kill your enemy, but it will destroy you in the process too if you let it," he writes.

Eddie recounts how he barely survived the years of excruciating winter cold, lack of food, constant physical abuse before being rescued by Allied soldiers. He was sent to an American hospital for 5 weeks where doctors gave him a 35 percent chance of survival.

**SUPPORTIVE FRIENDSHIP**

Eddie looks back and credits his stubborn survival with his upbringing in a warm loving family, his father's insistence he receive a good education, his supportive friendship with Kurt and his abiding belief that however awful the circumstances, "if you lose your morals, you lose yourself."

After liberation, he met Flore

Molho, the daughter of a Sephardic Jewish family from Salonica, in Greece, fell in love and married her and together with their young son Michael immigrated as refugees to Australia in 1950. Eddie's life here, he says has been wonderful, like heaven. "It has been one of happiness, hard work and family life.

**I AM THE HAPPIEST MAN IN THE WORLD."**

He and Flore spent 75 years together, raised two sons and had many grandchildren and great grandchildren. He also received an Order of Australia and has volunteered at the Sydney Jewish Museum since its inception in 1992 where,

until his death in 2020 at age 100, he told countless visitors the story of the holocaust and of his survival.

Eddie never asked his fellow survivors if they ever forgave the German people. "I couldn't forgive them, but I've had enough luck, love and friendship in my life, I've been able to let go of the anger I feel towards them."

He writes that anger leads to fear, which leads to hate, which leads to death. His moral stance was his strength throughout his life.

I enjoyed reading his story. But the author's photo of this warm hearted, exuberant, kind and thoughtful man, rather says it all.

**Sherry Stumm**



## HANNAM VALE AUTUMN MARKET

## HANNAM VALE RECREATION RESERVE

**SUNDAY 10th MARCH 2024**

**8:00am - 2:00pm**

**MARKET STALLS**

**Fresh Produce, Chicken, Beef & Pork, Home & Garden Decor, Art, Clothing, Candles, Jewellery, Toys, Timber Carvings & Much More**

**FACE PAINTING FOR THE KIDDIES**

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Approx halfway between Port Macquarie and Taree 10kms in from highway on sealed road

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# QUESTION 7



Richard Flanagan

Published by Knopf 2023

RRP \$35.00

**E**very so often you come across a book that defies easy categorisation, but which, when finished makes you feel that you have just experienced something unique and profound, but are unsure if you fully understood it.

I've always loved the saying that, 'if you remember the 1960's you weren't there.' A similar comment might be made in relation to Question 7, which is, 'if you fully understood Question 7, you didn't read it.' Although, I must quickly add that any deficiency of reader understanding will have nothing to do with the quality of the writing. It's just that it deals with questions and issues that, if we are honest with ourselves, defy complete understanding. What is the meaning of life and our own lives? What happened in the past to get us where we are today?

It takes a brilliant, imaginative writer such as Flanagan to seamlessly weave, apparently unrelated issues together, including both the personal and the historical. Issues such as, the dropping of the A bomb on Hiroshima, how he was named Richard and not Daniel, how his own father was held as a slave labouring prisoner of war in Japan, the torrid love affair between H G Wells and Rebecca West, the brutal treatment of the Tasmanian First Nations people, and his own near-death experience as a 21-year-old on the Franklin River.

The fly cover says this about Flanagan:

"Richard Flanagan's novels have received numerous honours and are published in forty-two countries. He won the Booker prize for *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and the Commonwealth Prize for *Gould's Book of Faith*. A rapid on the Franklin River is named after him."

Flanagan begins the narrative by telling the reader about a trip to Japan in 2012 where he visited the site of the Ohama Camp, where his father had been interred as a prisoner of the Japanese, and where he and his fellow inmates were forced to work in a coal mine as slave labourers. We then get a hint of what is to come when we find out that nothing of the camp remains, even in the memory of his guide, and that in fact the site is now occupied by a brothel, misnamed as a 'love hotel':

"...that catered for quick opportu-

nistic sex in tiny rooms that allowed for sexual release and deliberately little else. What remained, or rather what existed, was only the oblivion of pleasure in another's arms-the same oblivion that simultaneously prefigures and denies death."

In the same chapter we are introduced to Major Thomas Ferebee, the bombardier who released the lever over Hiroshima in August 1945 which resulted, 43 seconds later, in the deaths of 60,000 or more people. This introduces us to the moral dilemma involved in the decision to drop this bomb and the next one on Nagasaki. How many people are likely to have died if the bombs had not been dropped and Japan had invaded and Flanagan asks:

"Do possibly more corpses tomorrow justify possibly fewer corpses today?"

Any reader hoping for simple answers to such moral conundrums will be disappointed. He tells us that 'Chekhov believed that the role of literature was not to provide answers but only to ask the necessary questions', and we are then introduced to the book's title, which is derived from the following Chekhov question:

"Wednesday, June 17, 1881, a train had to leave station A at 3 a.m. in order to reach station B at 11 p.m.; just as the train was about to depart, however, an order came that the train had to reach station B by 7 p.m. Who loves longer, a man or a woman?"

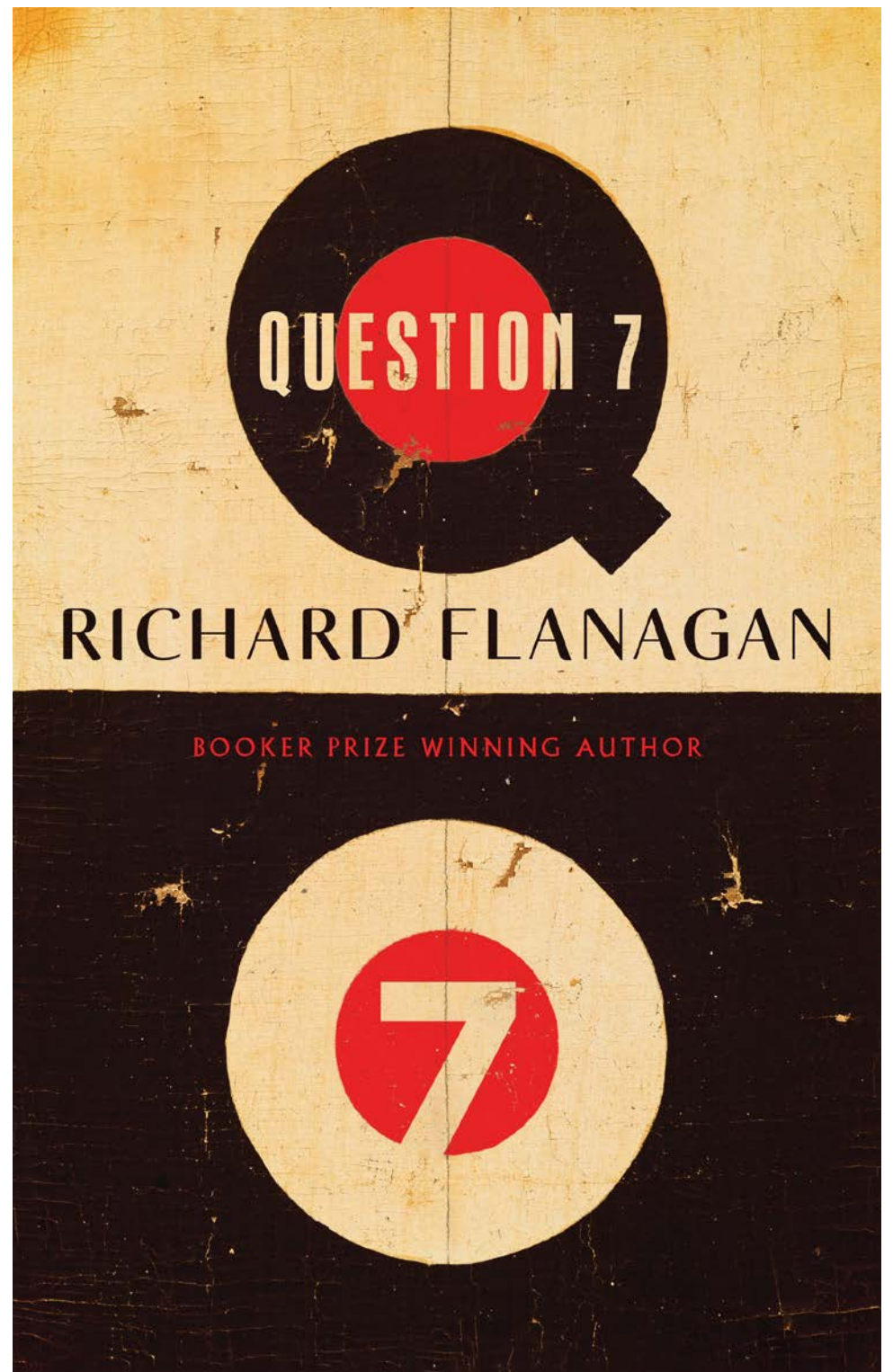
Much of the book is taken up with the writings and goings on of HG Wells and how what Wells did, and wrote, ultimately led to the atomic bomb and to the existence of Flanagan himself. As we know, a nuclear explosion requires a chain reaction but Flanagan brilliantly uses the concept of chain reaction for all that happens in life. The so-called butterfly effect.

Flanagan, tells us of an incident where Wells and Rebecca West kissed:

"That kiss would, in time, beget death which would in turn, beget me and the circumstances of my life that lead to the book you now hold."

The reasoning is that the kiss was followed by Wells, who was aware of the discovery of radium, imagining and writing about 'a new weapon of imaginable power which he called the atomic bomb.'

Some scientists, including those



advising Hitler, were sceptical about whether such a bomb was possible, and if it was, whether its chain reaction could be controlled. However, one physicist by the name of Leo Szilard, who had read Wells works, did believe it to be possible and helped to develop the technology for such a destructive bomb.

Then, the argument develops, the explosions on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war with Japan, and but for that destruction, Flanagan's father would have been unlikely to have survived the war, which would have meant that Flanagan would not have been born, and the book not written. He summarises it as follows:

"Without Rebecca West's kiss H. G. Wells would not have run off to Switzerland to write a book in which everything burns, and without H. G. Wells book Leo Szilard would never have conceived of a nuclear chain reaction and without conceiving of a nuclear chain reaction he would never have grown terrified, and without growing terrified Leo Szilard would never have persuaded Einstein to lobby Roosevelt and without lobbying Roosevelt there would have been no Manhattan Project etc etc etc."

The chain reaction it seems, doesn't only apply in the field of nuclear physics. It also applies to our lives.

The book reveals Flanagan's deep love for his native Tasmania, and he connects the genocide of its First Nations Peoples with Wells famous book, *The War of the Worlds*. Apparently, it was that genocide which helped inspire that book.

The final chapter deals with an incident, when as a young man, Flanagan came within a whisker of dying when trapped in rapids on the Franklin River. Again, if he had not survived, this intriguing book when never have been written.

The book cover accurately says this:

"At once a love song to his island home and to his parents, this hypnotic melding of dream, history, place and memory is about how our lives so often arise out of the stories of others and the stories we invent about ourselves."

This is a beautifully written, compelling, and thought-provoking work which I strongly recommend.

John Watts



# THE TEACHER'S PET



Hedley Thomas with Epilogue by Matthew Condon

Pan Macmillan 2023

RRP \$34.99

**O**n 30 August 2022 Christopher Michael Dawson was convicted by NSW Supreme Court Justice Ian Harrison of the murder of his (Dawson's) wife Lynette (Lyn) Dawson on or about 8 or 9 January 1982. Lyn Dawson, who was the mother of two young children, had suddenly and without warning disappeared from their Bayview home never to be seen again. No body was ever found and no cause of death was ever identified.

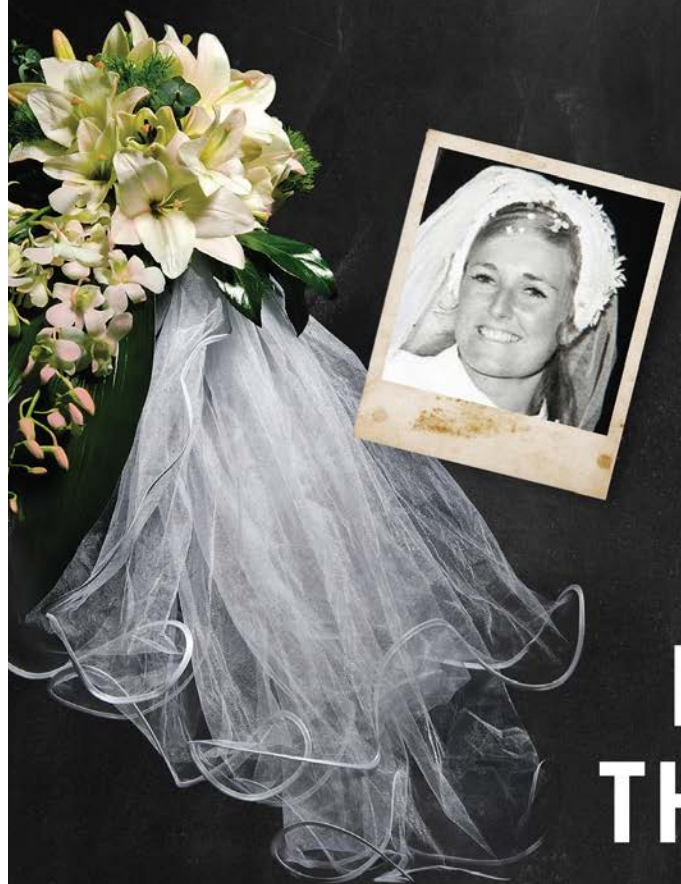
Back in 2001 Thomas, a Brisbane base journalist with *The Australian*, had written some lengthy articles about the strange circumstances of Lyn Dawson's disappearance, which was for some time treated by the police as a missing person case. In the years since she vanished there had been a number of suggestions that Lyn Dawson had been murdered by her husband, and in 2017 Thomas decided that he would host a podcast examining the circumstances of the case.

Hedley Thomas started his career as a copyboy with the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, working his way up to become *The Australian's* national chief correspondent and investigative journalist. He has won eight Walkley Awards, including two Gold Walkleys. In 2022 he received the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year Award.

The book cover says this: 'Hedley Thomas takes you behind the scenes with a blow-by-blow account of one of the most intriguing and enduring murder mysteries of our time – the crime, the podcast investigation, the sexual exploitation of teenage students, the courtroom drama – and how justice was finally delivered.'

## The Teacher's Pet

A tale of lust, loss and treachery about a vulnerable schoolgirl and a missing wife.  
From the journalist who pursued a killer.



'True crime storytelling as we now know it begins with *The Teacher's Pet*. If you think you know this story, think again.'

TRENT DALTON

'A masterclass in investigative journalism.'

LEIGH SALES

## HEDLEY THOMAS

THE GOLD WALKLEY WINNING REPORTER  
BEHIND THE GLOBAL HIT PODCAST

Dawson and his identical twin brother Paul had both played first grade rugby league for the Newtown Jets before both becoming school teachers on Sydney's northern beaches, and buying houses in the same Bayview street. Dawson had met Lyn when they were at school and outwardly, they had a happy marriage, but things went off the rails when Dawson brought

a 16-year-old female student Jenny Carlson (a pseudonym) to stay in their home as a 'babysitter.' The reality was that Jenny and Dawson were having a sexual relationship which caused Lyn significant distress.

Dawson reported Lyn as a missing person, telling police that when she failed to arrive to join him at Northbridge Baths she had

phoned him to say that she needed some time away. At the time the police were content to accept his word and oddly, so did many others, including members of Lyn's own family.

As time went on many people became suspicious that Dawson's version of events was not true. One factor creating suspicion was that within two days of her 'disappearance' Dawson brought Jenny back to the home where they then shared the matrimonial bed. Others questioned whether it would be likely that a loving mother would up and leave her two daughters whom she loved dearly.

Thomas explains why in 2017 he decided to host a podcast, also called *The Teacher's Pet*, and how he went about the task. We learn that Thomas felt a sense of injustice in relation to Lyn Dawson and the unwillingness of the then NSW Director or Prosecutions (DPP), Nicholas Cowdery, to prosecute Dawson despite the fact that two Coroners, in 2001 and 2003 had recommended prosecution. Thomas makes much of the fact that the DPP failed to follow the two Coroners' recommendations, but it must be noted that the DPP is the independent person charged with rigorously evaluating the admissible evidence before deciding whether to prosecute. The DPP must resist outside pressures when making such decisions. The

lawyers at the Office of the DPP would generally be more experienced in running major criminal trials than the average coroner. Thomas was, in my opinion, unfairly critical of the role of the DPP, at one stage disrespectfully referring to DPP Nick Cowdery as a 'knucklehead'. The book does not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



# LOW-MAINTENANCE FLOWERING PLANTS FOR THE MANNING VALLEY



Having a beautiful garden doesn't have to take a lot of effort – you just need to pick the right plants. Want a garden full of flowers without too much work? We can help with that! We've put together a list of low-maintenance flowering plants that are perfect for the local area.

**T**he plants listed here are reliable, versatile, easy-care options that will add colour and vibrance to your garden. Once established, each one is:

- Relatively drought-tolerant;
- Hardy enough to tolerate most weather conditions, including heat, cold and rain;
- Not bothered greatly by pests or diseases; and
- In need of little maintenance other than an occasional prune to keep neat and tidy.

## CREPE MYRTLES (LAGERSTROEMIA INDICA)



Iconic fixtures of summer, crepe myrtles are instantly recognisable with their masses of delicate, paper-like blooms. Flowers appear in a range of colours from whites and very soft pinks through to vibrant corals, magentas and even deep reds. Most varieties display deep green foliage through spring and summer, however the 'Diamonds In The Dark' series

has deep burgundy leaves. These deciduous favourites make reliable street plantings and offer lots of summer shade in your garden. As summer fades and the flowers disappear, crepe myrtles offer stunning autumn leaf colour before they defoliate.

Flowering season: Summer.

Ideal conditions: Full sun to part shade.

Growth potential: Up to 8m high x 6m wide, but this is highly dependent on variety. Plants in the 'Diamonds in the Dark' series reach up to 3m high x 2.5m wide, while some other dwarf varieties such as the 'With Love' and 'Infinity' ranges are closer to 1m high and wide.

Suggested uses: Feature garden tree. Some dwarf varieties may be grown in large containers, but check the plant label on your individual variety for suitability.

## INDIAN HAWTHORNS (RHAPHIOLEPIS INDICA)



Rhaphiolepis is known for being almost bulletproof, such is its tolerance to a range of weather conditions. It's great in coastal areas as it will withstand heat, wind and salt spray, and works a treat on exposed balconies. This dense evergreen shrub with deep green, glossy foliage is absolutely covered in white or pink flowers all through spring and early summer. It's a favourite of pollinators including bees and a range of other insects.

Flowering season: Spring to early summer. Flowers are followed by non-toxic blue berries.

Ideal conditions: Full sun to part shade.

Growth potential: Up to 2.5m high and wide. Some popular named varieties such as 'Oriental Pearl', 'Little Bliss' and 'Snow Maiden' are more compact and closer to 1m high and wide.

Suggested uses: Hedges and garden borders, container-grown shrub, general garden feature.

## GREVILLEAS

With over 350 varieties of grevillea known to exist, this would have to be one of the most versatile plant families in the known world! Popular Australian natives, grevilleas are perfectly adapted to the unique weather and growing conditions found in local gardens. Most fall into two flower types - "spider" or "toothbrush" depending on their shape - and offer flowers in a broad range of colours over a long period. Some even flower all year long. They offer a valuable food source for nectar-loving Australian native animals including birds, butterflies and possums.

Flowering season: Generally from winter right through spring. Some varieties offer year-round flowering, while others will have their main flowering flush from winter to spring and then

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



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spot-flower repeatedly.

Ideal conditions: Full sun with some shelter from strong winds.

Growth potential: This varies significantly from variety to variety, so always check the plant label! Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*) varieties are trees reaching up to 30m high and 10m wide. Our most popular grevillea, 'Robyn Gordon', is a shrub reaching approximately 1.5m high and wide. There are also prostrate varieties such as 'Poorinda Royal Mantle', which reaches just 25cm high but will spread up to 6m wide.

Suggested uses: With such a variety of sizes available, there are grevilleas for all garden purposes, including hedges, borders, groundcover, feature shrubs, trees and container plantings.

### EVERGREEN MAGNOLIAS (*MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA*)



Unlike their deciduous cousins, *Magnolia grandiflora* varieties don't defoliate during winter - but their creamy-white flowers are just as fragrant! With their dense, glossy green leaves featuring rusty-red reverse sides, these plants make a striking statement in the garden all year long. Some varieties such as 'Teddy Bear' are bred for their more compact nature and are favoured for pots. Others, such as 'Little Gem' and 'Kay Parris' are grown as feature trees, reaching heights of up to 6 metres and providing valuable summer shade alongside that iconic floral scent.

Flowering season: Early summer through to autumn.

Ideal conditions: Full sun to part shade.

Growth potential: Depending on the variety, up to 6m high x 4m wide. Dwarf varieties may reach only half of this size.

Suggested uses: Potted features, privacy screens, hedges, large feature trees.

### BOTTLEBRUSH (CALLISTEMON)



A beloved and iconic Australian native, the bottlebrush is an incredibly reliable plant that's frequently used by councils for street planting. Its nectar-filled flowers offer a plentiful food source for native pollinators. These eye-catching, spindly blooms come in a range of shades from white and lemon yellow through to mauve, pink and the iconic bright red. Bottlebrush's hardy branching structure makes it popular for a range of uses. Bottlebrush trees make great specimen plantings but can also be used as windbreaks or trimmed into informal hedges or privacy screens - 'Slim' is a great variety for creating a screen in a narrow space. Small or dwarf varieties such as 'Little John' can become striking potted features.

Flowering season: Spring and summer.

Ideal conditions: Full sun to part shade in specialist native potting mix or very well-drained soil.

Growth potential: Up to 5m high x 4m wide. Some dwarf varieties reach as little as 50cm high and wide.

Suggested uses: Feature tree, informal hedge, privacy screen.

#### How Long Do Low-Maintenance Flowering

Plants Take To Establish?

This is an important question to ask! Generally, plants can take one to two years (depending on the variety, of course!) to properly establish themselves with a strong root system and healthy growth. While they're still establishing, you'll need to water them regularly. Once they're fully established, that's when you can take your foot off the pedal a bit. For any more ideas or inspiration, come check them out at the nursery.

**Wingham Nursery & Florist**  
**02 65534570**

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

explicitly say so, but readers will be left in little doubt that Thomas is of the view that his podcast was a catalyst for the DPP's ultimate decision to prosecute Dawson and get him convicted.

The recent case of Kathleen Folbigg should remind everyone, journalists included, of the potential disastrous consequences of a flawed prosecution and wrongful conviction.

In telling the story of the podcast we read of all the sordid details of duplicity, dishonesty, unfaithfulness and the sexual exploitation of young school girls ending with the Dawson's trial, conviction and sentencing.

Preparing for the podcast required Thomas to interview many witnesses, although understandably, and no doubt on legal advice, Dawson himself declined to take part. The podcast developed a life of its own and as each episode unfolded more witnesses came forward.

The book is well written in clear journalistic style, but as I read, I began to doubt that the book would have been written if Dawson had been acquitted. The podcast was occurring at the same time that there was an ongoing police investigation and there was significant criticism, particularly in legal circles, of Thomas's activities. After Dawson was arrested and charged, his own legal team argued that the podcast and other publicity meant that it would be impossible for Dawson to get a fair trial. Using this argument Dawson applied to the Supreme Court for something called a permanent stay which, if allowed, would have meant that the prosecution could not proceed. Although the stay was not ultimately granted the Judge levelled significant criticism in the direction of Thomas and the podcast saying:

'...the risk that an overzealous investigative journalist poses to a fair trial of a person who might ultimately be charged with an historic murder...is self evident.'

And:

'...the unrestrained and uncensored public commentary about the applicant's guilt is the most egregious example of media interference with a criminal trial process which this court has had to consider in deciding whether to take the extraordinary step of permanently staying a criminal prosecution'.

One week before the trial commenced the Supreme Court granted Dawson a trial without a jury on the basis of all the pre-trial publicity of the case, the judge referring particularly to the podcast.

As part of his reasons for finding

Dawson guilty Justice Ian Harrison suggested that the podcast had 'figured as a significant factor to be taken into account...'

The podcast began with Dawson's sexual exploits which were clearly designed to damn him from the very start, and the regular expressions of opinion that he was guilty, and potential witnesses hearing what other likely witnesses had to say, created huge risk that there could not be a fair trial. It seems however that Thomas does not accept such criticisms. One report by Zoe Samios in the Sydney Morning Herald had this to say:

'Thomas says journalists should not be intimidated or discouraged from stories when there is a legitimate purpose and "the injustice appears so plain".'

"While we may not win the approval of judges or defence lawyers for going hard, and forensically examining these sorts of cases, we should not be deterred from it," Thomas says. "We are rarely going to be on the same page, and we should fight to ensure that we double down and do more investigations into the cold cases."

"This notion that some judges have that journalists should not be going and interviewing witnesses because they might one day be witnesses in a formal murder proceeding ... is quite illogical," he says. "There is no guarantee that any of these cold cases will ever go to trial in the absence of journalistic scrutiny."

I couldn't help wondering what Thomas might have had to say if Dawson had not been sent to trial, or if he had been acquitted because of his podcast. From what I have read he would have simply blamed a stuffy, out-of-touch legal profession and judiciary.

None of my comments should be taken as any approval of the appalling criminal behaviour of Dawson who is now a convicted murderer. From the evidence at the trial, he was a narcissistic, self-absorbed, manipulative, selfish and lying bully who deserves to be in prison. What I am suggesting is that the podcast and the surrounding publicity might well have enabled him to avoid his well-deserved prison sentence.

I note that Dawson has lodged an appeal against his conviction so this story might still have some distance to run.

The book is worth reading but I suggest that it be read with a critical eye.

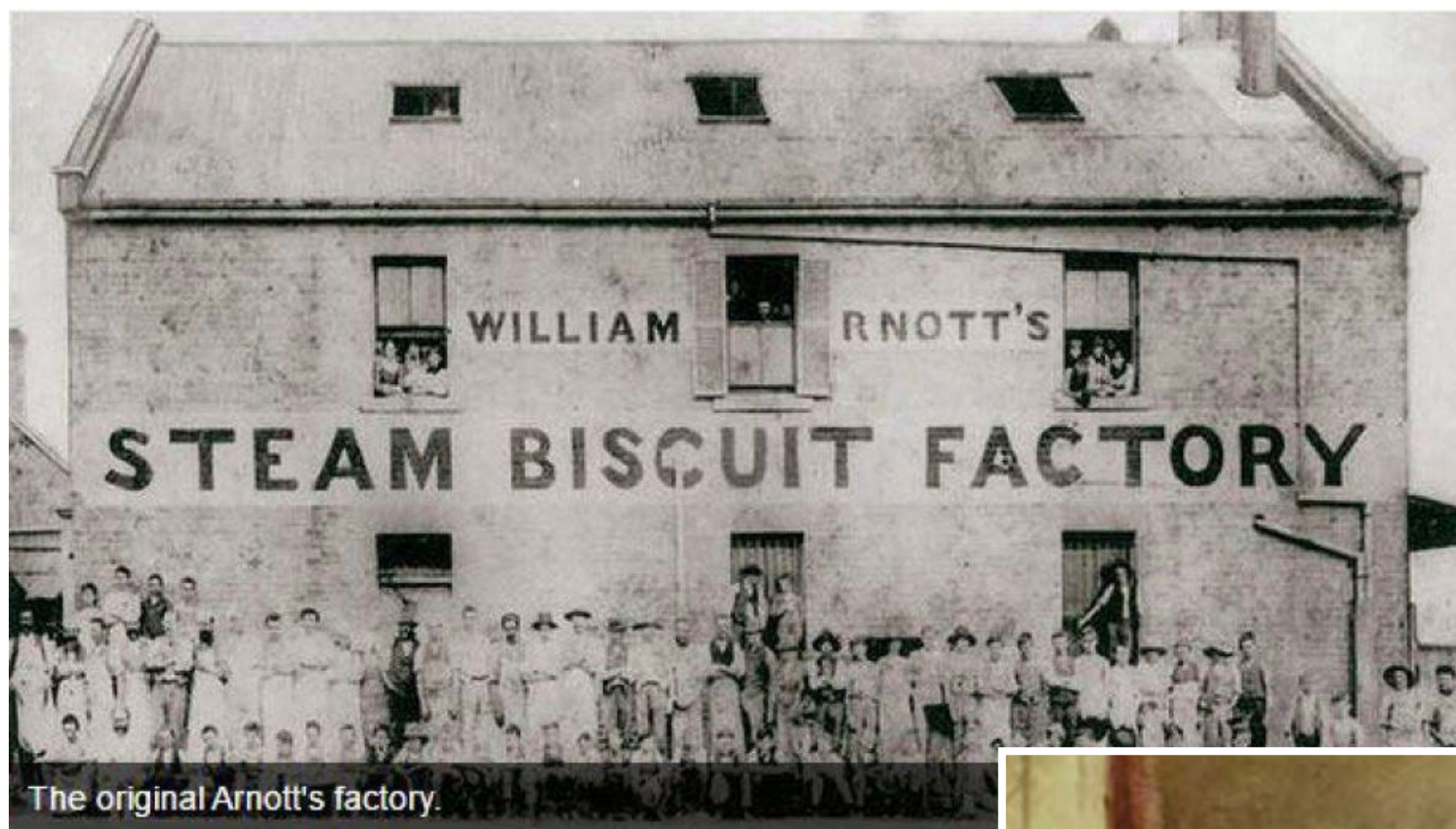
**John Watts**  
**(Retired barrister)**



# ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES



Collect the past and invest in your future, with an accumulation of knowledge and great items with history to share.



The original Arnotts biscuit factory in Morpeth.

**Y**ou can teach a child a lot of factual knowledge; but if you can teach that same child, through their own curiosity, how to seek out information, they will continue with their own learning process for their lifetime. This process also works with collecting. Your desire to learn more about the items you have collected often makes you an expert in that field.

Please remember to support your local small business operators, they are the mainstay of our communities and if we want them to succeed and stay afloat they need to be supported. Butchers, bakers, fruit and veggie, newsagents, upholsterers, cafes .... there are lots ..... even your town's antique shops. Support your local Antique Shops Taree – Isadoras, Clancy's Emporium and Col's Second Hand. Wingham – Delinquent Funk and Antiques And Old Wares – they all enjoy your regular visits.

Shop locally for your communities ongoing success.

Arnott's Group is an Australian producer of biscuits and snack food. Founded in 1865 by William Arnott, they are the largest producer of biscuits in Australia.

In 1865, **William Arnott** opened a bakery in Newcastle supplying goods to local people and visiting

ships. Among his products were ship's biscuits. He opened his first factory, known as William Arnott's Steam Biscuit Factory, in 1875 at Morpeth near Maitland. He launched the famous Arnott's Milk Arrowroot biscuits in 1882. The well-known parrot logo, which still adorns Arnott's trucks, was introduced in 1888.

William Arnott emigrated from Scotland with his brother in 1848. He worked as a baker in Maitland, New South Wales, before a brief period spent on the gold diggings. Returning to Maitland in 1853 he established another bakery business which was repeatedly destroyed by floods. He moved to Newcastle in 1865, where his business was successful enough to allow him to repay his Maitland creditors within a year.

The Arnott's Steam Biscuit Factory was established in Newcastle in 1875 to produce a range of plain and sweet biscuits and cakes. By 1882 the company was sending biscuits to Sydney by ship, then, by the end of the decade, by road. In 1894 the first Sydney factory began operations.

William Arnott died in 1901 but his sons continued to run the business, introducing many new biscuits. In 1906, **Iced Vo Vos** and **SAOs** were launched, while other new products at the time were Malt'O'Milk, Keil Fingers (later

known baked goods businesses including Adelaide's Motteram & Menz, Western Australia's Mills & Ware, Queensland's Morrow, and Melbourne's Brockhoff Biscuits, Swallow & Ariell and Guest's. It became a public company in 1970 and in the 1980s the Campbell's Soup Company acquired a 14 per cent share.

Over the following decades, Campbell's gradually increased its holding until, in 1997, the American company gained full control. In the mid-2000s Arnott's claimed to hold more than 70 per cent of the Australian market with its products found in 97 per cent of Australian homes.

In late 2018, Campbell's put Arnott's up for auction, raising the possibility that the famous Australian brand might return to local hands. However, it was announced in mid-2019 that **Arnott's had been sold** to Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, a private equity group based in the US. According to reports, the group is famous for buying and selling, rather than holding assets, so there are likely to be further ownership changes in the future.

Arnott's Biscuits is an Australian success story. Many collectors love old Arnott's advertising and biscuit tins, both old and more recent.

I have opened a shop (Antiques & Old Wares) at 12 Isabella St, Wingham. Come in and enjoy my collection spanning forty years of finds, call in and say hello.

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

**If you have items that you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals and/or sales. I love the history and stories of old and interesting treasures. Phone Rex – 0427 880 546.**

**Take care & stay safe!**



Founder William Arnott.

called Scotch Fingers), Ginger Nuts and Milk Coffee. A new factory was built at Homebush in 1907 as the company continued to grow. By the end of the decade, the company had about 150 biscuit varieties in the range. The Family Assorted range appeared around 1924, available in 7lb (3.2kg) and 4lb (1.8kg) tins while the popular Monte Carlo was introduced in 1926.

Arnott's continued as a family-run business into the 1960s, expanding by consolidating with other well-



# COOK YOUR WAY TO INDONESIA!



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**O**nce you start cooking any of these recipes . . . you are on your way to Indonesia!

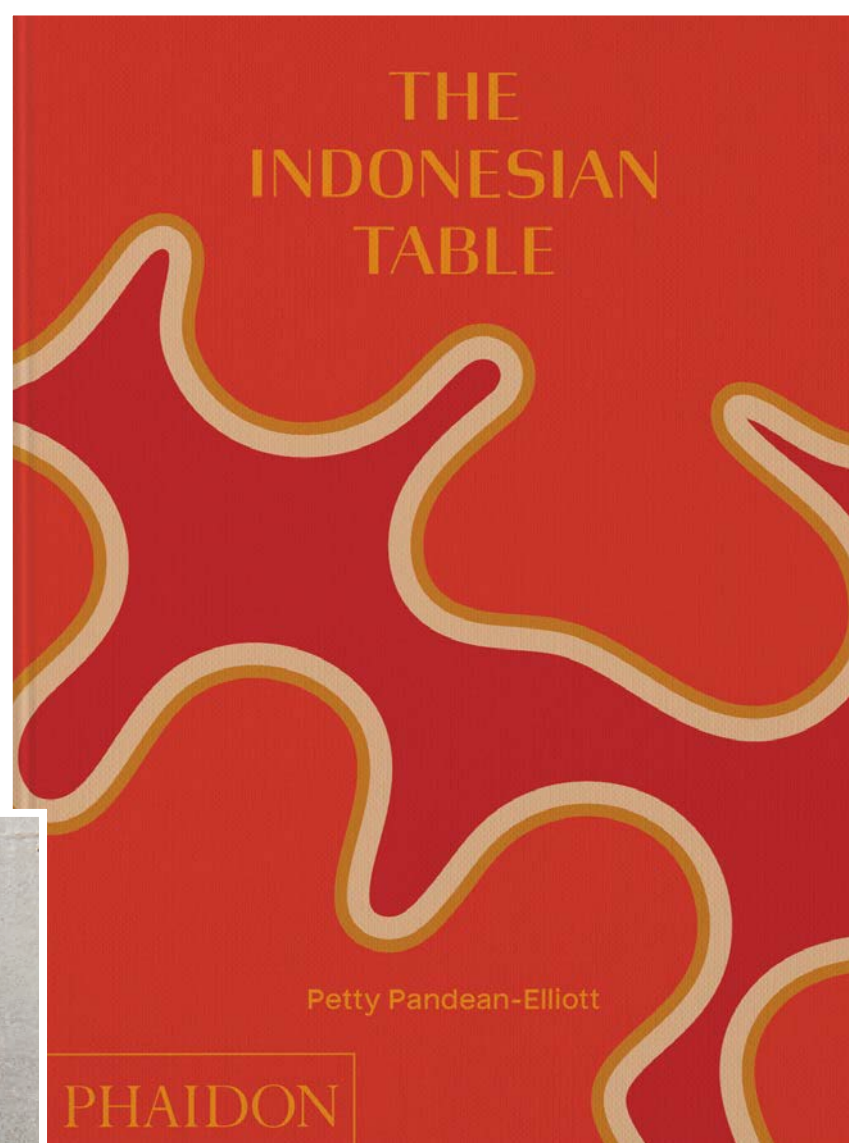
Even if you haven't been to any or many of the archipelago's 17,000 islands, just looking through the book is enough to make you want to go there . . . remember these were the world renowned Spice Islands . . . a collective of cultures and cuisines, the Indonesian table is rich in heritage, history, colours, texture, taste, aroma and variety. The author comes from Manado, North Sulawesi but we travel with her throughout the many islands and

their different cuisines and her personal reminiscences. It's an informative history and smorgasbord of richly endowed and diverse cultures.

It's a beautifully produced book, the recipes clearly set out with tantalising photographs of the dishes, the scenery and the local lifestyle. It's a virtual travel book of locales, history, characters and easy to follow well illustrated recipes. You want to cook (and eat) every dish on every page!

It's a wonderful book which would also make a wonderful gift.

**DM**



## BOGOR TEMPEH LAKSA

Laksa Tempe Bogor

The people of West Java were never ones to waste food, and this Bogor laksa is traditionally prepared with grilled oncom, a beautiful orange fermented soy product from this region. Visiting my uncle in Bogor was always a treat, a time to enjoy this laksa with combro, a fried snack made with grated cassava, oncom, chillies and basil.

This laksa is often prepared with chicken, but I've opted to use tempeh to keep this dish strictly vegetarian. The broth, beautifully golden from turmeric, lemongrass and lime leaves, is equally fortifying and delicious.

Origin: Java

Preparation time: 20 minutes, plus 10 minutes marinating time

Cooking time: 35–40 minutes

Serves 4

### For the spice blend:

- 1 tablespoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon white peppercorns

### For the laksa:

- Salt, to taste
- 250 g/9 oz tempeh, cut into 1-cm/½-inch-thick slices
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil or vegetable oil
- ½ quantity Yellow Spice Paste
- 3 green cardamom pods, slightly crushed
- 4 makrut lime leaves, torn
- 1 stalk lemongrass, crushed and tied into a knot
- 600 ml/20 fl oz (2½ cups) coconut milk
- 1–2 tablespoons coconut sugar (optional)
- 200 g/7 oz dried rice noodles
- Handful of basil
- Juice of 1 lime
- Boiled Sambal to serve
- For the toppings:
- 2–4 eggs
- 50 g/1¾ oz (¼ cup) bean sprouts
- 2 tablespoons Crispy Shallots



For the laksa, put ½ teaspoon of the spice blend into a medium bowl. Add 100 ml/⅓ fl oz (scant ½ cup) of water and ½ teaspoon salt and mix well. Add the tempeh, stir to coat and marinate for 10 minutes.

Heat a griddle pan over high heat. Working in batches, add the tempeh and grill for 2–3 minutes on each side. Transfer to a plate. Repeat with the remaining tempeh, then cut into 1-cm/½-inch cubes.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the yellow spice paste and sauté for 4 minutes. Add the remaining spice blend, cardamom and half of the tempeh. Mix well and cook for 1 minute. Add the lime leaves and lemongrass. Pour in the coconut milk and 300 ml/10 fl oz (1¼ cups) of water. Season with coconut sugar, if using, and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medi-

**T**o make the spice blend, dry-roast the spices in a small frying pan over medium heat for 4–5 minutes. Leave to cool slightly. Transfer to a pestle and mortar and grind to a fine powder. Set aside.

um-low and simmer for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the eggs into a small saucepan of water. Bring to a boil and boil for 10 minutes. Drain, then transfer to a bowl of cold water to stop the cooking process. When cool enough to handle, peel the eggs and halve them.

Prepare the dried noodles according to the package directions. Drain, then transfer to a bowl of cold water. Drain again, then set aside.

Discard the lime leaves. Add half of the basil and the lime juice to the broth and cook for 1 minute. Season to taste.

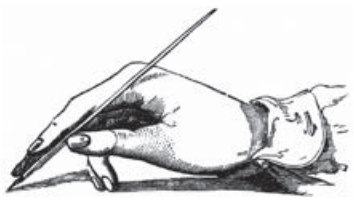
Divide the noodles into 4 bowls. Ladle 2–3 spoons of hot broth into each bowl. Top with eggs, grilled tempeh, bean sprouts, crispy shallots and the remaining basil. Serve with boiled sambal.

### Variation:

#### · Jakarta Laksa (Laksa Betawi)

This laksa has a deep and rich umami flavour. Add 1 teaspoon shrimp paste and 2 additional large red chillies to the paste. To your spice blend, add 1 teaspoon dried shrimp. Replace the tempeh with 100 g/3½ oz firm tofu (cut into 1-cm/½-inch cubes), 100 g/3½ oz shelled prawns and 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, thinly sliced. Add the chicken and tofu to the broth and cook for 10 minutes. Add the prawn and cook for another 2–3 minutes. Omit the bean sprouts topping and add melinjo crackers (optional).





# YOUR SAY

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

Hello Editor -

I was visiting my grandma in your area and she had a copy of the Manning Community News on her table with the front page DV article. As a single woman with 2 small children currently going through post separation abuse and family court, this article was very welcomed.

Thank you for not only writing about this issue, but for making it so prominent on the front page. Thank you for ensuring that coercive control was explained well. Unfortunately, I'll miss the new law coming in but I'm glad that other women in my situation will hopefully be protected by the new coercive control laws. Thank you for making it clear that leaving isn't the end, it's the beginning of a new hell we must

go through before freedom. Thank you for showing how it is so difficult for woman to actually leave, and how unfair it is that we do and often don't get to go back. It's awful to know that I'm not alone, and I'm so grateful my kids and I didn't end up in the worst type of statistics. I'm not sure how we will pay for the rest of court but there is strength in escaping and being able to fight to protect your kids.

They tell me freedom will come.

Thank you for shining a light on this and helping to provide ideas to make a solution. Sorry, this isn't the most eloquent email. I'm a bit emotional, but really I just wanted to say thank you for such a well written and presented article. I appreciate it. Kind regards, Kate.

**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](mailto:editor@manningcommunitynews.com)

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Publisher and Editor DI MORRISSEY

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