

# THE NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH

SHOALHAVEN, NSW

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## WHERE'S THE HEART

BONNIE CASSEN

**S**ITTING on committees at Council, Councillor Nina Cheyne became bothered that although there was Aboriginal representation, there was no real Aboriginal decisions or voices. They weren't really being heard. There was engagement, but she questioned, if their ideas and viewpoints were being progressed, and if their vision was being taken into account for the future of the town.

Councillor Cheyne reasoned that it had been done for Marriage Equity, so why couldn't the Shoalhaven Council endorse the Uluru Statement of the Heart and send a message to the Government that the Shoalhaven supports the Statement. Why not call on the Government to put it to a Referendum?

A lot of planning and consultation went into preparing the motion for Council. The Aboriginal community needed to understand the process and what it meant to put the motion forward. There hadn't always been good experiences for Aboriginals with Council in the past. There was also concern that the motion would be blocked, which is why it was important for there to be agreement and support to put it forward.

Over two community meetings and many more informal gatherings and discussions, words were shared, understanding gained, support given, signatures collected. Community groups, human rights groups, paid attention and showed their support – Amnesty, Shoalhaven Transition, Getup and The Greens. Hundreds of signatures ended up being collected. The gallery at the Chambers was packed and overflowing.

Councillor Cheyne delivered an emotional speech in putting the motion to Council.

"Some people say I am political in putting up this motion. I'm not. I make a stand for all human beings in this room to be treated fairly whether they are black, pink, purple, rainbow. I don't care. Everyone deserves to have a voice in this community. That's why I put this forward. Aboriginal people don't have that in this community. We give tokenism here and there. We need to raise this up another notch and allow them the space to be who and what they are meant to be in this community. We need Aboriginal inclusion to move this city forward.

Today I stand with my Aboriginal friends to plead that SCC accept the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It's a statement of peace, of connection, of inclusion, of justice and reconcilia-

tion. Not too much to ask. It calls us to be mature, to own our past, to admit our wrongdoing and seek forgiveness, compassion, understanding and common ground for the greater good."

The motion was ultimately defeated 7 votes to 5, with only the Greens Councillors and Annette Alldrick supporting the motion. The mood was one of shock and anger, with no one expecting that the motion would be voted down, especially as there really wasn't a valid reason for doing so.

"I'm disappointed that my fellow Councillors didn't support the community," Amanda Findley said afterwards. "They clearly had their own agenda. They certainly acted like they didn't understand the motion. The motion wasn't calling for us to change the constitution. They tried every dirty trick in the book to try and not have that motion heard. The desperation of trying to find some formal process to hang the motion on."

Councillor Patricia White thought, as a member of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee, that she would be invited to any community consultation. There were those that thought her whole argument resembled a child who hadn't been invited to a birthday party.

What these councillors don't



Councillor Nina Cheyne at the community consultation

seem to understand is that consultation needs to stem from the Elders. It is their advice that drives consultation, and why the process has gone this way. The community wanted to consult with people they trusted.

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee has very specific Terms of Reference, and it is generally tied up with local issues. There are also a whole lot of local government acts that exclude involvement in political matters. The nature of its role actually makes the Committee irrelevant for the purposes of consultation.

Mayor Findley responded to the cries about community consultation with, "I hear the hypocrisy in that, just who was being consulted. Because we actually made the observation, that it wasn't our consultation to have. It was a consultation to make sure that all of the Aboriginal people within our community were in agreement with councillors bringing this to our Council. Seeking our

opportunity to give voice to the voiceless, to give power to the powerless. Whose opportunity for consultation was it, and why, when it's not done to our needs, do we feel aggrieved at that? We have no right."

"Last night was about justice. It wasn't political, it just makes common sense," reflects Councillor Cheyne. "Let's have our Aboriginal people included. They just want a Makarrata. They want peace with us, and a voice in the community where they can help get recognition"

I'm confident that we will get there. What last night did was bring a massive awareness to the Uluru Statement. The whole process brought a lot of Aboriginal people and human rights groups from across the Shoalhaven together."

Public support for the Uluru Statement of the Heart is growing with 60.7% of the Australian population agreeing with its adoption. Malcolm Turnbull has previously rejected the idea of taking it to a Referendum. ■

50 people attended this packed community consultation meeting





# Editorial

EDITING THIS ISSUE of NBT, putting it together, has made me reflect on where Australia is as a nation and the importance of small independent publications, such as this. The importance of social media as an information sharing device; the way the internet connects us together in a changing world.

Grass-roots movements are growing and pushing the collective agenda. Plastic free groups are driving change and are making slow but steady progress. The Stop Adani and Lock the Gate movements are examples, although with the pursuit of fossil fuels still propelling our country backwards, the progress forward is painfully slow.

Nina Cheyne along with her fellow Greens on council did something special last month. In joining with the local indigenous community, it was another people push, calling on Council to endorse the Statement of the Heart. It was an attempt

at sending a very powerful message to the government; saying as a community this is what our country wants. We are a democratic country. Please listen to the people.

And yet, at the recent Council meeting, the motion was blocked by obstructionists; resulting in their true colours and allegiances being exposed. Their views were made crystal clear. Only the Greens councillors and progressive Annette Alldrick voted in favour of the motion.

While the opponents cried wolf, the truth is there was extensive consultation. Gash's interrogation of Charlie Ashby, following his deputation, was unwarranted and raised questions as to her motives. While this action did not cross any particular line, it unveiled a bias that is not conducive to community consultation in the truer sense.

For democracy to work,

it means using your vote, your voice – to create change. Exercising your vision for our country and our future means taking action. If democracy, civil rights, human rights and our environment count then none of us can afford to be apathetic.

With the USA losing influence, the next superpower isn't China, or Europe or Japan. It is us, the people, together – united and strong.

There is growing evidence from around the world that social media is changing the dynamics of the past. Young people are becoming more involved. The future is theirs and that is how it should be. It is good for democracy. With both Federal and State elections looming in the near future, politicians are on notice.

I hope you enjoy the winter issue.

Bonnie Cassen

# Big supa rethinks plastic, but not hard enough

WITH NSW THE only state not to have banned single use plastic bags so far in Australia, it has been up to local grass roots movements to push the plastic ocean issue from the ground up. Pressure finally saw both Woolworths and Coles announce a ban on single use plastic bags by June 2018, just in time for Plastic Free July – encouraging consumers to have a go at living plastic free for one month.

Stores all over the country have been preparing customers for weeks, reminding them that in July they would have to bring their own bags; stores also selling out of keep cups and stainless steel straws, teams of sewers stockpiling Boomerang Bags. It will be interesting to see how the Shoalhaven fairs in its commitment to going plastic free.

Judith Deane, from Shoalhaven Transition, has been campaigning against plastic pollution for many years now, teaming up with Antony Hill from Plastic Pollution Solutions, to bring education into the primary schools and to their families. She has also been very vocal in lobbying the local Vincentia market place, being extremely influential in getting Woolworths management on side on the plastic issue. Again, the actions will be interesting.

Woolworths has now committed to removing plastic straws from sale by the end of 2018, further removing plastic wrap from fruit and vegetables, and investigating how they can replace plastic from the whole-sale supply chain.

These initiatives are huge wins for the environment, seabirds and marine life.



Globally one million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals die each year from plastic ingestion and entanglement. Australia uses around 10 million single use plastic bags a year, and these moves by Woolworths and Coles will see around 5.2 billion bags a year taken out of circulation.

Although around one billion single use plastic bags will still be available in NSW from a combination of smaller stores and chains. Costs structure changes within the packaging industry may see the costs of these plastic items go up as the production runs decrease, and the costs of non-plastic reusable bags decrease as demand for them increases.

Consumers do have the power to influence change and are powerful players in the market, but it does take a significant push and commitment to make it happen.

Of the most concern is the thicker reusable plastic bags being sold by supermarket chains, including both Coles and Woolworth, for around 15 cents per bag. Past experience from interstate and international markets indicates that when a single use plastic bag ban has been implemented, people stockpile plastic bags, then use the thicker reusable bags as rubbish bin liners with more of these ending up in our waters.

"We don't see these thicker plastic bags as a solution, and the idea is really counter productive in getting people to transition away from plastic", says Judith Deane. "I'm also disappointed in the range of bags both Woolworths and Coles have offered as replacements, most of which still contain plastic. I'd prefer to see quality hessian and canvas shopping bags."

While big business will always pursue profit, and everything the big supermarket chains do, is in the name of profit, they also cannot afford to ignore the issues that are important to their customer base. People need to remember that plastics are made from fossil fuels – oil and gas, and increasingly fracked gas is being used to produce plastic. Now that's something to think about.

To get on board for Plastic Free July and learn about how to replace plastic in your daily life, visit [www.plasticfreejuly.org/](http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/)

# ON HER ROUNDS

BY MOTHER SUPERIOR



The question is, has the Member for Gilmore come a bridge too far? Or, to put it another way has she burnt all her bridges?

Ms Sudmalis has been telling Mother Superior for some considerable time about how she has been working her butt off for the past five years to secure funding for a new bridge across the mighty Shoalhaven and at last she is able to announce success. Well done, Sudsy!

The trouble, however, is that the wolves are baying at her door; for there are those who no longer see Sudsy as a safe bet at the next election. Fortunately for Ms Sudmalis she has friends in high places, for no less a person than the Prime Minister has come to her aid. It appears she is highly regarded within the ranks of the nasty party. She also happens to sit comfortably in that faction that is far to the right of Genghis Khan. These are the people that wish to sell off the ABC and wholly support the Zionist desire to shift our

embassy to Jerusalem. They are the cruel advocates of our shameful asylum seeker policies. One of her closest allies is Tony. She voted for him when he was deposed by Malcolm but now she loves Malcolm too, and may be even Barnyard!

I say this because Ms Sudmalis supports the energy policies favoured by the bulldozer party which looks after the interests of big coal. Although as far as Mother Superior is aware, Sudsy was not invited to join the Monash Forum (perhaps, she was not considered important enough). Still she is on the public record as being all the way with the Adani coal mine proposal, so her views on global warming become self-evident.

Mother Superior favours 'liberal values'. What is important is that the Member for Gilmore does not. The once great party, which Sudsy represents, was long ago captured by fascists elements. These people don't care two hoots for middle Australia. 'They don't like the public broadcaster. They don't like public education. They don't like public health. They just don't like the public!'

# Austerity for National Parks golden anniversary

PENNY SHARPE, SHADOW Minister for the Environment, recently revealed an almost \$22 million cut to the National Parks and Wildlife Service's 2017/2018 budget. Since 2011, 49 permanent rangers have been lost – now national parks will lose 14 regional managers and 15 area managers. Greens MLC Dr Mehreen Faruqi reported that 10 pest management officers will be lost, leaving only eight staff to manage weed and pest programs across the State.

Our national parks face around 40 million visitors each year, and these budget cuts will mean staff have fewer resources to service the growing number of visitors.

According to Penny Sharpe more than 200 field-based staff have lost their jobs in the past 18 months. Critically important pest and weed control programs have been discontinued; facilities such as picnicking and camping areas in national parks across the State are being decommissioned due to a lack of resources. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is 50 years old. It should be celebrated, not slashed to the bone.

Michael McFadyen who worked for the National Parks and Wildlife Service for 30 years reports that the number of rangers employed has

dropped from about 300 to just over 200 under the Liberal state government – 300 rangers were already insufficient.

Some perceive these cuts as a punishment, a stripping of its 'green berets'; those who save our forests and wildlife on a daily basis, but the reductions are more accurately a reflection of the small government policy of the current Government.

The NPWS needs to become once more a stand-alone, independent service and have direct access to its environment minister, to provide unfiltered and fearless advice. National parks are here to stay and comprise a large and vital part of NSW estate. These important public assets require adequate funds and professional staff to ensure security for wildlife, wilderness and visitor experiences. Volunteers, donations and commercial development are no substitutes for government support. While there have been some recent reappointments advertised at lower pay and skill grades, much more needs to be done, including a vision for national parks.

Current short-term thinking on the environment could cost the NSW Government at the next election. It needs to rethink its priorities.



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# 30 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT

IN DECEMBER 2018, the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum is celebrating the 30th Anniversary of its opening in December 1988. During December and all through January, the museum will be holding a range of functions and events to celebrate the rich history of the area and important role the museum plays in the cultural life of the Jervis Bay area.

The Museum officially opened in 1988 and is situated on four hectares of reserve along the Currumbene Creek, donated by the Shoalhaven Council. The Museum's original purpose was to house the Lady Denman ferry, which was built in 1911 in Huskisson and worked on Sydney harbour until 1979. The Museum was also built to house a collection of maritime and surveying instruments and objects, collected by local landowner Warren Halloran. This unique, world-renown collection is now preserved in the Museum's Science and the Sea Gallery and is maintained by the Museum's curatorial and preservation staff.

Over the years, native gardens, a pond and other buildings were added to house a growing collection of local history exhibits and to meet the community's need for exhibition areas. The museum now has several gallery spaces, including the Vera Hatton and the Kingfisher galleries,

which showcase the work of local artists and craftspeople, as well as hosting travelling exhibitions. The Museum also plays an important role in the local indigenous community, hosting the Laddie Timbery Aboriginal gallery and indigenous exhibitions.

A not-for-profit community organisation run largely by a dedicated group of volunteers, the Museum is a significant cultural centre for the

Jervis Bay and Shoalhaven areas. As our 30th anniversary approaches volunteers and staff are busy preparing the festivities. Watch out for key event announcements in the future. If you would like to be involved, please feel free to contact the museum.

We look forward to celebrating with you

BELOW: The Lady Denman Ferry and Museum in the early years



## Shared Pathways – SeeChange Jervis Bay

*This year the outdoor sculpture exhibition formed part of SeeChange's Artpath exploring the festival theme Shared Pathways. The inspired winning work by local artist Michael Purdy titled 'Tree Spirits' is described by Purdy as being a 'part of an ongoing journey – exploring and celebrating life, death and the afterlife of trees.' The diverse selection of works exhibited in the bushland setting reflected a feeling of profound & deep connection and concern for our environment by the artists.*

*Akira Kamada a local sculptor and installation artist who organised the exhibition on his property in Tomerong also held a series of workshops for adults and school students leading up to the festival. Kamada encouraged artists to focus on an appreciation of the ephemeral nature of environmental installation and site specific works, including the joys and challenges of working with the environment such as rain, wind, sun and local wildlife.*

**Right:** Michael Purdy's sculpture *Tree Spirits*



## Markets – a world of local offerings

WHEN YOU THINK of local markets the smell of fresh leafy herbs and spices comes to mind, people chatting, coffee permeating the air, buskers playing, community in action. On any day the market is a source of goodwill and health.

Farmers markets provide the freshest and tastiest produce available. The proof is in the taste of the fruits and vegetables. Fruits are allowed to ripen fully in the sun and are brought directly to you - no long-distance shipping, no gassing to simulate the ripening process, no sitting for weeks in storage. This food is as real as it gets – fresh from the farm.

The food you buy at local markets is seasonal, fresh and delicious, and reflects the truest flavours. Shopping and cooking from the farmers market helps you to reconnect with the cycles of nature in your area. As you look forward to asparagus in Spring, savor sweet corn in Summer, or bake pumpkins in Autumn, you reconnect with the earth, the weather, and the turning of the year.

Buying directly from growers gives them a better return for their produce and a fighting chance in today's globalised economy. Reducing food kilometres, saves significant resources including transpor-

tation (fossil fuels), packaging and cold storage. Conventional agriculture uses many more resources than sustainable agriculture and pollutes water, land, and air with toxic agricultural by-products.

The highly processed produce found in supermarkets is grown using pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and genetic modification; is often irradiated, waxed, or gassed in transit, having negative effects on human health. Small scale organic farming yields nutritious produce using sustainable techniques, picking produce right before the market, and growing heirloom varieties.

At the grower's market you find an amazing array of produce that you don't see in your average supermarket - red carrots, a rainbow of heirloom tomatoes, purple cauliflower, stinging nettles, green garlic, watermelon radishes, duck eggs, maitake mushrooms.

You will find meats, cheeses, and eggs from animals that have been raised without hormones or antibiotics, who have grazed on green grass and eaten natural diets, and who have been spared the cramped and unnatural living conditions of feedlots and cages that are typical of animal agriculture. A wonderful opportunity to relish the biodiversity of your area.

Artisans rely on markets, passionate cooks, nutritiously crafted lore, always happy to dispense free advice about cooking with the produce they are selling. You can also join the much loved and popular Shoalhaven Organics Food House and as a member receive a discount on all your purchases along with wholesome recipes.

Wouldn't you rather stroll amidst outdoor stalls of fresh produce on a clear day? Listen to our local buskers rather than roll your cart around a grocery store with artificial lights and piped in music.

Coming to the farmers market makes shopping a pleasure rather than a chore. Plastic bag free growers markets are a community hub; a place to meet up with your friends, bring your children, or just get a taste of small-town life in our majestic Shoalhaven.

**JULIE DANSER - TOMERONG MARKET COORDINATOR**

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# Environmental damage huge from Tathra fires

BONNIE CASSEN

**A**FTER the fires have ripped through the town, after the horror has been lived and the whole damn disaster is still sinking in; while the loss is still raw, and grief is still overwhelmingly real; another challenge begins. The assessment of the damage. The devastation to the environment, the wildlife lost, the homes, the memories.

The damage from the fires was huge. Official figures confirm 65 houses, and 35 caravans and cabins were destroyed, with a further 48 damaged.

Tathra is quite an advanced town when it comes to sustainability – honouring its commitment to 50/50 by 2020 with community energy initiatives on most community buildings and a beautiful solar garden which spells the words image.

The town is climate aware and yet it was caught out in this fire by a lack of communication – a mobile blackspot awaiting funding, not prioritised. Caught out by a totally freak event – an extremely hot day - in March, early Autumn, an unprecedentedly hot day, in an unprecedentedly hot month, in an increasingly hot year. In fact, it didn't feel like late autumn at all. It felt like Summer. Not Spring even. Summer. In March. Temperatures reached 40.1 degrees in Sydney's Bankstown; although in Tathra itself it was relatively mild 35 degrees maximum.

Heat waves are becoming more common outside of summer, as well as more frequent and intense; extreme events are happening regularly, rather than once every 50 or 100 years. Rainfall patterns have changed, both in timing and intensity. The effects of a changing climate.

With international efforts attempting to keep increases in global temperature rises below 1.5 degrees C of warming, the Tathra fires clearly demonstrate some of the things we will be dealing with as weather becomes more unpredictable and extreme.

Along with the pressures, distress and panic that such a catastrophic fire will no doubt bring, went the blame. Rumours circulated of warring fire factions, community demands, back burning accusations, and of course Malcom Turnbull on his visit to Tathra after the fires, normalising the extreme fire event as something that always happens in Australia and always will.

"To say that there always will be fires, when we know that it is a climate related event, was damming the next community to exactly the same fate as ours, without ever trying for a better outcome for that community." Says Jo Dodds, Councillor with Bega



: Flames and smoke colour the sky during the March fires at Tathra.

Valley Shire Council, and Tathra resident.

There is quite a body of science that clearly shows the trends - that fires are becoming hotter, fire seasons longer, and the frequency more intense.

The fire department has long been training its force in preparation of extreme fire events, how best to deal with them, how best to fight them. Some reason the importance of drone maintenance of forest areas, so as to spot fires early, getting teams to them before the fire can take hold. However, whatever sparks a fire is simply the trigger; the igniting of what is already there to burn. And for an extreme fire event to take place, the fire is already there waiting greedily, hungrily, ready to come to life, to go off in a second.

"Fires are an interesting one because they don't just start over nothing, you can have all of the conditions for a hot terrible fire day, but as long as nothing ignites it, nothing happens. It's a complicated series of events that has to happen for a fire, as opposed to a flood or tornado. There were at least 10 other fires in the Bega Valley that day, the intense wind being the key factor that set off the one in Tathra."

"Afterwards I was able to step back, and do a risk assessment, think about what caused this, and how could I stop this happening again. Just that stepping back, made me very very aware of the risks we're going to face in increasing numbers as the temperature rises. Because it only has to change minutely to change the weather patterns, and the moisture that's held by the landscape. People cannot know what it was like to stand in that wind and the heat of the

fire and watch what can go wrong with one spark. One spark on one of those days can take lives, houses, wildlife, forests."

And the impact. Fires create a lot of destruction, it destroys homes, ripping through them like a furnace of heat, leaving debris littered everywhere. Asbestos burns, damages, slays. Then there is the actual environmental damage, such as the asbestos and chemicals illegally dumped in the forests, now exposed after the fire has ripped through. The wildlife lost. Habitat gone.

The cost is also cultural and social and historical - so many vectors at play. Many of the houses destroyed in the fire have now been cleared, flattened, prepared - ready to rebuild. The uncontrolled demolition of houses. Chemicals burnt, now in the soil, the surrounding area, the atmosphere. The human impact, the mark, the slur.

And then there is the soil conservation risks. With large areas of natural covering stripped away, by the fires, low shrubs and grasses gone, the steep slopes from the forest have no defence in heavy rains. Polluted soil can wash down into to the Bega River below, right where it meets the oceans and the sensitive lagoon ecosystems exists.

"My big call is to ask people to step back from the politics, step away from the shouting voices and the agendas and have a look at the likely consequences for their community of having climate change continue on the trajectory that it is on," warns Jo. "Because it is going to bite, and when it does, it bites hard. It takes your house. It takes your pets. It takes all of your memories, and in the worst case it takes lives."

## The First National Parks?

THE WIRRIMBIRRA were areas that were set aside as sanctuaries or increase areas – places where The People were not allowed to travel, to hunt or to live, although occasionally a yuri woman would take up residence on the edge, and be allowed to remain there upon condition that she ensure that no person enter those lands. They were areas where the animals and plants could live undisturbed by human-kind, where they could increase and spread outside the boundaries, ensuring that there would always be a source of food and medicines, even during the worst of times.

Because The People were not allowed to traverse the Wirrimbirra, there was, of course, no archaeological evidence of their existence, and unfortunately, therefore, the various governmental agencies have ignored their importance to Aboriginal people all over Australia. This ignorance, and it can only be called ignorance, has led in the past two hundred years to the destruction of so many important habi-

tats that had been protected for tens upon tens of thousands of years by our Peoples, and therefore, to the extinction of many of our animals and plants. The major problem is that agencies involved in Aboriginal heritage do not recognize that the complete absence of evidence of Aboriginal occupation of special areas is itself evidence of a very significant place.

The D'harawals had many such Wirrimbirra, some are now included within the National Parks of the Sydney area, some are now industrial areas on the outskirts of Sydney. There were many of these areas throughout the Lands, varying in size, from small, for example near the Turella, in Sydney, to huge, for example, an area which used to be known as Wild Dog Plateau complex near the Nattai and Burragorang Rivers.

*The material presented here comes from D'harawal Climate & Natural Resources – a book published by Envirobook. Its author is Fran Bodkin (a D'harawal Elder) and the accompanying illustrations are the work of Lorraine Robertson.*





# Civil Rights, Human Rights, Our Rights

BY STUART REES

*Australia's cruel bureaucracies, the unravelling of a fair and just system of governance and democratic freedom.*

**S**OCIOLOGIST Max Weber warned that if bureaucracies – like Australia's Department of Home Affairs for example – were left unchallenged, they would threaten individual freedom. Conformity would be demanded, punishment dished out for non-compliance and people would end up in an 'iron cage.'

The Czech novelist Franz Kafka described the nightmares of dealing with cruel bureaucracies, avenues of appeal blocked, along with any efforts to gain an audience with bureaucratic chiefs. He described unaccountable procedures, inaccessible documents and encounters with faceless, humourless officials.

Running government departments by fear may seem as preposterous as the notion that an Australian cricket team would plan to cheat in a Test match. But fear engendered by cruelties has become central to the operations of an allegedly rational, efficient Australian government. It's not that unusual.

Each day, huge numbers of families bargain at the interface between themselves and a bureaucracy, perhaps a Traffic Department, Centrelink, a Housing Department, Home Affairs, Health Insurance Companies or the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Regarding the latter, 55 year-old Hamish, who is blind, has explained, "Over the last nine months, I have phoned NDIS every other week and left my requests. They never responded to my calls. Eventually I called my MP. When she intervened, NDIS replied."

Thousands of individuals on bridging visas or temporary protection visas wandering around major Australian cities will have no influential MP who might intervene on their behalf. Applicants for citizenship may also feel powerless. They are all up against the Turnbull/Dutton engineered Home Affairs



LNP Minister Peter Dutton seems proud of the bureaucratic bullying his department inflicts upon the voiceless and vulnerable

Department which is fulfilling Weber and Kafka's predictions. An iron cage has been crafted, endless nightmares guaranteed.

## Cultivating Fear

Being frightened to complain enables government by bureaucracies to proceed unhindered. In office buildings in Canberra, demoralized public servants pore over papers, fail to clear their in-trays and play with people's lives. Minister Peter Dutton and the public servant chief of Home Affairs, Mike Pezzullo, seem proud of their reputation for being bullies. The bureaucracies they preside over are distant, invisible, inaccessible and largely unaccountable.

To the people whose lives are affected by getting nowhere with bureaucracies, it is no consolation that the staff may be almost as fearful as the applicants whose claims they sift and judge. If your boss is a bully, you may decide that it's best to keep your head down, keep the process going, do as little as possible for the vulnerable and as much as possible not to disturb the system.

Excessive delays in responding to citizenship applications illustrate Weber's warnings. To powerless applicants, non-responses feel like indifference, a maladministration thriving on fear. There's another explanation: office in-trays

not being emptied because the government has outsourced services or has limited funding to recruit staff, train and support them.

A senior Federal politician has told me, "Some of these problems may not be the fault of existing staff. In an under-funded, under-staffed outfit like Home Affairs where many of the experienced Immigration personnel have left, morale is at rock bottom."

## Discrimination, Maladministration

In the conduct of government administration, it may be naive to assume that a scrupulously fair, due process occurs. During 2013, former Minister for Immigration Scott Morrison directed ASIO to delay security clearances for refugees. A clear 'No' to due process and 'Yes' to discrimination and punishment for certain groups.

An official alarm bell rang when the Federal Ombudsman reported in December 2017, that on issues such as the handling of citizenship applications that required integrity and identity clearance, some people had waited over 18 months for an outcome. The report also noted an increase in the number of applications where a decision had not been made for over two years.

The following case refers to an application which has stayed unresolved for three years. Given the fear that people experience, the names and some details have been changed.

On their daughter's birth in Brisbane, stateless parents

applied to register their daughter as an Australian citizen. But Immigration – now Home Affairs – seems to have been determined to delay or resist claims from people who might not look like white South African farmers.

The dehumanizing journey of father Matt began with an assurance from a government department that the application concerning his little daughter would take no more than 80 days. At that rate the issue should have been settled by September 2015.

Frustrating years for Matt and his wife waiting to have their application answered have also involved a middleman, an Immigration Agent, who could be helpful, or might be part of the delay. Letters to and from the relevant government department are funnelled through such agents and only reach applicants indirectly.

Between September 2015 and April 2018, Matt received four dismissive letters from the government department, each saying that the matter is complex, even though the law on such matters is crystal clear. The letters included references to complexity and security and were signed by the first names of different public servants: William one day, Amanda the next.

Immigration agents may appear indispensable but can be part of the maladministration. They take information from applicants, dress it up in their own legalistic jargon, put it on headed notepaper, post the information to the government department and charge their clients large fees. Matt estimates that the fruitless application process has cost him over \$10,000. In the last exchange,

his Immigration agent charged \$600 to post the documents which the family had assembled. A dismayed and almost beaten Matt says, "It's a brutal process".

Matt has also explained, "If we ever protested to the department, that could affect our applications. The best to happen would be being pushed to the back of a queue, the worst to have our application turned down. There's nothing we can do."

At least Matt, his wife and daughter are not imprisoned on Manus or Nauru. An editorial in The Saturday Paper of March 24 listed the names of seven people who had died in detention while Minister Dutton was responsible for their care. The file of Fazl Chegeni ran to 700 pages. The paper shuffling must have been tiring. Eyes diverted from a touch of humanity must have begun to ache.

ABC's Four Corners could investigate the extent to which politicians and their public servants are governing by fear. Alternatively, a Royal Commission should be asked to examine the interface between powerless people and a Home Affairs bureaucracy whose Minister seems unmoved by the nightmares he inflicts on his clients. Because freedoms and even lives have been lost within his department's iron cage.



## Become Famous!

We welcome all contributions about local issues and events, poems, photos and any other items of interest to our local community. Contact our editor Patrick Thompson on 040 236 1424 or e-mail pat@envirobook.com.au

# Australia needs a strategy for nature 2018–2030

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S new draft Strategy for Nature has been described as a 'global embarrassment.' If adopted, it would replace a currently unfunded policy of substance with airy statements. The authors try to convince the reader that civilisation needs nature and much of the strategy should have been relegated to an appendix.

Headings like – 'We must work together to care for nature' is followed with 'Caring for nature is essential if we want it to persist, to provide services for present and future generations and to remain integral to our national identity.' No data, funding plans or projects to protect the natural environment back up these remarks.

Yet 'Strategy for Nature' is designed to replace the previous Biodiversity Conservation Strategy that

has measurable outcomes and was once funded. Under the previous and current Federal Coalition Governments the funding and the public service administration of the projects went, but now strategy is to be gutted. While the Coalition government allocated \$1.4bn to environmental funding in the 2013/14 budget, there was a 30.2% drop in the 2016/17 budget down to \$980m. It fell again in the 2017/18 budget to \$945m (Adam Morton, *the Guardian*, 13 Dec 2017).

The Federal Department of Environment and Energy is almost a shell. Its programs like Landcare, Indigenous Protected Areas and the National Water Initiative should be well funded. Identification and protection of World and National Heritage values must be accelerated. The National Reserve System needs to be strengthened and

managed. The extraction limits established under the multi-billion dollar Murray-Darling Basin Plan must be enforced and adequate environmental flows secured using Federal constitutional powers. The Regional Forest Agreements must be scientifically reviewed and replaced by a new deal that protects our remaining publicly owned native forests. The curtailment of land clearing which underpinned Australia's carbon concessions in the Kyoto protocol in 1997 must be reinstated. This minimal list of unsupported environmental policy reveals that our national environment program is now a sham.

On all fronts Federal environmental management is being swept away, in a time when environmental protection is more important than ever before.

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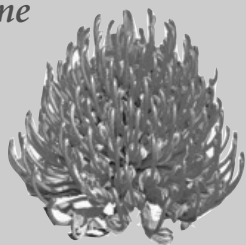
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# Mapping nature just like a scientist

JUST LAUNCHED THIS year the south coast has its very own nature mapping application, recording flora and fauna in the area and helping with both classification and identification of species, and how populations change over time.

Fiona Stewart, was doing a survey on her land when she realised that the existing catalogue systems weren't set up for her area and proceeded to work with the developers to have it adapted. The atlas of life Budawang Coast was developed under the NatureMapr digital app, where enthusiasts can record sightings and have them identified by biologists, and to determine the biodiversity of local area and any hotspots that develop.

It is a knowledge sharing device and of great value to the community for developing a rich data base and encouraging deeper connections and protection of each unique pocket of the region. A growing list of moderators are coming on board to share knowledge

"I think citizen science is a really important part of natural resource management. We all have a responsibility for our natural environment, and the exciting thing about Naturmapr is that it enables anyone to make



Glossy Black family Male (top) female (centre) juvenile (bottom)

sightings of things that are occurring in the natural environment and to have them identified." Fiona says. "I'm not a scientist but I am very interested in what is happening in the natural environment and I want to become more knowledgeable. Expert moderators can validate my observations. And if there is something unusual or rare, we have a way of acknowledging

that."

Property owners can develop their own field guides of what wildlife and plants are on their land, mapping it over time to show trends. We don't have enough scientists on the ground to make observations of everything that is happening.

"We have just launched a project on the Glossy Black Cockatoos over the whole south east NSW. Glossy Black's are losing their habitat, so we are now focussed on registering and recording where people see them, so we will have a much better understanding of these birds, how many there are, where they are and where their habitat is, how their breeding is going, etcetera."

One of the groups that became involved was the Fossil Walk. It enabled people to do their research prior to the walk and then to add to the research during their experience. Our database is actually the first to include fossils."

The NatureMapr application makes everyone into a scientist and opens the door to a world of nature exploration. No matter where you are wandering, if you see something unusual, you can take a photo, upload it and have it identified by an expert who may be on the other side of the

country. So much of our natural world hasn't been recorded, or recorded in a particular area. Whatever you record now will have further relevance in 10 to 15 years time as patterns start to emerge. The value of the data is that it exists now and can also be referred to in the future.

"Our advice is take a picture of every single species. It may be a rainbow lorikeet, and they may be common now, but who

knows if they will be here in 10 or 20 years time. The fact that they were there and were validated is a relevant sighting." Fiona explains. "We want people to take ownership of this, and encourage everyone to get involved because it really is a project that brings the community together and into much closer contact with the natural environment, and that's got to be a plus."



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## More Tomerong Quarry Debacles

THE TOMERONG QUARRY was again in the spotlight last week when a rescission motion was carried at the June Council meeting, meaning an independent investigation would not take place in regard to compliance issues at the quarry. The Tomerong Community Forum were disappointed that the investigation would not take place, leaving residents with many unanswered questions.

Shoalhaven Major Amanda Findley described the Councillors tactics as a charade "They decided they didn't want an investigation to go ahead. They made no commitment to getting a resolution for the residents of Tomerong."

The way to get an improvement from a process is to investigate that process, look at it from different perspectives. Changes will already have been instigated by new compliance staff so this process would build on creating better systems.

Peter Allison who heads the Tomerong community group, says "Council have taken the approach of drawing a line in the sand, the quarry has been shut since July last year. Compliance really needs to be sured up on daily haulage and extraction, but the biggest issue is rehabilitation."

The quarry had been blending imported material with quarry material, which in itself is illegal, but there has also been carcinogenic material brought in – fly ash – which puts

residents at risk from the dust. The quarry has been a repeat offender and the community cannot understand why more wasn't done to protect residents.

Some of the compliance issues have been going on for over 27 years, it is no wonder the long term residents are fed up. Then there's the issue of the illegal dam. Additionally, Councillors appear to be making decisions without paying due diligence to the huge file of information. A very dangerous practice. A councillor's job is to read the business papers and come to Chamber prepared to discuss the merits of each item, for both the community and Council's best interest.

Peter Allison believes it is a governance problem. "We need to be transparent about this. It's not a witch hunt, as some of the Councillors suggested. It's about

governance and compliance and why this was allowed to happen over such a long period of time. The people's health on Purnell Road has been put at risk. If the Council had done its job, the carcinogenic fly ash wouldn't have come into the quarry in the first place. So this is really disappointing."

Amanda Findley believes many Councillors came to the room in a disingenuous state, already knowing they weren't going to support the investigation. Despite originally asking for the investigation. Certain councillors then proceeded to shift the blame to the Major, claiming the process lacked their involvement. Residents in the Chamber could be excused for feeling confused.

**BELOW:** Dust from the Tomerong Quarry hangs in the air





# Shelter against the cold

LAST YEAR THE Shoalhaven community got together to operate a homeless shelter through winter in the Wesley Centre in Nowra. This year through the Safe Shelter project it's going one step further, opening a dedicated year around home in the old Neighbourhood Centre in Kinghorn Street.

"I feel really excited that we have managed to solve this." Said Shoalhaven Mayor Amanda Findley. "It's not the complete solution for everybody. But it's somewhere the current people can get relief from the weather, and it connects them with services, and that's really important. It's a really classic example of Council working

really well with community, and the desire of the community to do something in that space. The State and Federal governments need to get on board too and be a bit more supportive."

Last year saw different groups and individuals come from everywhere to find a place for homeless people to shelter, while they attempt to find something more permanent to live and get on with their lives.

"The need in the area already exceeds the 12 beds we have, so we are already looking to expand. If more people come we will organise something, either the Wesley hall, or work with another organisation," said John Steel, who along with

Lesley Lane runs the centre. Both positions are full time and voluntary. There are a further 250 volunteers on the books who work the overnight shifts. It's quite an operation.

Major renovations were necessary; two bathrooms had to be put in, a laundry, and a kitchen, the work being enabled by a large donation received from a family in the community. The group has also secured 6 repurposed buses from Sydney to convert into accommodation if the Council is able to rezone some land for the purpose.

Last minute jobs are still being completed, a big rush before the opening on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

The Shoalhaven has long been a vulnerable area with unemployment levels amongst



The new dedicated homeless shelter in Nowra

the highest in the country. With more and more government services being sold off, the least wealthy suffer the most as prices creep up, and the gap between rich and poor becomes greater.

Linsey Lane knows the situation well "For whatever

reason, people become homeless. They lose their job and lose their home. Technically 75% of this community is just two pay cheques away from homelessness. You miss a couple of payments and someone takes your house."

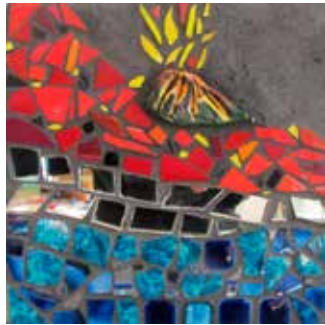
## Mosaic Madness

THAT IS WHAT Dóra called it, Mosaic Madness! The three hour mosaic workshop run by artist Dóra Rögnvaldsdóttir from Madcowstudio was fast paced, energetic, hands-on, a bit messy and lots of fun. And we did the nearly impossible, finishing a piece of creative mosaic work to take home.

This condensed workshop was a quick introduction to mosaic art that leaves you wanting to do more, explore more - rummaging through the ceramic pieces to find yet another little treasure that fits into your creative puzzle is quite addictive. Time constraints did not diminish Dóra's enthusiasm to get us all going, to instruct and help with techniques and give ample creative advice on colours, contrast, shapes and borders, it certainly takes a very experienced teacher to accomplish all of this with a group of beginners.

Usually the mosaic workshops are run at Madcowstudio in Nowra, there are regular weekly classes or full day courses available. The three hour workshop was a special event as part of SeeChange Jervis Bay Art Festival 2018 where Madcowstudio students exhibited their work, with Dóra offering this short introduction to the craft.

Originally from Iceland Dóra is primarily a sculptor. In her work she challenges the inflexibility and heaviness of the



medium, awarding a sense of movement and energy to her works. The effortless forms of Dóra's works are fundamentally a metaphor, expressing concern about the impact of humanity on the environment.

She works with a variety of mediums including steel, concrete, aluminium, bronze, timber and sandstone and her objects vary from small bronzes to mixed media wall sculptures to large outdoor sculptures. Dóra also makes hand-crafted jewellery from sterling silver and Icelandic stones, for these unique pieces she draws on Nordic myth to reflect culture and create keepsakes.

Madcowstudio offers weekly classes and full day workshops in sculpture, mosaic, painting and decoupage. Visit [www.madcowstudio.com](http://www.madcowstudio.com) here for dates and bookings and the studio's gallery.

*By Ingrid, a happy participant.*



Mosaic Madness workshop, photo by Dóra Rögnvaldsdóttir.

## NAIDOC celebrates women

NAIDOC Week this year runs from 8th July to 15th July, with the theme being - Because of her, we can! - celebrating the invaluable contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made, and continue to make, to our communities, our families, our rich history and to our nation. The role these women play in our society bring significant issues to the forefront, as they drive at the community, local, state and national levels.

For at least 65,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have carried the dreaming stories, song lines, languages and knowledge that have maintained and enriched Aboriginal culture.

The Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards is an opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the outstanding contributions that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and organisations make to their communities. This year awards will be hosted by Kiama Municipal Council on Saturday 28 July 2018 at the Kiama Pavilion.

2018 NAIDOC Events

NAIDOC Week Storytime at Ulladulla Library. Come along listen to a story and make a cool craft! BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL - LIMITED PLACES AVAILABLE

Fri. 13 July 2018 11:00 am - 11:45 am AEST

Wednesday 11th July - 10am to 2pm - Shoalhaven Fun Day - Nowra Showground

Friday 13th July - 2.30pm - NAIDOC Celebration - Ulladulla Civic Centre

Saturday 28th July - 5.30pm - Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards - Pavilion Kiama - Tickets On Sale - For further information see Kiama Municipal Council (02) 4232 0444

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# Interview with a Drum Enthusiast

BY J.M. BAY

I RECENTLY JOINED a drumming group. I had some idea of what to expect because I've been around drum circles before and they've always been fun so I was keen when this new opportunity came up. It was a really good experience. The people were welcoming, the rhythms were good and mainly easy to pick up, and overall I could see that everyone was enjoying it and the good feeling was shared through drumming. I thought "wow, I could do this again" and so I did and I haven't missed a chance since. I spoke with Jamie Bedson who runs a drumming group at Huskisson (Huskidrumming) to find out more about it.

**Q. Why do people join drumming circles?**

A. I find that the drumming circle is a great place to be, where people come together to make music without necessarily being trained musicians. In doing so they connect with others in the group, musically – yes, but socially too.

**Q. What makes for a good drumming circle?**

A. It's all about the experience. Different types of drumming circles suit different people, depending what they're looking for. Some drum circles are directed by a facilitator, who will teach particular rhythms and direct how they are played. Arrangements normally include traditional or cultural rhythms, but they can also be modern compositions that work well for the group. This type of circle suits drummers who like to learn and improve by mastering structured rhythms, and they like the direction that the group takes under the guidance of the facilitator. Other drum circles make music organically, based on rhythmic grooves that could be started by anyone and developed by others

as they join in. This type suits drummers that like the creative energy of spontaneously creating music with others.

**Q. I think both sound good, which one should I join?**

A. Join both, and more. Drum with a friend, take a class, practice on your own and drum with the jammers at the park. If you're lucky enough to have a workshop offered on team building days - do it, or go on a drumming retreat, whatever, all and more – just drum, drum, drum. But only if you enjoy it! For me it's all about fun. Sure I enjoy the host of other benefits it brings, but if it wasn't fun I probably wouldn't do it.

**Q. What benefits would they be?**

A. There's whole articles written on the health benefits alone, ranging from the exercise it gives the body and the brain, and it's also really good for mental health and general wellbeing. And there's also the social connection - you have to listen to others, musically, to fit in. Maybe you can feature with your contribution, no-one judges, it's just about being in the moment and doing your thing, at one with the drum, with the rhythm, with the group, with the music. It's a pretty special experience, meditative even.

**Q. Physical exercise?**

A. For sure. Drumming is inseparably linked to movement and dance, so it has to be played with intent and intensity, but we also learn to control volume and maintain accuracy. It can be physically challenging to keep up and sustain our part for an extended time. So it's a good workout, and with that comes the release of hormones, endorphins and the like, that keep our body and mind in good condition. Of course, good technique is also important like any exercise to avoid injury and to get the best sound out of our drums. So playing the drums



is a balance of body, brain and mind – we get a work out on all of these levels at the same time.

**Q. And Mental Health?**

A. Absolutely, yes. It is extensively used as a therapy for all sorts of wellbeing purposes. Programs are being developed for schools, aged care facilities, prisons, rehabilitation clinics, corporations and so on. Studies have shown benefits of drumming therapy for managing a range of conditions including dementia, trauma, ADHD, autism, depression, anxiety, the list goes on. But we don't have to be sick or in recovery to get the benefits of drumming, we just have to be alive. Drumming releases in us a 'feel good' emotional response, and I think that's why it's great for maintaining our health and sense of wellbeing: physical, social and emotional.

**Q. The links between drumming and the brain, what's that all about?**

A. There's a fantastic Ted-Ed talk about 'how playing an instrument benefits your brain.' It talks about how playing music engages so many parts of our brain. With drumming our bodies move to the rhythms and our listening focuses to the sounds we make both as individual players and as a group. We work out new rhythms and

patterns, sometimes rationalising how they need to be played, and with familiarity these patterns shift into our long term memory where we draw from them automatically without thinking at all. By drumming we actively make new memories, flexing our neuro-plasticity as our brain functions on multiple levels. But we don't need to over think it: to play we don't need to consciously think at all – at some point we just go with the flow and remain alert and responsive within the creative moment of making music with others.

**Q. So it's not a New Age fad?**

A. Drumming circles by their nature are pretty democratic, they have to be – it allows everyone to have a voice through their drum, and to work together to create music. So regardless of your personal beliefs or philosophical persuasions, everyone has a place in a circle and something to contribute. Whether you follow, lead, fit in or feature, it all goes into the mix to make the musical moment. Keep your mind and ears open and enjoy the ride.

As for a fad, I don't think so! Drumming circles, drawing from world music cultures, have been popular in the West for about 30 years now. The internet has brought a whole new level of learning and sharing to the

drumming community, so it's very strong and continues to grow, particularly as we see the personal benefits on so many levels, which are now validated by a wealth of studies and research across the world.

**Q. Lastly, what about public performance? Some people love the idea while others dread it. How do you deal with that?**

A. In the group I run public performance is not a key focus and it's not for everyone. Other groups may be different. By drumming we 'learn by doing', and for many of us the rewards in that are enough. If a performance opportunity does come up then those keen for the challenge step up, but there's no pressure for anyone to perform. Some love it, with all of the anticipation and adrenalin that goes with it, but really, as our group is made up of a diverse collection of individuals who do it for a range of reasons, performance remains an optional extra for those that want to add that experience to their drumming repertoire.

*Huskidrumming is a community drumming group running each Saturday morning at Huskisson Community Centre 10.30am – 12.15pm. Drums available, no experience necessary, cost \$5. Facebook 'Huskidrumming' for more details or contact Jamie Bedson at Huskidrumming@gmail.com.*

## GENDER JUSTICE

A CAPPSIZE EXCLUSIVE

NON-EXISTENT women or too many men? The gender issue has been looming in media headlines and in party politics. It's not the MeToo hashtag. Gender Justice concerns the number of women on company boards and among Federal MP's in the Liberal Party.

In the Shoalhaven region, Cappsizes has discovered the models for gender balance for which Prime Minister Trumble and the Institute of Company Directors could be so grateful. I'll come to those splendid examples later.

If aspiring company women knew what men do when they sit on boards, or become members of the Liberal Party, they might not be so keen to join them, or would they?

Cappsizes has it on good authority that apart from the requirement to be well dressed, it is also necessary for male directors to sit comfortably, never ask difficult questions but hold out grateful hands

for enormous pay cheques for doing nothing. The Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of banks and other financial institutions confirms Cappsizes' findings.

Then comes the case of the disappearing women in the Federal Liberal Party, or rather the disappearance of people who weren't there in the first place. Sudsie the MP for Gilmore, a resplendent colour scarfed but passive fixture behind the PM in the nation's parliament, had been rumoured as likely to be turfed out in favour of an aggressive male.

Looking like an endangered species, she generated sympathy in unlikely places. An ambitious Liberal politician, well known for massage parlour tastes, suddenly decided that instead of challenging Sudsie's pre-selection, he would bow to the 'we need women' appeal and allow the forlorn Sudsie to continue to sit and to nod at least until probable funeral rites at the next election.

Now we come to the Shoalhaven models of exquisite gender balance, even

of female to male imbalance. Among the three distinguished baristas in Vincentia's famous Albert & Miso cafe, Maree and Kaitlin are highly skilled young women and Dominic the only surviving male. If we add occasional barista Annie, the ratio is 3:1. In some quarters, the Human Rights Commission for example, this could be considered outrageous and Bookshelves Brandis may be asked to return from his London sinecure to challenge this unfair ratio.

But the most impressive example of balanced gender governance in a powerful institution has been observed in the committee of the Wrights Beach, Ahimsa Sailing Klub (ASK). At risk of boring readers with detail, I will list the four female members who hold significant positions in that organisation. The catering manager, artist in residence, treasurer and spiritual/ethics adviser - also known as the chaplain- are positions held by women. Their influence is balanced by four men. The Commodore, Vice Commodore, secretary/weather

forecaster and maintenance officer, positions filled by altruistic, humble, non-power-seeking men.

Readers may observe that even in that august institution, the influential positions, Commodore and Vice Commodore, are still retained by men. But at least there's balance, achieved without a quota, without money passing hands and not needing a sacrifice from a Commodore who, like the chairman of the AMP Society has been there for years.

Stop press news from the Institute of Company Directors, from the feminist 'break the glass ceiling' movement and from leaders of the Liberal Party, is that examples of female dominance from that Vincentia coffee shop are irrelevant. However, the splendid example of gender justice - Cappsizes would not put it lower than that- lies in the membership of the governing body of that inimitable sailing club and it's their practice which even the Liberal Party may try to imitate.

*Cappsizes, June 4, 2018*