

Canaries in the Coal Mine p.3 | The Importance of Public Education pp.4-5

Public Education Our Future

JAMES MARIUS

WITH NSW surging to the top of national economic performance the situation in the Shoalhaven should be of ongoing concern for our unemployment rates continues to be amongst the worst in the State. In this issue of the NBT we look at the importance of public education in finding solutions. Let us make no mistake about it. There is no magic solution beyond lifting the skills base of our community and this means investment in public education.

When it comes to investment in our schools what is needed is that schools be funded according to the needs of their students and what is required to educate each one of them to a high standard. This template was outlined in the Gonski Review and is currently being implemented to the benefit of our schools in the Shoalhaven. However, this funding formula, so vital to future prosperity and the employment prospects of our children is now under direct threat as the Abbott Government is refusing to honour the Gonski agreements. The Abbott Government has also indicated that beyond 2017 it will abandon funding public schools according to the individual needs of their students.

For the Shoalhaven this literally means a loss of many millions in direct investment. In the words of the NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli, it is "more than a breach of commitment with the NSW government, it is a breach of faith with all school students..." For the Coalition voters for the federal seat of Gilmore, it is likely to be a point of disconnect that will weigh heavily on their minds.

The decision to abandon Gonski funding is not the only attack the Abbott Government is making to education. The whole education system - from early childhood right through to universities - is under threat from budget cuts, privatisations and a "user pays" agenda. In the case of TAFE cuts the NSW Government is marching to the beat of the same drum.

There are two important considerations when it comes to obtaining an overview of public education as it is in the Shoalhaven. The first is that most of our kids attend government schools with a much lower proportion attending private schools than the state average. The second is that our public schools in the Shoalhaven have a lower socio-educational advantage than the national average. The importance of this measure has huge significance when it comes to the funding of our schools in the Shoalhaven into the future. What the Gonski reforms are designed to do is to close the gap between rich and poor schools.

This becomes more concerning when the extent of difference between schools in Australia appears to be growing. According to Professor Geoff Masters, chief executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research, Australia is the only OECD country where the gap between low and high socio-economic schools is getting worse. One might be forgiven to think that this would be a matter of urgent concern for the Abbott Government but it appears it places more importance on its ideological stance than funding public schools which it sees as not its responsibility.

Here in the Shoalhaven, our federal member, Mrs Ann Somalis, herself a former teacher gives voice to the argument that the former Labor Government had never factored into forward estimates the cost of funding Gonski, as if this somehow negates any responsibility to fund its reforms beyond 2017. The fact that her electorate is full of needs-based public schools that Gonski is designed to address is conveniently overlooked. The Abbott "lower taxes" mantra for investment futures is the only game in town.

On becoming Mayor in 2013 Joanna Gash told the Guardian's Bridie Jabour that "Unemployment is the major issue as far as we are concerned". After 17years as federal member Mrs Gash went on to say: "Certainly, we are looking forward to the federal

government introducing work for the dole. Whilst it doesn't pay anybody, it certainly gets our people out in the community with a work ethic that was let lie under the Labor government." When asked how long she thought it would take before the employment rate in the area might start to recover, Gash replied: "I don't think it is going to come down very quickly. It's going to take a while for confidence to be restored."

Our Mayor's prophetic words are ringing in my ears. Perhaps, it is time for a new frontier. For too long we have been hearing about "green army projects" when what the Shoalhaven needs is an investment in Human Capital. It is education that is important for innovation and productivity growth. It is education, experience and abilities of employees that have an economic value for employers and the economy as a whole. It is the investment in our schools, our Tafe's, our universities that will create employment opportunities and not tax cuts. We had plenty of those under Howard and it didn't make a jot of difference to employment in the Shoalhaven.

With Gonski reforms our schools have hope. Right now our schools are ready to ensure the potential of our kids. It is said that with on-going funding beyond 2017 our schools will have the resources they need. This money will result in improved student learning through:

- More individual attention in the classroom
- Extra specialist teachers in areas such as literacy and numeracy
- Greater support for children with disabilities or special needs
- Additional training and classroom support for teachers

In the words of Jesse Rown, Broulee Pubic School parent: "Money we spend today on education will still be delivering benefits decades down the track. We need to start thinking about education as a long-term investment with long-term benefits. Parents understand this but we need our politicians to do so as well." ■

Localwiki Start Up

GEMMA HART

TWO BAY AND Basin young people are urging locals to contribute their stories to a community website set up just for the Bay and Basin.

Jervis Bay and St Georges Basin Localwiki is a website that encourages local people to participate in the community around them. The website allows people to add, share and create their own stories about the places they care about. The site is completely free and the local wiki platform is active in communities across the world. In fact, over 400,000 people in more than 300 different communities use localwiki to access information about where they live, and to contribute local knowledge about their communities.

The Jervis Bay and St Georges Basin Localwiki started about three months ago, with the help of two local residents, Rachael Brown and Danielle Hobbs, who have been very occupied with adding content to the site.

"When we first started the project I thought it could be a bit of an adventure and something different." Said Rachael.

"This has been a fun experience and more people should get involved" Danielle stated.

The girls would like everyone who's interested to jump on board and create content for the site.

"The content should be specifically about the local area, said Rachel, "something like a cool place, or an issue or something important to you that's around the Bay and Basin"

"Anyone can add to the site, all you have to do is go to <https://localwiki.org/jb>." Danielle explained. "The Jervis Bay and Basin localwiki will come up, and you can have a look. If you want to add a story on something you just have to create a localwiki account, which is absolutely free."

So far the girls have added nine different stories to the localwiki site, and are in the process of adding more. The stories range from features on local artists, to a zombie attack response guide (just in case of emergency).

It's a great place to share information about the local area, and even advertise your business for free. So check it out and get involved. ■

Rachel Brown (on left) and Danielle Hobbs



letters

MUSEUM CHANGES

I would like to respond to some points in Peter Lavelle's article on the controversy at the Denman Museum, as someone who served the museum for seventeen years as property and maintenance manager and committee member I find it objectionable to be described as a 'rebel'. All the members of this group - including wives and friends who had been in Mr Lavelle's words 'co-opted' - are long standing working members of the museum with joint experience far outlasting any members of the current board. Also it has been mentioned that Mr Ferguson signed up 16 new members to tip the voting numbers his way. I am sure they are all sincere well meaning people but how many of them are now volunteering at the museum?

**Max Forster,
Old Errowal Bay**

MOTORSPORTS COMPLEX

Finally a newspaper that let's us know what's really going on in our community. Your editorial on our Mayor's way of "getting the job done" was spot on. A pity you weren't around to see Joanna Gash's idea of democracy when she had an "open" meeting about the proposed Motorsports complex at Yerrilyong. It is the community that lives in Falls

Creek who will be directly affected by this proposal but those who are opposed to it were told they could only bring seven people along to a meeting that was otherwise stacked with the bikers. It appears the Mayor only ever favours a one-sided debate. Has she stopped to consider the impact it might have on our hospital, which is already understaffed, underfunded and bursting at the seams!

**Christine Hutchison,
Falls Creek.**

GETTING HOLD OF THE NBT

I would like some information on how to obtain/purchase future copies of this publication. Please give me a HOW and WHERE so that I can become a subscriber.

I found the winter edition in our house, not knowing where it came from. I also found the publication to be quite informative & easy to read with it giving local information about matters I am interested in reading about.

**Joe Cassar
Sanctuary Point.**

(With each edition of the bush tele we distribute 4000 copies all over the Shoalhaven including public libraries and many cafes and shops. Subscriptions are also now available at \$20 per year.)

Avoidance strategy

GRAEME GIBSON

FOR AROUND 100 years up to the mid-1980s Australia was actively moving towards greater income equality. Since then though, the policies of governments of both persuasions have focused on economic efficiency rather than fairness. This has led to increasing inequality of income and Australia is following a world-wide trend.

World leaders such as US president Barack Obama, Pope Frances and head of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde have condemned this. Income inequality has been described as the defining challenge of our time.

Work done by The Equality Trust in the UK has shown that in rich developed countries, health and social problems are significantly worse where income inequality is greater. In brief, the Scandinavian countries do best with lesser income inequality and better health and social outcomes. The US is at the other end of the scale. It does worst of all the rich developed countries, and glaringly so. Australia, generally, is around the middle but heading toward the US on some measures.

Income inequality can be lessened through either redistribution in the taxation system or more generous benefits in the welfare system. It makes little difference how it's addressed

but the benefits are clear: A more equal society is better for everyone, not just the poor.

It can be hard to talk about that which makes you uncomfortable. Prior to the NSW elections in March, the Shoalhaven based *Equality for a Fair Go Campaign* had little success in drawing issues of inequality to the attention of candidates or the media.

And it can be hard to talk about that which draws attention to your failure, particularly over the long term and especially when it's close to home.

In mid-July a report on social disadvantage in Australia was released. The report, *Dropping Off The Edge 2015*, is based on 25 indicators such as family income, unemployment, education levels and crime.

Most of the Shoalhaven is categorized as disadvantaged, but there are areas, primarily around Nowra/ Bomaderry and Ulladulla that are categorized as most disadvantaged. The outcomes are strikingly similar to outcomes that have been found in other research dating back to 1999. In other words, in all that time, little has changed. Under governments of both persuasions.

This is well characterised in a 2013 report of the Shoalhaven Anti-poverty Committee which noted that when compared to the national average the Shoalhaven has consistently had:

"... higher levels of unemployment; lower than average levels of income; increasing housing prices both for rental and owner occupied dwellings; significant levels of disability or health related conditions usually related to poverty such as diabetes; high levels of alcohol, drug and gambling abuse and associated health and financial risks; significant levels of reported domestic violence; and high numbers of early school leavers."

On the launch of *Dropping Off The Edge 2015*, lead author Tony Vinson said there is a risk of stigmatising the communities that are named as most disadvantaged, but, he said, the risk of ignoring the disadvantage is far greater.

The *Dropping Off The Edge* report has received little public comment or media attention in Shoalhaven. Elected leaders have been entirely silent. The disadvantage is being ignored. ■

Dredging Update

CHRIS GROUNDS

THE SHOALHAVEN DREDGING projects are to be a little more drawn out than anticipated.

Council is not certain when the dredging will start as negotiations with potential contractors are in progress. The plan is to have all dredging projects completed by June 2016, which involves delays of a few weeks to months.

The best information was

that none of the tenderers could finalize work by the summer vacation.

It has been most interesting news that Council will not proceed with the sale of sand, which constitutes 'sand mining'. This was 'strongly opposed' by the Office of Environment and Heritage and other submissions to the Review of Environmental Factors.

Council now intend to reuse dredged sand on public land works as it represents a better value for money. This only applies to that portion of sand that was to be sold from Sussex Inlet and Conjola dredging only.

This however poses the issue of the longer term impact of removal of sand offsite from

natural systems, a matter raised by a number of people in meetings and submissions.

Foreshore nourishment along Sussex inlet will proceed as originally planned.

Councillors are now aware that "life-cycle cost of dredging is high and would not be generally acceptable for other assets it [Council] manages".

That assessment was made with sand mining revenue still a component of the project.

The other issue getting somewhat lost in the process is that the dredging projects constitute 'High Impact - Shoalhaven Wide' community engagement matters and that a continuing information flow to all the community should be happening.

CORRECTION

The article The Heritage Estate which appeared in the winter edition of the paper referred to a previous article on the same subject published in 2009 but which unfortunately attributed its authorship to Sally Gjedsted when it should have been Judith Gjedsted. We apologise to both Sally and Judith for the mix-up. Editor



THE NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor.

Editor: Patrick Thompson
pat@envirobook.com.au

Tel: 0402 361 424

Advertising: Ingrid Leusch

Tel: 0417 711 128

Send your letters, comments, pictures or contributions to The Editor, New Bush Telegraph, PO Box 49, St Georges Basin NSW 2540
Layout: Bungoona Technologies, Grays Point NSW 0404 065 376
Printer: Weston Print, Kiama NSW
BUSH TELEGRAPH ON THE WEB
www.newbushtelegraph.org.au

Anne's
2nd Hand Books
Shop 1
138 Junction Court, Nowra
☎ 4423 3281

SHOALHAVEN Swim & Fitness
Bay & Basin
Leisure Centre

Modern Gymnasium • Cafe
Learn to Swim & Adult Learn to Swim
3 x Indoor Heated Pools • Water Features • Spa
40m Water Slide • Squad Program • Child Minding
RPM Room • Aerobic Classes • Personal Trainers

The Wool Rd, Vincentia • 4406 2022 • shoalhavenswimandfitness.com.au

Follow us on Facebook for Classes and activities notification!

jervis bay
KIOSK
Huskinson's Premier Cafe
Seriously Good Coffee!
2/66 Owen St Huskinson
7am - 4pm 7 DAYS
www.jervisbaykiosk.com.au

Sussex Inlet Mechanical Services

- ✓ Comprehensive mechanical services
- ✓ NRMA Road Service
- ✓ Suzuki outboard sales & service
- ✓ Marine servicing

(02) 4441 1955
(02) 4441 3055

Unit 2/4 Flood Avenue Sussex

Canaries In The Coal Mine

CHRIS GROUNDS
CONSERVATION OFFICER
BIRDLIFE SHOALHAVEN

This title hardly seems an appropriate metaphor for the state of Shoalhaven birds but the miners tell that not all is well with the canary.

BirdLife Australia has recently released its "State of Australian Birds" report containing regional details of the status of many Australian species from data collected over the last decade.

The data extends concerns beyond the threatened species listings.

The Shoalhaven's emblem, the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo is one of a number of district birds identified as in decline on Australia's east coast by this report.

In the wet eucalypt forests the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo data shows a significant decline on the east coast as does the data on other well-known local species, the White-cheeked Honeyeater and Laughing Kookaburra.

The east coast dry eucalypt woodlands and forests have witnessed decline in similarly well-known species numbers such as the beautiful Variegated Fairy-wren, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Mistletoebird and migratory Dollarbird.

This is a matter of serious concern for these familiar



Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* This NSW Vulnerable threatened species faces a high risk of extinction in the medium term future. The first verified, successful nesting on the South Coast of this species has recently occurred in St Georges Basin. Photo Chris Grounds

species in the Shoalhaven but the catch is that these are not listed threatened species.

Some species such as the Golden Whistler, Striated Thornbill and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters however have increased in numbers so it is a mixed though worrying picture.

The Threatened Species profile for the Shoalhaven is even more sobering.

The Jervis Catchment Management Area, which embraces most of the Shoalhaven, has 47 bird species listed as threatened by the Office of Environment and Heritage under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 with 4 listed as at "extremely high risk of extinction in the immediate future". The four are

the Hooded Plover, Beach-stone Curlew, Orange-bellied Parrot and Regent Honeyeater.

The peril of the Hooded Plover is very familiar to the small army of Shoalhaven volunteers working in the National Parks Shorebird Project.

There has also been critical and telling revision of the status of a number of key species in recent months.

The Commonwealth critically endangered status has now been extended to include the Regent Honeyeater of which there are only an estimated 400 remaining in NSW.

The same change of status now applies to Eastern Curlew and Curlew Sandpiper which are summer migrants from the northern hemisphere.

These two species together with the threatened Little Tern, are of immense importance in the environments of Lake Wollumboola and Shoalhaven-Crookhaven Estuary, areas which are both listed in international treaties for their importance as bird habitats.

BirdLife International includes Lake Wollumboola, where 17 threatened species are listed, and the Jervis Bay area, in an international network of 'Important Bird Areas'. Both are part of the Jervis Bay National Park.

Indeed, a government commitment has been made to progress the RAMSAR listing of Lake Wollumboola, which meets necessary criteria but this has been delayed by the progress of planning of the lake catchment.

The state government has initiated and funded a "Save Our Species" program covering all plant and animal species listed as 'threatened' in NSW, which of course includes key coastal bird species.

On an international level the global seabird populations are being described as in 'catastrophic decline'.

A major cause of the threat to migratory birds is the damage to habitat along the flyways or migration routes, especially in south-east Asia but also in Australia.

Nationally, regionally and within the Shoalhaven habitat intrusion, damage and destruction are key high risk factors.

So much of the population pressure in the Shoalhaven, both residential and tourist, has been and is concentrated on the coast, its beaches and immediate hinterland involving the

lakes, lagoons, estuaries, coastal delta, floodplains, wetlands and forests all of which are prime bird habitat.

The development demands, which produce vegetation clearing and water pollution, continue to threaten the unique status that birds have brought to places such as Jervis Bay and Lake Wollumboola.

The burgeoning demand for off-leash dog areas consistently fails to recognize beach systems as bird habitat, often for nesting of critically endangered species such as the Hooded Plover.

It is somewhat worse than this already with many dog owners prepared to openly flout the regulations in declared dog-prohibited zones which so often associate with resting and nesting bird areas.

The petitions that some Shoalhaven Councillors seem all too ready to uncritically accept and respond to invariably fail to provide any recognition of birds, their status or habitat.

Even the professional advice given to Council in environmental reports can sometimes fail the standards test.

In July a new report released by BirdLife Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environmental Justice Australia, revealed that recovery plans designed to prevent Australia's most endangered species from extinction are failing to protect habitat.

The environmentally beautiful and precious Shoalhaven, touted as a tourist mecca for the grand natural environment will not remain so without a better understanding of what makes this environment so precious and the recognition of how fragile the balance really is. ■

End Of TAFE As We Know It!

FIONA PHILLIPS

NEARLY EIGHT MONTHS on from the introduction of the NSW Government's *Smart and Skilled* reforms for the NSW vocational education and training system, and people continue to raise concerns with what's happening with TAFE locally, including skyrocketed TAFE fees, axed courses, cuts to course hours, and job cuts.

While the aim of the reforms, according to the NSW Government's Department of Industry, State Training Services, is "helping people get the skills they need to find a job and advance their careers", the

reforms mean TAFE now competes directly with private training providers, with the public funding of TAFE no longer guaranteed.

To make courses attractive to private providers, TAFE fees in many cases needed to increase substantially. As TAFE prepared for the reforms, decisions were made on what courses to run locally and what courses would no longer be offered.

The metal fabrication faculty was closed down at the Nowra Campus meaning the loss of a number of courses and jobs. Pre-apprenticeship courses were axed. The Outreach

Coordinator position axed. Fashion - gone. Face to face hours for courses were also cut.

One semester on, and the course axings and TAFE jobs lost continue with the skyrocketed TAFE fees impacting enrolments. At Ulladulla Campus: the loss of the introductory Computer course which also taught Literacy and Numeracy; the loss of the Tourism and Hospitality course and the Tertiary Preparation Course. At Nowra Campus, the Electrical Head Teacher position axed.

The recent NSW Budget revealed there are 30,000 less NSW TAFE students enrolled this year. The reforms hit regional areas like ours particularly hard with high unemployment and often the need to re-train; yet people are faced with higher TAFE fees, axed courses that ironically would have helped gain skills for work, limited transport options, and even greater distances to go to TAFE.

A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in NSW is currently underway. We need the Government to guarantee the public funding of TAFE to ensure TAFE is here for future generations.

Fiona Phillips is the President of Labor's South Coast State Electorate Council.

Fiona Phillips and John Glyde



Shoalhaven Food House Inc.

Organic produce at affordable prices provided by a non-profit community group run by volunteers
Supporting local growers ❖ Bulk buying power ❖ Sustainable & ethical

Available at Tomerong Village Markets,

3rd Saturday every month,
Tomerong School of Arts Hall,
Hawken Road, Tomerong

Call 4443 6607 or 4443 4759



WIRIN WIRRA Native Nursery

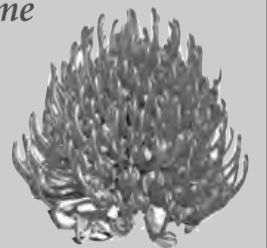
Full range of locally grown flowering ornamentals, screening, local species & bush food - tubestock to advanced

Wholesale Prices - All Welcome
Eftpos Available

0488 332562 Mob
4443 4029 Ph/Fax

wwirra@bigpond.net.au
wirinwirra.com

Located crn. Evelyn Rd & Hill St, Tomerong



THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

A Teacher's perspective

AS SOMEONE WHO grew up in a housing commission estate on the south western fringes of Sydney and who attended the local public school and high school, an inclusive public education is something I feel strongly about. Having lived and worked as a teacher in the Shoalhaven on and off for the last 20 years, this belief hasn't changed.

Too often these days I find myself trying defend public education in the face of what I believe to be a growing and ignorant belief that the quality of learning in public schools is declining, that curriculum is out of touch, that public school teachers have no control of students and lack quality pedagogical training and skills. I'm told regularly that I work in an education system that is failing students and can't possibly compete with private schools. This seems to filter down from the policies and words of the Federal government, through our mainstream media, is exacerbated through ill-informed comments on social media sites and finishes with the backyard discussions around the BBQ. Even standing on the sideline watching my children play soccer I have to grit my teeth as people start discussions with all those who will listen about 'how bad the local public school is'. You know, the one their kids don't go to and the one these people have never set foot in

themselves.

The thing is, everyone's an expert on school. Let's face it, we all went to school so we all know how it works and what goes on. Don't we? I don't begrudge people having an opinion, sometimes I just wish they were based on experiences and not on image, generalisations and misinformation. Although I know it not to be the case, the cynic in me sometimes thinks the whole private school versus public school debate has become a new prize in the entire 'keeping up with the Joneses' mentality. Sometimes I wonder if it's not just the flash house and car, the fancy overseas holiday and the investment property that people need to feel successful these days. A private education for their children now seems to take pride of place in that list.

Like I mentioned earlier, I grew up in a pretty tough environment and attended my local public school and high school. Without going into too much detail, I would learn about the cycle of poverty in Geography and then go home and see it in action in my neighborhood. So did many of my friends. Other friends came from the more affluent areas of town but still received the same public education. Regardless of this, so many of them are now successful adults with a tertiary education behind them. They run successful businesses and are

leaders in their chosen fields. They are part of happy and (hopefully) healthy families. They worked hard to get where they are today and the building blocks that helped them become the people they have become were formed by their families and through their 13 years in public education.

I suppose that's why it irks me so when I see the friends I went to school with put out Facebook status updates including pictures of their children in private school uniforms...but that's a gripe for another day.

INFORMAL CLASS SURVEY

So I got to thinking, why do I support public education so strongly? Is it because it provides me with a job? Is it because I dislike private schools? Or is it something else? As I contemplated this in a short break before teaching a Yr11 class I actually wondered how said class would themselves feel about public education. I wondered if they would even have an opinion at all. So I asked them. The initial answer was interesting and I wasn't actually expecting it, but in hindsight I'm not surprised. The general consensus was public schools are important in the Shoalhaven, and I quote here, "so poor people can still learn."

Okay, so that was a pretty simple consensus so I decided to press further. The discussion led

to things academic. They talked about assignments and study and deadlines. They talked about exams and marks and grades and going off to work and university. All these things are important and they are all the core business of any learning institution. So I pressed them further, got them to think. We talked about critical thinking skills and why they were important and then I challenged them to use their own critical analysis skills to really answer the question of why public education is important. I took note of some of the things they said. They included:

"We all have an opportunity to succeed."

ACCESS.

"Personal achievement, you're always going on about being the best we can be."

EXCELLENCE.

"We learn to be honest and trustworthy. You have to be able to trust us sir."

INTEGRITY.

"I have to be accountable for my work and actions."

RESPONSIBILITY.

"We all have to get along and work together."

CO-OPERATION.

"We have to show some pride in what we do and have a go."

PARTICIPATION.

"We learn to be understanding of each other...what's that word again?"

(Me) "Empathy"

"That's the one!"

CARE.

"We learn how to be fair about things"

FAIRNESS.

"We need to show regard for ourselves and others"

RESPECT.

The words in capitals represent the VALUES public Education stands for and after speaking to my class and hearing their answers I came to realise they are the values I also stand for. It's why public education is important. These are values that all communities should embrace and ones I believe represent the caring, just and civil Australian society we live in. The fact that the students understood what they are really learning is evidence that public schools and people who work in them do an important job and stand for values that we should all embrace.

Public schools are merely buildings that fill with adults and children from the local community. They are a place where people come together to learn, to express themselves and develop as people. Students develop knowledge and understandings from the key learning areas and enhance their skills in communication, problem solving, planning, organisation and research. They work on their literacy and numeracy skills and develop confidence in using new technologies. Safe and healthy

continued on p. 5

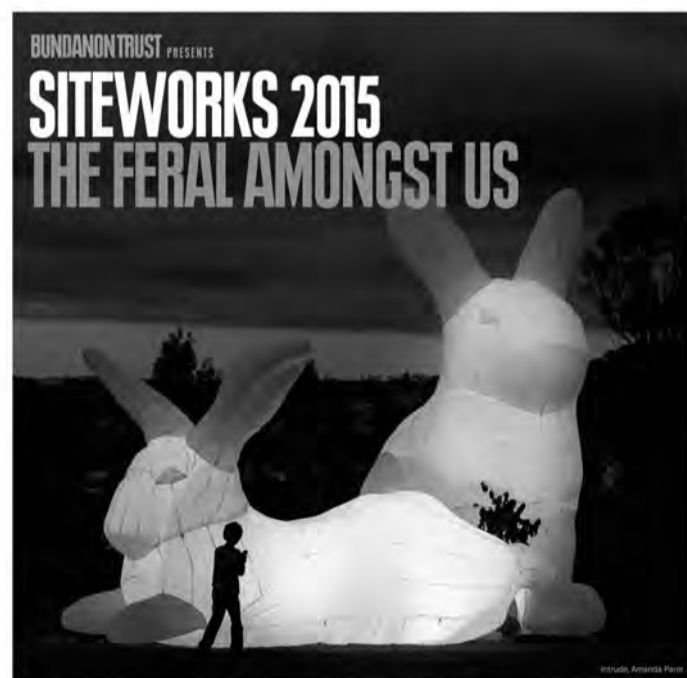


nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

NATIONAL PARKS DISCOVERY RANGER PROGRAM

In addition to our school program, **National Parks and Wildlife Service Discovery Rangers** offer great school holiday fun for the whole family: Hunt for bugs in **Dharawal National Park**; meet the Ranger at **Minnamurra Rainforest**; explore the treasures of **Bomaderry Creek**; introduce children to bushtucker at **Fitzroy Falls**; explore rockpools at **Seven Mile Beach**; or take an unforgettable forest night walk at **Depot Beach** ... and more!

For details of all the tours visit: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au or phone the Fitzroy Falls Visitor Centre on: 02 4887 7270

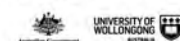


SITWORKS

RIVERSDALE
Gates open 12 noon
Camping \$10 per person

SAT 26 SEPT
BUNDANON.COM.AU

f t i #sitworks2015



Riversdale, Tana Lamtack



Rogyn Archer AC



Dinosaur Popping Zoo, Erin

Bundanon Trust presents Sitworks 2015: *The Feral Amongst Us* at Riversdale. Featuring feral talks, feral walks and feral works by artists.

New, site specific art works across performance, installation, sound and dance will enliven Riversdale. Join in talks, conversations and debates by day. Then eat, drink, and explore the moonlit bush by night.

There's fun for kids too, with giant rabbits, dinosaur puppets, kid's parade and more throughout the day and into the evening.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

A Parent's View

PAT THOMPSON

SHORTLY AFTER MY daughter started her high school years, I joined the school bus as an interested parent to attend the NSW All Schools Triathlon competition held annually in western Sydney. With a team of over 100 entrants Vincentia High School was one of the largest of the many schools represented. What struck me on that day was that as each and every one of its entrants approached the finishing line they were cheered with great enthusiasms by their peers. This to me said something about the spirit of the place.

In today's world our youth face new challenges as never before. Often we hear that our schools are not doing what is needed to prepare them in life. In a new digital age, as every parent knows the world out there is a stage that 24/7 has invaded our space. It is not only at home that we must deal with these changes but it is in our schools that these new challenges must also be faced.

Schools can never afford to have a static approach. As a parent walking the corridors of Vincentia High School I was certainly struck by a different feel from my own school days. Every school has its differences of course but here I found was a school with a different kind of buzz. It reminded me more of a university campus. The senior students had just opened their own cafe. Students seemed to do a good deal of wandering hither and thither and were not necessarily always in class. I can't say that every student appeared to be about studious industry but that is not what you would expect. No what I found at Vincentia was a happy and friendly milieu. It was a busy place with an air of freedom that in some ways astonished me.

Steve Glenday the principal says school should be fun. It has a job to do too. Staff are there to support and guide students to achieve their personal best. Like every organisation leadership comes from the top. It impresses me when I find a principal that not only seems to know the names of a thousand plus students but also shows a considerable understanding of the range of complexities that many of his students also face.

Talking to a business colleague I asked him how he found the students from Vincentia High. He said he thought the School performed well and offered good opportunity for those students that made the right choices. I was interested to learn that his staff mostly came from the school. Like their boss they were complimentary of their Alma mater.

Making the right choices is what parents want their kids to do. Academic success or distinction is not for everyone. Vincentia High like the rest of our government high schools in the Shoalhaven is both co-educational and comprehensive. Unlike our city cousins, there are no selective high schools in the Shoalhaven. Our schools offer equal opportunity to all whether gifted and talented or not. Aboriginal Education is an important part of Vincentia High. Indigenous students enjoy a wide range of cultural programs and activities. A number of units cater for students with a diverse range of disabilities. Individual, modified and alternate programs are designed to address academic, vocational and social skills based on interests and abilities of students.

This is what modern education is all about. In a fully comprehensive setting the range of desirable outcomes

good authority that students that attended Vincentia High and go on to the University of Wollongong have the highest completion rates of any high school in our region. What impresses me even more is the very large number of students obtaining vocational education and training enrolments. It seems that not only are the students leaving school ready for further education but many are already bound for jobs or at least half-way to future employment.

As a school Vincentia has also become a leader in the area of student well-being, recognising that mental health is a key issue in adolescent development. The school has invested heavily in staff training through the highly acclaimed MindMatters "frame-

work" that provides structure, guidance and support while enabling schools to build their own mental health strategy to suit their unique circumstances.

Schools do also have their funny side. Since the school has finally got its standardised Department of Education high metal fence, the number of students found wandering Vincentia shops or truanting on the nearby beach is said to have noticeably dropped. Loss of freedom does always come at a price!

Another moment of humour came when I was visiting the office of one of the school's deputies. I noted that from his desk, perched as it was with a glass window, he could survey much student movement in

front of him. He agreed there was not much that escaped his eye, mentioning that the classroom block had in fact been designed by a prison's architect.

In researching this piece I would like to have had the chance to visit more schools, but I feel confident that all our high schools are doing well. This is in no short measure due to the overwhelming dedication of our teachers. Sure there is a raging debate out there on teacher performance and there is a good case to be made for lifting the status of teaching as a career choice but equally important for educational outcomes is the need for lower class sizes with more teachers and ancillary staff. ■

Blessed Are The Cheese-Makers



LIVING AS WE do in country NSW it seems fair enough that one of our high schools is leading the way with preparing students for a life on the farm.

This week's school newsletter from Vincentia High highlights news from the ag farm. For some it may come as a surprise that behind the gum trees fronting the school a virtual farm exists with animals ranging from alpacas to prize-winning chooks and ducks.

There is always much happening down on the ag farm. This week students have been lucky enough to

be involved in "Cows Create Careers" program. While some students were being educated in how to look after two three week old carves, others were back in the classroom making their own camembert cheese.

For the year 9 agriculture class there was the witnessing the birth of lambs and learning to ear tag the new arrivals. For some after school training is part of their experience as they work on their skills in handling and preparing the animals for field days and shows.

The poultry shows have come to an end this year, although

there is still a lot of work to do to help improve the show birds. This year the school had a lot of success taking out prizes with over 30 birds being exhibited. There is much work involved in preparing a chook for the show; selecting the right chook, washing, cleaning and blow-drying, feeding and watering. Oh, were they as keen to clean up their bedrooms at home!

Meanwhile with spring in the air, the grape vines will soon be cloaked in fresh green leaves, so with the new year's fruit there will be the skills of the vintner to master as the vines yield varieties to tempt the wine connoisseur's palate. And those alpacas, well they have minds of their own, so should you meet one in the company of a student walking up stairs, then don't be alarmed, as it is all part of preparations for getting them ready for the Nationals in Sydney next month.

Above: (From L to R) At back: Ms Boyce (teacher); Jordana McLaren with fellow students Brittany Burnett, Hayley Ward, Dallas Mannix, Alana Cusack.



.....
"Teachers are the lifeblood of our education system. They are not only educators; they are also mentors and role models. Good teachers empower us to achieve great things." SMH, Professor Mary O'Kane, NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

A Teacher's Perspective

cont from p.4

lifestyles are promoted as are ecologically sustainable practices. Schools run a variety of programs that prepare students for further education and the world of work. All this is great and it's what schools are about, both public and private.

But for me I also like that public schools go beyond curriculum. Public schools foster a love of learning, high standards and care and respect for others. They prepare students to be active citizens of the world and asks students to be appreciative of Australian history

is multifarious. I am told on and our ever-changing society. These are the things I got out of school. I do pretty well at trivia contests too so don't get me wrong! I learnt lots of stuff but it's the values that really ingratiated themselves to me and those same values that made me want to be a teacher and still make me bounce out of bed every morning and pay it forward to our kids.

Next time I'm at the soccer I might just unclench the jaw and speak up for what I believe in rather than keep quiet to keep the peace. It's time more people stood up for public school values and the students, staff and families who embrace it. ■

Model & Wooden Boat Festival

THE JERVIS BAY Maritime Museum's Model and Wooden Boat Festival will be held on the October Long Weekend, 3-5 October 2015. The festival will encompass a number of static wooden displays, a model boat exhibition, radio controlled boats, children's workshops, music, entertainment, food and market stalls.

The Model Boat exhibition in the Museum will showcase the art and craft of model boats built on a small scale. The exhibition is an opportunity to view the exquisite workmanship that goes into making these intricate models.

The Museum pond will be taken over by a variety of radio controlled boats from local clubs, the Coastal Waters Model Yacht Club and Basin Radio Yacht Club.

There will be a number of wooden boats on display in the Museum grounds. Locally built boats from our heritage fleet will also be on display including

the historic Lady Denman, an inner Sydney Harbour ferry built in Huskisson in 1911, the Crest, a fishing boat also built in 1911 and our latest edition the Kingfisher, a 30ft post World War II fishing boat.

The Festival will also coincide with our monthly markets, which will be held from 8AM to 1PM on Saturday 3rd October.



Do You Love Your ABC?

A National Call to Action and Fighting Fund is being established to save the ABC from further funding cuts and to maintain its independence so that it can continue to be competitive and to provide quality programs and information for all Australians. The campaign is being led by Randal Macdonald, who was the Editor of THE AGE newspaper for 19 years, and who will be speaking at the AGM of FABC (Friends of the ABC) NSW, to be

held at The Sydney Mechanics School of the Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, on 26th September from 1pm.

We are planning to establish a Shoalhaven branch of FABC in the next couple of months. You can also help by spreading the word to as many people as possible via Facebook, Twitter (#saveourabc), Instagram or any social media or conversations you have. There will

be more news in the next edition of this publication.

Please go to www.abcfriends.org.au to join and/or make a donation to the campaign. If you join, you will receive the Update publication, which is filled with lots of local branch and topical news about the ABC. For local information, or if you are willing to help, contact Carmel McCallum: carmelmcc55@gmail.com or 0414 392 660.

Escape ARTfest

Artistic bliss in the MUD is the promise of the Escape ARTfest, celebrated during Spring in the Milton Ulladulla District.

The festival is a two-week or more creative feast of everything arty, themed each year (2015 = CLASH) and much anticipated by both the local and visiting communities.

The festival will once again kick off at Ulladulla Harbour with the popular 'Harbour Beats' lead by local drummers and performers, followed by a free outdoor music concert under the stars. This is

followed by a diverse range of happenings and surprises as the local creatives get inspired...

With an amazing line-up of over 70 events, ARTfest celebrates the full spectrum of art and culture... visual arts, sculpture, photography, music, literature, digital arts, film, performance, gourmet delights, youth and community.

The full festival details are available online at escapeartfest.com.au, and should you be one of those social media people, you can stay up to date through EscapeARTfest on

facebook.

So come and play, come and stay...Escape ARTfest 2015. Sept 18-Oct 4.



husky yoga studio

UPCOMING workshops

AUGUST

Fundamentals of Yoga
Sundays (8 weeks) 3pm-4:30pm
9 August - 4 October \$170

Fundamentals of Meditation
Sundays (6 weeks) 5pm-6pm
16 August - 27 September \$120
both for \$250
with Tracie Story
** no class on 13 September*

SEPTEMBER

Spring Seasonal Yoga Treat
Join us for a day of yoga, food and shiatsu
This workshop will teach you how to support your body through the natural cleansing season of spring.
Sunday 13th September
10am-4pm \$150
with Cate Peterson & Lars Skalmann

OCTOBER

Hormone Yoga Therapy
Saturday 17 October & Sunday 18 October
9am-4pm \$300 or early bird (before 20 Sept) \$270
with Julia Wohlrab

NOVEMBER

Summer Seasonal Yoga Treat
Summer - fire element. Heart and small intestine meridians. Embrace and express your joy.
Sunday 22 November
10am-4pm \$150
with Cate Peterson & Lars Skalmann

DECEMBER

Recharge for Christmas
Beat Christmas stress this year with a 2 hour session including juicy Yin, breath work and a long guided relaxation
Sunday 6 December
3pm-5pm \$35
with Mary

for more information contact Mary on 0437 070 200

www.huskyyogastudio.com.au 1/64 Owen Street, Huskisson NSW 2540

husky yoga studio

Husky Yoga Studio offers a safe space for the whole family to practice yoga. Yoga builds strength and stability, connects the mind and body while creating a true sense of peace.

Class Timetable

Mon: 10.00am - 11.30am	Zen Yoga with John
6.30pm - 8.00pm	Yin Yoga with Mary
Tues: 9.00am - 10.30am	Beginners class with Mary
6.00pm - 7.30pm	Intermediate (cancelled until further notice)
Wed: 10.00am - 11.30am	Seniors/Beginners class with Mary
6.30pm - 8.00pm	General class with Mary
Thurs: 6.00am - 7.00am	Power Hour with Gabbie
6.00pm - 7.30pm	Beginners class with Mary
Fri: 9.00am - 10.30am	General class with Mary
Sun: 8.00am - 9.30am	General class with Mary/ Gabbie (alternating Sundays)

Check the website for the latest updates to the timetable and workshops* *Some mats available. However, to avoid disappointment BYO own mat or towel

Prices
Adults: Casual visit \$15/10 Classes \$130
Seniors: Casual \$12/10 Classes \$100

phone 0437 070 200

Level 1 Shop 1 / 64-66 Owen Street
Huskisson NSW 2540

www.huskyyogastudio.com.au

Yoga is for everyone

Sustainability Workshops

Shoalhaven City Council run a series of free workshops for the community covering a range of sustainability topics for the home.

This "Home Sustainability" program is dedicated to educating the community about environmental sustainability, as well as have some fun and save money! Residents are encouraged to attend the free workshops and put the skills they acquire to work at home.

The workshops are short (usually 1 1/2 hours) and informative, covering a wide range of topics, including Composting, Worm farming, Veggie gardening and Chemical free cleaning, Bokashi and Healthy Soils. If you come along to a compost 1 workshop, Council even gives you a free compost bin to take home!

These workshops have been very popular over the years and will continue to be offered as a means for Council to support and educate residents on adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Workshops are free and are open to all Shoalhaven residents. Workshops will start again in Spring.

Bookings are essential: online at <http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Environment/Waste-and-recycling/Home-Sustainability-Workshops> or by telephoning Council's waste services on 4429 3129

Amnesty In Action

VINCENTIA HIGH SCHOOL students Julia Andre and Hélène Pirot are members of the newly formed Bay and Basin Amnesty group and have taken the message of social justice and compassion to the students of Vincentia High.

The group has been meeting in Huskisson for the past three months and have decided as one of their campaigns to support Syrian refugees as they try to resettle around the world. The

social media campaign simply requires students and staff to show their support by having their photo taken with a sign that says #open to Syria.

This is a simple but effective way of showing support to refugee's locally and around the world. Julia and Hélène have embraced the concept and supported by other students have raised awareness of this issue and Amnesty International amongst the

school community.

Other campaigns the girls are active in are the Community is Everything which is helping to create positive solutions for Indigenous young people who are involved with the justice system and they assisted in a stall held recently at the Huskisson markets to raise awareness and create conversations about this.

Planning has started for a photo exhibition to be held in

2016 at the school highlighting the stories of refugees from the local area. Both Julia and Hélène believe that education is essential to change perceptions and this would be an ideal way to do that.

Bay and Basin Amnesty meets at Huskisson community centre and if you are interested please email joanne.warren24@gmail.com.

Below: Julia and Helene



FREE Home Sustainability Workshops – are on again this Spring

- **New workshops include “Healthy Soils/ Healthy Life” and “Bokashi/Probiotics for house and garden”**
- **Don't forget to collect your free compost bin when you attend a Compost 1 workshop!**

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Council is utilising an on-line event booking service, so go to the Council website www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au, and follow the **Home Sustainability Workshops** link.



Shoalhaven
City Council

 **Get it Sorted.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PHONE THE WASTE HOTLINE 4429 3374

Community (dis-)engagement

GRAEME GIBSON

In 2005, along with a bunch of other people, I became interested in how our local council did things. As is the way with a young and curious mind, the more I looked the more I found to be interested in. Trouble was, from my perspective, the more you looked the more it became apparent that most people knew little about what was going on.

I had some time with a local Community Consultative Body – the Huskisson Woollamia Community Voice – and then the Shoalhaven Action Campaign, which, as the name suggests, campaigned for change. Specifically, at the 2008 local government elections, which ultimately saw a major change in the elected council.

The energy expended in this knocked the stuffing out of me and, as part of the recovery process, I started writing a personal debrief. Therapy if you like. After a while I thought there was more in this and headed towards an essay – reflecting on what worked, what didn't and why. Then a bit later on I thought, 'no, bugger it, there's a book in this.' Without wanting to sound (too) conceited I thought I had learnt so much about how things work – or not – at the local level that I wanted to share it. In fact (with rising conceit) I felt I needed to share it. This was a project that took a while. A long while in fact. I self-published *Beyond Fear and Loathing: Local politics at work* in 2012. And managed not to get sued.

Around this period a number of other things happened.

Under a new, and invigorated council a local open government forum was hosted at the Nowra School of Arts in early 2011. Council had, fairly, stated at the outset that this was a one-off, with no commitment to any future forums. With around 40 people on a mid-week morning I spoke about opportunities to engage people in local decision making. While entirely appre-

ciative of council's initiative I felt the forum was limited in its approach and finished with the statement that this was too important to be left to future chance. And set myself the task of doing something to follow-on, build-on the impetus from this first very worthy attempt.

This ultimately became GRASSROOTS: Local democracy at work, a public form in September 2011 which attracted 110 people into the Nowra School of Arts. Here they heard a panel of speakers – all deliberately from beyond Shoalhaven – on community consultation and planning, before deliberating in small groups. Then federal member for Gilmore, Jo Gash, was a very welcome participant. A number of people said they would like more of this type of forum which was generally well regarded. I was emboldened to do more.

With strident opposition from those with higher political agendas at stake, elected council knocked back a staff recommendation to waive hire fees on the School of Arts for a follow-up forum: GRASSROOTS 2, which I proposed for mid-2012. With support from University of Wollongong Shoalhaven Campus this took place in August 2012, shortly before council elections. On a wild and stormy night the forum drew around 60 people, unsurprisingly including a number of candidates for election to council. A feature of the forum was presentations from students at a local high school on what they liked and were concerned about. People love events that involve young people.

Both these forums were attempts at engagement, giving people facts and perspectives, with an opportunity to discuss in small groups. There is no attempt at controlling people's input or working to an agenda as is often the case with council initiated community consultations, which hover between providing *fait-accompli* information and placation.

Somewhere in this period council was developing a community engagement policy, which I had rather a lot to say about. This policy was ultimately adopted in December 2012 and launched in 2013. For the most part it has been entirely ignored since.

Earlier in 2015 I organised a Citizen Journalism forum at Squid Studio in Nowra. Citizen journalism is about releasing the shackles from that which can be reported publicly. It's not simple, but it's not beyond the reach of interested and committed citizens either. A panel of speakers presented their thoughts before questions from the audience of around 35 people. This was a different format to the previous forums and perhaps a bit boring really – which is meant with absolutely no disrespect to the panel or the moderator. After all, I organised it.

After each of these events I have had people say how much they have enjoyed it. How much they would like more of something similar. Every now and then I have asked who would like to help organise future events. These could be on a regular basis and might include forums as I have described above. It might include politics in the pub or kitchen table conversations. Or something else. Anything really, as long as it gives people an easy chance to be an active citizen in a respectful environment where diverse opinions are welcomed, rather than a stay-at-home whinger.

The response has been deafening, which, while disappointing, isn't surprising. Lucky though, I have thick skin.

My vision would be to put community engagement in the hands of the community, rather than relying on the whims of the council. If you think this is important, do something. Otherwise we can all be comfortably numb. ■

From School To Work

HOLLY PASTOR

WHEN A SOCIETY begins to question the worth of its Public Education system a discussion of academic quality and rigor tends to dominate debate. Yet this narrow focus often overlooks the holistic role a school plays in the lives of its community members.

It has been said on many occasions that a school's purpose is to educate its pupils, nothing more and nothing less. Yet a brief history of Public Education in NSW reveals the longstanding role our schools have had in strengthening a community, particularly in rural or regional areas. When we look at the inclusive nature of Public Schools and their willingness to accept and encourage diversity we can see a melting pot of culture and creativity that is designed to prepare young people for an increasingly complex world, where many of the skills required are only beginning to be understood.

The changing nature of schools has made an awareness of 21st Century skills essential for educators across the state, whose role it has become to pre-empt employment conditions and demands. While the uncertain aspect of these changes presents numerous challenges for teachers, a growing number of proactive schools have developed programs designed to suit the increasingly diverse needs of their students.

After the introduction of the 17 Year school leaving age, which makes it difficult for students to exit education without guaranteed work or alternative study options, many schools have noticed a change in their demographic. Students that would have left formal education in search of work or alternative training now remain in the classroom. This has led



to the need for more practical, work based programs to ease the transition from school to work for these students.

At Vincentia High School students have the opportunity to participate in the inVEST program. inVEST is a school-to-work program designed to meet the needs of students seeking to enter the workforce through a job readiness pattern of study exposing students to the world of work, TAFE/ College (Technical and Further Education), vocational studies, and on the job learning. It adopts the principles of Flexible Progression from a vocational perspective and maps core outcomes to deliver 3 years into 2, for a small group of twenty students, allowing them to graduate with a non-ATAR HSC in their 17th year.

The program has been very effective, and allowed many students to gain fulltime employment, or reengage with further study.

It is likely that in the future, a plethora of programs like inVEST will emerge to cater to the needs of students that do not "fit" the model for traditional schooling.

Without the foresight shown by proactive school communities, the needs of 21st Century young people are unlikely to be met. It is therefore important that schools are given access to needs based funding such as the Gonski model that can be used to develop programs that meet the needs of a school and local community.

If we do not continue to support the role schools play in forging the character of the next generation, we may find ourselves unprepared for the challenges of an increasingly uncertain future. ■



www.interiortradingco.com.au

ETHICALLY PRODUCED HOMEWARES

E: mail@interiortradingco.com.au

Ph: 0419 123 539

Enter Promo Code: **NEWBUSHTELE**
during checkout to receive 10% discount

**JERVIS BAY
MARITIME
MUSEUM**

**Open daily: 10AM-4PM
02 4441 5675**

**Woollamia Rd & Dent St, Huskisson
www.jervisbaymaritimemuseum.com.au**

- Home of the Lady Denman Ferry
- Significant collection of maritime artefacts
- Navigational and surveying instruments
- Exhibition galleries
- Museum shop
- Mangrove boardwalk, pond & native gardens
- Aboriginal Arts & Crafts: Laddie Timbery