



HUSKY CHURCH

Development or Heritage?

BY DR SHIRLEY FITZGERALD

THE demolition team has removed the old church hall on the site of the Holy Trinity Church in Huskisson. This was once the original church and probably the oldest building in Huskisson. Indigenous members of our community say it was used as a ration shed back in the day, where government hand-outs of food and blankets took place. There has been insufficient research done for anyone to really know enough about its history.

This is the shocking story of the Shoalhaven Council's attitude to this much-loved Huskisson iconic block with its lovely little Cyril Blacket designed wooden church, beautiful stand of trees and heritage of unmarked graves. It is being trashed with the approval of a local government that has not commissioned any independent studies and held no community meetings. Locals and plenty of people who visit as tourists have made their anger known through many letters and submissions to the Council. A petition of almost 3,000 signatures was ignored.

The next thing planned by the developer, Mr. Steve Bartlett, owner of the Husky pub, is to move the Blacket church across the site. By the time you read this it may have been moved. Originally he was going to demolish this too, but as a sop to the community he later offered to move it 'temporarily'. Some concession...not. The purpose of this is simply to reduce its heritage value and upset the local community. Its final resting place will be who knows where? We think the



We stand with you. This is shockingwhat is happening here at the church today. I speak on behalf of our ancestors... It's not a good day, it's a day of grieving ...that this could happen to this place. To this site. It's really not right that these things are happening to our ancestors and all peoples that know and love this area. Auntie Dawn Whaddy

best place for it is right where it is, on the corner of this lovely site.

This whole exercise is received cynically by anyone who understands the heritage values of this place. One of the official measures of heritage significance is community esteem. As Graham Quint, Conservation Director of the National Trust explains: 'This is the essence of heritage significance – that a significant section of the community values a place and wishes it to be conserved for future generations. Any assertion that it (the Huskisson church property) does not have, or fails to meet a 'threshold' of significance is patently a denial of the facts.'

All this is causing great distress to the Aboriginal people whose ancestors are buried there as movements of machinery on site will potentially disturb graves. Local elders Jean Carter and George Brown from Wreck Bay have addressed Council, Aboriginal people attend meetings and protests. The request from the Jerinja Land Council for time to investigate and consult with descendants of people buried in the graveyard has been ignored. If the planned development for this site of a conference centre, pub, commercial buildings goes ahead, distress will be ongoing. Gravesites have been desecrated in many places, but the sins of the fathers do not justify ongoing insensitive desecration. Precious natural habitat is inevitably a victim of urban development, but it is difficult to fathom why this particularly loved place needs to be trashed.

Except that it isn't difficult at all. It's all about the dollar – the big dollars the Anglican church and the developer hope to reap

from land that was granted, free of charge, for 'public purposes' (that what the Government Gazette called it) back in the nineteenth century. And they are being assisted all the way by the mindless majority on our local Council.

Community opposition to all this just grows stronger and to those who think it is all a done deal, think again. There are planning hurdles and zoning issues to be negotiated and the community will stand up for what is right all the way. The recently formed Huskisson Heritage Association gained over 100 members in its first weeks. Peaceful demonstrations outside the church are ongoing. If you want to know more, or if you want to join in our actions, you can contact huskissonheritage@gmail.com or follow our facebook page [savehuskychurch](https://www.facebook.com/savehuskychurch).

HOW COUNCIL VOTED ON THE HUSKY CHURCH ISSUE:

For development:
Councillors: Guile, Wells, Gash, Pakes, Watson, Kitchener, White

For heritage:
Councillors: Findley, Alldrick, Digiglio, Levett, Gartner, Proudfoot

The Garden, the Kitchen and Retrosuburbia

BY SUE SHERIDAN

ON 5 JUNE, World Environment Day 2019, David Holmgren, co-ordinator of the world-wide permaculture movement, inspired a full house at Bomaderry Bowling Club, with his ideas on making our built environments more resilient to economic and environmental shocks. He told the story of Aussie Street, a fictional typical suburban neighbourhood, tracing its evolution into a sustainable community using the permaculture principles that David elaborates on in his 2018 book, *Retrosuburbia*.

In hosting the event, Shoalhaven Transition promised participants that any profits from the evening would go to the Nowra East Community Permaculture Garden Kitchen Project. The garden, which started in 2013 in the grounds of the Nowra East Public School is both a local community and a teaching resource. It aims to

bring people together to enjoy healthy food in a peaceful space. The community continues to contribute through monthly working-bees, functions and workshops in the garden. The idea of having a kitchen in the garden has always been planned. With grants and donations in money and in kind from not-for-profits and business, the kitchen project is taking shape. At the moment, the external structure for the kitchen building has been completed, and once power and water are organised, a kitchen with donated cupboards and appliances will be installed. When this kitchen becomes a reality it is intended that it will not only become a focal point for teaching in the garden – but also a social hub for the local community. The opening of the kitchen is planned for this October.

Shoalhaven Transition is a small community organisation that brings together like-

minded people determined to make positive change in our towns and villages in the face of environmental challenges. For Shoalhaven Transition, the garden and its kitchen project are a great example of how people in local communities can work together to develop a shared resource that builds community resilience. On 16 August, Cllr Kaye Gartner, a member of Shoalhaven Transition, presented a cheque

to the Garden for \$1300, the profits from the Retrosuburbia event. Teacher, John Stovin-Bradford, and his students, then gave members of Shoalhaven Transition a tour of their productive garden.

The story of Nowra East Community Garden and Shoalhaven Transition doesn't end here. The following are contacts if you would like more background information or to know how to get involved:

For Nowra East Community Garden: John Stovin-Bradford - Nowra East Public School-4421 3539 or go to the Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/NowraEastCommunityKitchenProject/>

For Shoalhaven Transition: Trish Kahler (Secretary) shoalhaven-transition@yahoo.com.au or go the Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/ShoalhavenTransition/>

Sue Sheridan presenting cheque to John Stovin-Bradford.
Photo Trish Kahler



Venice or Hyams Beach

Dealing with those pesky tourist, it seems Venice has had enough. With in excess of twenty million visitors a year, the famed canal city has decided on banning tourist ships. Back as far as 1987, authorities capped the number of tour buses carrying day-trippers into the city.

More stringent measures are also in place for those who do not preserve 'decorum' in the city centre. Under rules introduced in May you can be fined for wearing indecent clothing or eating in public places other than restaurants or cafes. As reported in the New York Times, the sight of two German backpackers setting up a travel stove to make their morning coffee on the steps of the Rialto Bridge led to not only their expulsion from the city but the Berlin travellers were fined a total of 950 euros (or \$1500) for their trouble.

Such an approach by Shoalhaven Council might easily overcome the parking problems at Hyams! What do you say to that councillors?

PRINCESS HIGHWAY UPGRADE

BY PAT THOMPSON

RIGHT FROM THE starting blocks, our new Member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips first question in the new federal parliament was to bring the government to account concerning its election promise for a \$500 million upgrade of the Princess Highway. The answer received was that there is just \$50 million in the budget over the next four years. At that rate we might expect 40 years for the government to fulfil its promise! In response to the government's admission, Ms Phillips called for, "the government to bring forward the investment in the Princes Highway, which will help to create new jobs and stimulate jobs growth in sectors like hospitality, construction and primary production."

In her maiden speech Fiona spoke of being inspired by Dame Mary Gilmore, referring to her family connections to the great reformer. Invoking the spirit of Mary Gilmore, her desire is: "to have the courage to stand up for what's right, to defend our most marginalised and to reduce disadvantage so we can all live in a better place and world."

Addressing her immediate concerns, Fiona referred to the fact that: "Parts of my electorate have the lowest workforce participation rate in Australia—around 47 per cent." The figure points to neglect of much of regional Australia when it comes to workplace participation.

Calling on the government to do more, Fiona said: "We need to re-engage those that have given up. The government must lift the rate of Newstart to equip people for work. The government must invest in TAFE to train and re-skill our jobseekers in aged care, health services, trades, hospitality and other growth industries."

She also highlighted the lack of mental health services in the region. Whilst congratulating the government on matching labor's commitment to a full 'headspace' for Batemans Bay, she called for an acute mental health unit to be included in the Shoalhaven Hospital upgrade, drawing attention to the hospital's suffering from 'bed block' and the cancellation of elective surgeries, as the result of this shortcoming.



THE NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH is a community newspaper. It is 'issue' based and politically non-aligned.

We welcome contributions from all viewpoints. As such, the views 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

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ON HER ROUNDS

BY MOTHER SUPERIOR



Blessed are the Cheesemakers

AND SO IT was without the aid of 'miracles' that our dairy-loving, (my favourite-colour is red) Fiona Phillips, defied the national swing and won the federal seat of Gilmore! It was always going to happen after Morrison's parachuting into Gilmore the hapless Mundane, which even the die-hard liberals couldn't stomach.

May 18 seems a long time passing. The coalition was returned with a two seat majority. For some the surprise defeat of labor was due to 'ignorance & greed', whilst in the words of one conservative commentator: "This clearly had

to be work of God. There really is no other explanation for it!"

Mother Superior finds it hard to make much humour from all this beyond making a few observations. The troubling aspect of the PM's religiosity is not his believe in 'miracles' or the power of prayer – (God appears to work in strange ways.) Of more concern might be Coal-moe's view on the separation of church and state. His brand of Christianity seems to govern his economic narrative: if you've got more, you get to keep more.

Coal-moe's has only 'unfunded empathy' for those on Newstart. 'The poor you shall always have with you', and so let trickle-down do its work. In the Pentecostal view poverty is a direct result of idleness or 'if you give to God, you'll be given back a hundredfold'. His government will give big tax cuts to those on

\$200,000 and another \$5 billion a year in franking credits to those who pay no tax. ('If you give to God, you'll be given back a hundredfold'.)

On the environment Coal-moe cares little beyond what to do with our consumer-driven waste. It's not people that count, he told our Pacific neighbours, it's the economy that matters. All this while his government will not admit that our carbon emissions continue to rise as we become the world's biggest exporter of fossil fuels.

On more complex matters of state, such as, China-US-Australian relations, Coal-moe's stock answer is: "There's nothing to see here, folks. Move on." It reminds me of Joh Bjelke's dictum: "Don't you worry about that!" The problem for Mother Superior is that there is good reason for worry. ■

Park or Carpark?

CHRIS GROUNDS

IT IS AN easy to criticize council decisions based on our agreement or disagreement with the decision but often far more edifying to examine the process that led to that decision.

In March this year Council processed a decision regarding a package of measures to deal with the 'challenge' of people, vehicles and parking at the now infamous Hyams Beach peak tourist seasons.

The package was represented in a Report from council involving its own Tourism staff and included one key, critical element that involved the consideration of using alternate, adjacent public properties to develop an over-flow, tourist car park.

It was here that things got complicated and a little messy, not that councilors seemed to notice.

The first property proposed for consideration was the Jervis Bay National Park behind the Hyams Beach village.

The second property was the Hyams Beach "Old Tip" site on land now owned by the Jerrinja Local Area Lands Council, also to the west behind the village.

That 'Old Tip' had been closed in early 1986 by order of the State Pollution Control Commission and the Department of Public Health.

It was a site highly contaminated as a result of the total absence of any control over what was dumped there and, in fact, the operation of the tip by the then council was regarded as illegal and a permit application by that council was refused.

Today, both properties are zoned as Environment Conservation 1 in the Shoalhaven Local Environment

Plan and thus subject to some of the strictest environmental constraints that can apply, which are provided for in the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Not even this tinkled a warning bell.

The package went to the Strategies and Assets Committee and on to the full council in March with nary a concern raised, despite a number of warning signs.

A significant submission had been made a year earlier to Council with multiple and clear warnings regarding the use of the Jerrinja land and 'old tip' site though this didn't enter the considerations of the staff report, so there was some pre-knowledge.

This was part of the pursuit of a solution to the Hyams Beach traffic management challenge.

For what?

An off-site, tourist over-flow car park for peak season operation that at the very least would mean more cars and people to be accommodated to a site already under classic and dramatic strain.

Suggestions arising for such a facility were that this would involve 500 car, 15,000 square metre car park for a base of 15 days per year.

The expenses cash register was whirring.

The matter got even messier with this aspect but still no alarm bells were going off or questions being raised.

Ah, but surely the significant natural importance and value of the sites would draw questions and caveats?

Both sites are part of the Jervis Bay Key Biodiversity Area, recognized under an international system involving the International Union for

Conservation of Nature and its many partners around the globe, including BirdLife Australia.

Both sites and the entire area host threatened species such as the eastern Ground Parrot and the iconic Eastern Bristlebird and are part of the habitat corridor to Booderee National Park.

Now that would surely sound alarm bells wouldn't it? Nup!

A further check would surely point to appropriate consultation being involved in the suggestion – surely?

The National Parks and Wildlife Service were not approached nor advice sought in the lead up to the decision.

Neither was the Jerrinja Lands Council advised of the limitations of the old tip site on their land, the use of which for a car park had been proposed to them as a 'commercial opportunity'.

Yet another "FAIL" in process.

Was there anything else that could cause concern?

The final frame indicates clearly that councilors received no advice nor information of the type necessary to proceed to a sound decision about the two sites and that is a little unusual given the volumes of 'Attachments' that besiege them with business papers.

One is left to wonder at the degree of respect for Environment Conservation 1 locations.

In the abject absence of all that was necessary for a sound, appropriate decision it is no wonder there was no questioning, discussion, nor debate about the proposal.

Indeed, it is probably no less a wonder that all councilors voted for the proposal.

Was there a solution?

Well, yes there was but it was community based as it so often is or can be.

A ten week campaign based in submissions and representations from a coalition of the major Shoalhaven conservation organizations led to Greens group councilors moving a recission motion to withdraw the proposal as it involved the national park and Jerrinja land.

A notable result of this was a clear and vigorous backlash to the thinking that our national parks are available for this kind of use. That thinking was a mistake.

Substantial leverage was provided by the fact that the Hyams Beach community formally decided and expressed their great concern and opposition, having been consulted regarding the submissions prepared by the various community conservation groups.

So, in a nutshell, there was nothing that could substantiate the original decision and councilors, to their credit, unanimously adopted the recission motion which abandoned the idea.

Is there not some protocol, structure or process that could have warned them?

There clearly needs to be a better system within council at the interface of tourism and environment, which continues to cause legitimate concerns in the Shoalhaven.

(The conservation groups involved in the campaign were Heritage Estate Network, Jervis Bay Regional Alliance, National Parks Association, BirdLife Shoalhaven and Australian Conservation Foundation)

Spain – a world leader

BY JAMES KESTEVEN

Spain has the most extensive high-speed rail network in Europe, and the second most extensive in the world after China. The Spanish high speed train is, on average, the fastest in the world. By 2020, that country will have 7,000kms of high-speed trains linking almost all provincial cities to Madrid in less than 3 hours and Barcelona within 4 hours. Spain also had 1 million electric cars on the road by 2014. In 2017, Spain was the second most visited country in the world, recording 82 million tourists which was the 5th consecutive year of record-beating numbers.

After joining the EEC - later the EU - in 1986, Spain experienced strong economic growth, well above the EU average during the early 21st Century. Spain is one of the world's leading countries in the development and production of renewable energy. In 2010, Spain became the solar power world leader when it overtook the United States with a massive power station plant called La Florida, near Alvarado, Badajoz. Spain is also Europe's main producer of wind energy. In 2010 its wind turbines generated 42,976 GWh, which accounted for 16.4% of all electrical energy produced in Spain. On 9 November 2010, wind energy reached an instantaneous historic peak covering 53% of mainland electricity demand and generating an amount of energy that is equivalent to that of 14 nuclear reactors. Other renewable energies used in Spain are hydroelectric, biomass and marine (2 power plants under construction). (ex Wikipedia)

Spain is an example of a country, which with its many diverse regions and cultures, where good things are done because of a level of informed and properly supported initiatives by government, big business, local authorities.



Australia's Authoritarian Future?

BY STUART REES

In early August, two events cast a shadow over Australia's democracy. The US Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) met in Sydney to fight to 'protect the future.' The High Court ruled that the government may restrict the right of public servants to express political views, and in this way supported the sacking of a public servant for anonymously criticising her employer the Department of Immigration.

SPEAKERS AT THE CPAC meeting included Fox News commentators, members of the US National Rifle Association, former PM Tony Abbot, One Nation politician Mark Latham and Britain's Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage. The participants arrived in the wake of mass shootings in Texas and Ohio and following President Trump's demand that Congress women of colour go back to where they came from. Farage had been invited in response to his English nationalism, racism and opposition to the EU.

Although advertised as fighting for Australia's future, the conservatives' only agreed target concerned a common enemy, a mirage-like ghost called 'socialism'.

Apart from universal health insurance, contemporary Australia offers no policies which could be dubbed even mildly socialist. Yet opposition to this imagined devil prompted CPAC praise for free markets and for their families' values, a repeat of the Thatcher dictum that greed is good, there is no such thing as society and no alternative to this way of thinking.

In the absence of proposals

about policies, the CPAC 'political warriors' resorted to derision as their key to good journalism and to their 'fight on' objectives. Farage called former PM Malcolm Turnbull 'a snake', Raheem Kassam, notorious for tweeting that 'Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon should have her legs taped so that she can't reproduce', said Senator Christina Keneally was 'a bigot', and Fox News' Jeanine Piro's description of Hillary Clinton as 'that hag' prompted cries of 'send her back'.

The CPAC speakers offered white, mostly Christian, top down versions of freedom for 'real people' in a future where they would judge anyone who opposed them. Their support for Trump-like populism seems inevitable. The High Court might have expressed completely different values, but instead interpreted freedom of speech with either/or perspectives on rules to ensure that state wrongdoings stay secret.

As the anonymous LaLegale, the brave, now sacked Immigration staff member Michaela Banerji had criticised immigration policies and the treatment of detainees. The

justices appeared not to know, or ignored such policies, which continue in the Department of Home Affairs, successor to Immigration.

Deliberations in Home Affairs are invisible, staff are inaccessible and fearful, certainly not allowed to heed alternative voices such as Ms Banerji's. Staff fear is understandable given that the intimidating Secretary of Home Affairs Mike Pezzullo regards himself as accuser, judge, jury and executioner. In common with CPAC leaders he seems to enjoy judging others, is certain that anyone who leaks information should be jailed. Notions of due process and justice not evident.

Even if it was not intentional, the High Court's ruling reinforces the idea that stifling criticism is the way to maintain government control. Nadine Flood, national secretary of the Commonwealth and Public Service Union says, 'People working in Commonwealth agencies should be allowed normal rights as citizens rather than facing Orwellian censorship because of where they work.' Allan Anforth, Banerji's lawyer, commented on the High Court's ruling, 'This is a really

naive decision in terms of the political realities of what exists in the community.'

'What exists' is authoritarianism to discourage freedom of speech and to encourage journalists to collude with government policies. Emily Howie from the Human Rights Law Centre, says, 'It has become dangerous to expose government wrongdoing, even when it is in the public interests to do so.'

The AFP has raided ABC offices and the home of a News Corp journalist. Courts face a queue of whistle blowers waiting to test what the law knows about justice.

Witness K and barrister Bernard Collaery are being prosecuted for exposing Australian government deceit in bugging Timor-Leste government offices in order to gain commercial advantage in negotiations about oil and gas revenue from the Timor Sea. Former military lawyer David McBride is being prosecuted for reporting alleged unlawful Australian forces' killings in Afghanistan. Richard Boyle, former Australian Tax Office employee faces criminal charges for blowing the whistle on the ATO's alleged abusive, unfair debt collection practices.

As Wikileaks journalist and publisher, Australian citizen Julian Assange revealed secrets about murder and mayhem in US wars. He is held in a top security British prison, faces extradition to the US and the prospect of 175 years in prison. US politicians have made frenzied demands that Assange be

exterminated by any means, numerous espionage charges have been concocted against him but Australian major party leaders have said nothing. Their cowardly silence suggests loyalty to the White House, indifference to social justice and to civil liberties.

Reluctance to even reflect on notions of social justice are instructive. In her recent book, 'How To Lose A Country', the brilliant Turkish novelist Ece Temelkuran writes, 'When social justice is ignored to devastating effect, that is when democracy starts to smell funny....like rotting onions.'

Central control, deference to UK and US governments remain Australian policy imperatives. The US creation CPAC promoted their version of freedom and the High Court's ruling appeared to do nothing to challenge such views. In other prestigious high places, respect for universal human rights, let alone for policies to encourage inclusiveness, equality and solidarity are hard to find.

The CPAC hopes for return to a supposed utopian past did not question inequalities, racism, wars, violence to women, environmental destruction or the exploitation of Indigenous people.

The opposite of such policies is a future worth fighting for and might even be called socialist.

Stuart Rees, OAM, is Professor Emeritus, University of Sydney and inaugural recipient of the Jerusalem (Al Quds) Peace Prize.

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For enquiries or to be put on the mailing list for the Spring program contact Shoalhaven City Council Waste Services Team on 4429 3111 or email wasteadmin@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au



Palestine – through her eyes

BY KERRY SAWTELL

SAMIRA LIVES IN Hebron in the West Bank of Palestine. Every weekday morning is the same. Samira walks to Cordoba School going through Checkpoint 55. She walks down a road divided by a cement and wire barrier. The barrier is in place to keep Palestinians off the road which is now reserved for settlers.

Settlers who, under international law, should not be establishing colonies in the occupied West Bank. They turned up years ago, rented a Hebron hotel and barricaded themselves in the hotel. They never left. Now more settlers have come and settlements like Kiryat Arba have been built, or Palestinian homes have been taken over by settlers, all of which is in violation of international human-

itarian law (Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention). There are about 800 settlers living in Hebron, protected by 2,000 Israeli soldiers and security personnel – almost 3:1.

The road Samira walks was once open to both Palestinians and Israelis. Now, the sealed part is just for Israelis and the track is for Palestinians. A track that is muddy and slippery in winter, festering in summer. Where settlers throw their rubbish and it piles up because there is no rubbish collection for Palestinians in an area occupied by settlers.

Sometimes Samira has to open her school bag so that the soldiers can check that she's not carrying any weapons. Sometimes she stands at the checkpoint waiting for the gate to open, calling out asking the soldier to open the gate even

though there is no reason for it to be closed. Sometimes she has to walk quickly hoping to avoid settlers who yell and spit at her. Sometimes she has to run because the soldiers are firing tear gas at her neighbours. It stings her eyes and makes it hard for her to breathe. Sometimes she just wishes she could avoid school because when she goes to school she has to repeat the same steps but in reverse and her experience is then repeated. Her teachers walk the same route and they have to show their identification. Identification that they show to the same soldier twice every school day – once going to school and once leaving the school. The soldier calls them by name, because he knows them but even so, the teachers are made to wait, made to show their identification documents.

Samira's uncle's home has a Star of David painted on his front door. The settlers put it there marking their intention to take the home and occupy it. Her uncle won't leave though. He says this is where he was born, where his father was born and where his grandfather was born. They must stay and look after Palestine because no one else will. The world doesn't seem to be listening or if it is listening it turns a blind eye to Israeli settlers' continual expansion in the West Bank.

Samira's school has a wall. It's been tagged by settlers – 'Gas the Arabs'. She doesn't like that. Someone else wrote the Hebrew word for peace, 'Shalom', she likes that.

But what she likes more is the writing on her school's playground wall – 'education is the most powerful weapon which



you can use to change the world' And so every weekday morning is the same. Samira walks to Cordoba School going through Checkpoint 55.

Kerry Sawtell spent 3 months in the West Bank city of Hebron as a volunteer with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel.

Photo captions: (below) Samira; (below right) Palestinian teachers.



On Water

**NATALIE CROMB
GAMILARAAY WOMAN AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
EDITOR, INDEPENDENT
AUSTRALIA**

IN MY LANGUAGE, we call water *gali* and we know that it equates to life. It is difficult to enunciate the emotions that emerge when you see once abundant waterways run dry, when environmental mismanagement takes that life away.

Our waterways had been protected for millennia but a mere 230 years since colonisation we are on the precipice of complete environmental

destruction.

From the decimation of the fish in Sydney's waterways following first contact to the redirection of waterways and economic bolstering of destructive industries such as cotton farming and mining, the greedy decisions made have all been contrary to the ecological sustainability of this country.

Happiness Report

AUSTRALIA HAS DROPPED out of the top-10 happiest countries for the first time in the newly released 2019 World Happiness Report, while frosty Finland retained its top spot for

a second straight year.

Sitting in 11th place, Australia has moved down two places since 2016.

Released by the United Nations, the report ranks countries on six key variables: income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support and generosity.

The top-four happiest countries based on these criteria were all Nordic nations, with Denmark in second place, followed by Norway and Iceland.

The Netherlands was fifth happiest, with Switzerland sixth, Sweden seventh, New Zealand eighth, Canada came in ninth, with Austria replacing Australia in 10th spot.

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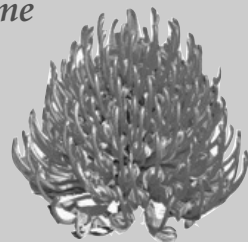
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Giving a Dam About Extinction

BY MIKE CLEAR

Background

A recent Guardian Australia article (March, 2019) reported that Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinction in the world, and more than 500 animal species are currently at risk of extinction. This number is increasing, and is also likely to be an underestimate of how many are actually vulnerable.

In recent Senate estimates hearings, the Federal Environment Department said that it doesn't have data on the total number of conservation plans and recovery plans being implemented. In response to this, Tony Burke, Labor's spokesperson on the Environment at the time observed that this, "reinforces the need for new environmental laws."

The particular focus here is how current environmental laws fail to provide anything like adequate protection. The case studies represent local exemplar of the management and protection of threatened species. They're intended to serve as brief field study perspective for the recommendations that follow.

A view from the field

The critically endangered Regent Honeyeater

The Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) is close to extinction. The world population is no more than 400 individuals. In Australia, there are only small pockets of known breeding habitat left and these are primarily temperate woodland and open forest of the inland slopes of south east Australia. The species is critically endangered and habitat loss is the central determinant.

The Burratorang Valley is a heritage-listed valley in a remote part of the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. In 2017 it was found to support more than 20 Regent Honeyeaters. This included at least seven breeding pairs.

Whilst the species has been recorded in the Burratorang Valley over the past couple of decades, sometimes in flocks of up to 50 birds, this is the first breeding event recorded in this location. Finding the Regent Honeyeater breeding here was very significant, and it is now one of few known breeding sites of this species.

The NSW State Government however, proposes to increase the capacity of the Warragamba Dam by raising the dam wall by some 14metres, and this would flood 4,700 hectares of the Burratorang Valley and National Parks World Heritage-listed area in the Blue Mountains.

The proposal is said to be necessary flood mitigation in order to protect the 130,000 residents living on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain. Opponents of the proposal believe the government plan is simply a sop to developers, the devastation wrought on natural and cultural heritage is too great, and that much better mitigation would be,

not to build and develop land in this way, on floodplains <https://www.giveadam.org.au>

Regent Honeyeater habitat would be destroyed, if this NSW State Government plan to increase the capacity of the Warragamba Dam goes ahead.

The critically endangered Hooded Plover

The Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*) is protected under NSW threatened species laws, the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2017, as critically endangered. It is also listed under the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), as 'vulnerable'. It is one of the most threatened bird species in NSW. There are now less than 50 Hooded Plover and 14 breeding pairs remaining on the NSW south coast.

The Hooded Plover are beach nesting birds that make well camouflaged nests on our beaches during Spring and Summer when beachgoers are present in large numbers. The beach represents critical habitat for this most endangered species.

Off leash dogs pose a major and demonstrated threat to beach nesting birds and there is overwhelming evidence of their impact. This can be in the form of lethal disturbance to breeding Hooded Plovers, predation of the flightless chicks and crushing of the eggs.

The impact of a seemingly benign local government decision to regulate a beach for recreational purposes, as a dog off-leash area, where it is critical habitat of an endangered shorebird, is particularly significant. This occurred recently on Cudmirrah Beach in the Shoalhaven City Council.

Cudmirrah Beach is critical, both because it is the nesting habitat of a critically endangered species, and also because it is a nesting habitat in what is a threshold zone of the species' most northern distribution. Loss of this site, this beach, would contribute to the further fragmentation of the Hooded Plover nesting habitat. This fact is critical.

Issues and problems

Among other things these case studies highlight the centrality of critical habitat. The Regent Honeyeater and the Hooded Plover in NSW are both endangered through either loss of habitat or nesting habitat that is highly pressured. The latter is due to population increase and recreation, and increased threat of storm surges and inundation from sea level rise.

The case studies highlight, that without a strong focus of legislation on protecting and sustaining natural systems, the identification of endangered species may become principally an exercise in just that, species identification and listing, where the species and its survival is not effectively understood as a problem of species habitat and natural systems.

As mentioned, both the Hooded Plover and the Regent Honeyeater are protected under threatened species laws in NSW and also federally. In reality, however, these listings and the apparent protections they provide, permit little confidence that when habitat is threatened and therefore the survival of such vulnerable species themselves is challenged, legislative support is available.

Indeed, we know that under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act), that there are only five places listed on the register of critical habitat to protect threatened species. This surely highlights an extraordinary shortcoming of the Act. This is only further underscored when one realises that the penalty provisions of the register only apply to Commonwealth land. National environmental law provides no effective protection of critical habitat beyond the boundaries of Commonwealth territory.

A single regulative or policy change by state or local government can have major impacts on a threatened species. This is no better demonstrated than in the case of Shoalhaven Council's resolution to render critical beach nesting habitat a dog off leash recreational area, when all the available evidence indicates that off leash dogs pose a lethal threat.

The protection achieved was reactive and tentative, and largely driven by volunteers on the ground campaigning to protect a species that is near extinction in NSW. The successful rescission of the Council's 'off-leash' regulation was by no means assured. Even though the Hooded Plover is listed as 'vulnerable' under federal legislation, precisely how this may have supported the significant threat to its habitat was, and remains quite unclear.

It appears the legislative protection afforded by the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act relies on a form of co-operative federalism, that itself is not reliable. Too often the line of responsibility for stemming the tide of fauna decline and environmental loss is unclear. The level of government that can act responsibly, that is, be responsive when protections need to be invoked is simply obscure, uncertain and ultimately somewhat incomprehensible.

The strong focus on the conditions for approval or rejection of a development or a regulation or policy change by a particular level of government, for example to log or plant a forest or to permit greater recreational access, sometimes appears to come at the expense of a strong framework for an accountable and proactive protection and management of the natural systems that any endangered species depend on.

The need for strong accountable proactive protection and management is evidenced by the



case studies provided here, and of course countless others.

Recommendations for change

At the time the EPBC Act came into being, there was a broadly held view that it was hardly adequate to the task of environmental protection. That was nearly twenty years ago and the rate of environmental decline, habitat loss and waning of our fauna and flora has continued apace.

In addition, we should count in this tide of extinction and decline in our environment, the challenges already being experienced due to global warming, the resultant sea level rise and climate breakdown.

The problems and shortcomings of federal environmental protections identified here through the cases illustrated, suggest the need for an independent national Environmental Protection Authority. The Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens took a policy recommending such an authority to the last federal election in May 2019.

At the very least the following recommendations for improving the protections provided to endangered species seem essential:

■ The loss of critical habitat highlights the need for a management approach, which places greater priority on protection of natural systems and the habitat of species that are listed as endangered.

■ There needs to be a stronger national framework for protection that is responsive, collaborative and proactive. A test (just one) of legislative effectiveness and efficiency here, might well be, how successfully those 'on the ground' such as field workers and volunteers in threatened species conservation work, understand and recognise in their experience, the support provided by the laws.

■ Any legislative change should ensure there is Federal leadership in the management of Australia's environment and specifically in the management and response to endangered species protection. This would give the Federal minister responsibility for improving the state of our environment, and ensure the Minister had the powers to do this.

■ The concept of threats to

"matters of national environmental significance" (MNES), upon which the Federal government relies in order to take action, is by its very nature, reactive. The Federal government needs to be proactive in managing natural systems that underpin the breeding success and survival rates of endangered species, including the Hooded Plover and Regent Honeyeater case studied here.

Conclusion

As scientists writing on Australia's extinction problem recently observed in The Conversation; "We need nature. It gives us inspiration, health, resources, life. But we are losing it. Extinction is the most acute and irreversible manifestation of this loss."

I would add that the sooner we regain a personal and empathic experience of species loss, the more likely we are to be responsive to their decline and loss. This highlights our need for a cultural reconnection with nature, and development of a new respectful stewardship as members of the natural world, not as outsiders with some extra natural perspective on life.

The findings of the Senate Inquiry into faunal extinction that is currently sitting, represents an important opportunity for the national parliament to recommend a restructure of federal environmental law and ensure that we stem and 'turn around' the extraordinary diminution of species and their loss, to which we now bear witness.

The evidence here seems overwhelming. We need strong national environmental laws that provide clear, proactive and systemic based, not just species focussed, national management and leadership in these issues, urgently. For many species it is already too late, and for others it soon will be.

Beyond our international obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, we owe nothing less to the natural heritage of which we are custodian, and also an integral part. We owe it to the natural world that makes life possible and to future generations who will inherit the world we choose to leave them.

Dr Mike Clear to the Faunal Extinction Senate Committee Inquiry 2018.

Book Review

Blood on the Stone by Jake Lynch, a seventeenth century detective story.

Jake is almost a local, as he divides his time between Vincentia-Sydney and Oxford, UK. He is the winner of the 2017 Luxembourg Peace Prize for his work in peace journalism, training and development.

Blood on the Stone is a substantial work of 340 pages and includes additional historical notes that point to his thorough research of the period in which the novel is set.

Oxford is hosting the English Parliament under the 'merry monarch', King Charles II. The novel's lead character is Luke Sandy's, Chief Officer of the Oxford Bailiffs. He sets out to solve an apparent murder, which in turn leads to his need to solve a real murder that also presents him with a moral dilemma. Should he notify those in authority of a 'Popish Plot' against the Crown or save the woman he loves. It is a fast-moving and fascinating tale with a number of entertaining sub-plots. The story is convincingly recreated. Jake has a marvellous vocabulary and his historical research gives one a taste of the customs, religious intolerance and political intrigue of the period.

The renowned author, C J Samson is known for his Tudor England detective stories. For those who enjoy Samson's work, 'Blood on the Stone' makes for a good read. This time it is Stuart England, but Jake brings to life a convincing 17th century Oxford and a good overview of the sectarian hatreds of the period with a little humour along the way.

The book is available from the Bush Tele at \$30 (postage included). Simply call or email us to purchase your copy.



No one says it better than Greta Thunberg – I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.

Strike for the Climate

(FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20), BY BONNIE CASSEN

WE ARE ALREADY on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Prolonged drought cripples farming communities. Flash flooding creating chaos in cities. Catastrophic bushfires and severe cyclones threatening people's homes. Heatwaves.

Yet our politicians refuse to stop massive new fossil fuel projects like Adani's coal mine, oil drilling in the Bight and gas fracking in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Nor are they doing the vital

work to provide a fair transition for communities and workers to move beyond fossil fuels.

To make matters worse, Australia just elected a Government that wants to open the floodgates to new coal, oil and gas projects that contribute to dangerous climate impacts, at the very time when the science demands rapid action to turn this crisis around.

With the world leaders meeting in New York for the UN Emergency Climate Summit on September 23rd, big rallies are being held across the globe calling for action and climate

justice.

The next Global Climate Strike will be on Friday 20th September just three days before the summit. This time the school strikers are calling not just for their fellow students and parents to stand with them, but the entire community. Like a union strike, when we stand together demanding better work conditions or better pay; students are asking everyday Australians and workers, to take the day off, or swap a shift, and join them in this important strike that affects every single one of us.

Jarrah Carlile student organiser, is optimistic about the Nowra September 20 event "The global strike on March 15 saw 1.6 million students and their supporters strike across the world. We're going to take our movement to the next level. If you're an adult, please take the day off and invite your friends, workmates and families to join us," he said.

A global climate strike will take place in Nowra on Friday September 20th at Harry Sawkins Park, Nowra, 10am to 12pm. Everyone should join them if they can.

Shark Week – Don't Miss It

NATHAN BASS

EACH YEAR BETWEEN the months of June and November, large numbers of Port Jackson sharks migrate to Jervis Bay to form breeding aggregations on the reefs that surround its shoreline. Males typically arrive before females and jostle their way to the best spots on the reefs. The females then make their way into Jervis Bay and begin looking for the right male. From September onwards, Port Jackson shark eggs begin washing up on the beaches around Jervis Bay, where they inspire a sense of wonder and curiosity in young and aspiring marine biologists.

To celebrate these large aggregations of Port Jackson sharks in Jervis Bay, the Jervis Bay Marine Discovery and Research Centre are hosting "Jervis Bay Shark Week 2019". Through community events, family-friendly activities and immer-

sive experiences, we are on a mission to encourage others to get out and explore nature and inspire them to become good stewards of our natural world. Throughout "Jervis Bay Shark Week 2019" we are aiming to share our love for sharks and teach people about the importance of sharks in our marine ecosystems. "Jervis Bay Shark Week 2019" will run from the 29th of September to the 7th of October, 2019. Throughout the week, there will be guided snorkel sessions at the pristine beaches of Jervis Bay, documentary screenings, a shark-themed trivia night at Club Jervis Bay and arts and crafts activities for kids at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum.

The Jervis Bay Marine Discovery and Research Centre are also hosting an environmental film competition for amateur and professional filmmakers are invited to submit a short two to three-minute film centring around an environmental theme. Film is a powerful tool for change, so we are looking for stories that inspire others to get out in nature and experience it for

themselves. This year's theme is "Discover the Jervis Bay Marine Park". Applications close on the 27th of September and the winning films will be screened during "Jervis Bay Shark Week 2019".

For more information on

the community snorkels or any of the other events that the JBMDRC are running for "Jervis Bay Shark Week 2019", please visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/jbmdrc or our website at www.jbmdrc.org.au.



CAPPSIZE

Shoalhaven Councillors Confess Almost All

IN A CONTROVERSIAL exclusive, your *NBT* reporter has obtained private recordings of confessions made by members of the Oxymoron party the Independent Liberals (affectionately known as OIL) on the Shoalhaven Council. These revelations follow the demise of the Catholic Confessional whose centuries old tradition of being above the law has been declared illegal. Cappsizze can't reveal who leaked the verbatim recordings of these significant political confessions but can tell readers that the AFP are excited about performing dawn raids in Nowra.

Recordings from one confessional show someone identified as 'Cunning Andrew' saying, 'I am really an Anglican enthusiast, this politicking is just a hobby. But there will be revelations to shake even our fair go liberal world.' Cappsizze was not

sure what that meant but then read the next confession.

This one came from someone known as a parking Mitch and less generously as Pontificator - no connection to a real Pontiff - who showed humility 'I know nothing but I try always to act intelligently. That catches attention. I could admit to one thing. This environmental stuff looks like a hoax.'

Then came what reads like the red meat in these confessions. An old bruiser has confessed 'I was born to be a man of power. Yes I allegedly once burnt an Aboriginal flag, necessary to teach people(s) (sic) a lesson. Whose country do they think this is, there could be refugees coming next. But it's a load off my mind to say so.' A somewhat flabbergasted Cappsizze wondered what might come next.

A more peace oriented confession came from another OIL representative 'I attend but I don't like to speak. Silent Kitch explained 'My body language is sufficient and in any case I have nothing to say, except, well, I benefit from being here.'

In Cappsizze's judgement, perhaps the most controversial confession came in the form of a betrayal, comparable in your correspondent's non judgemental eyes to UK Labor politicians voting with the Tories and for Brexit. A proud Shoalhaven Labor member, 'I vote with OIL but I'll never join them', said 'You can call me a man for all seasons and I'm not afraid to

admit it. My laborious party's policies depend on which way the wind is blowing. That's democracy isn't it? Besides, I regard myself as a man among boys, no disrespect to the green ladies. I am a mathematician so I know what I'm talking about.'

One ubiquitous OIL member, named rainbow, cream or

off pink in the recordings - Cappsizze could barely hear - confessed to 'loving being on a Council where I must, stress must, be mayor one day. UK Boris always wanted to be a PM. I need to be a mayor.'

So, there you have it dear readers. The content of these confessions reads like a

Shoalhaven edict, at least from OIL quarters: don't like refugees, Aboriginals, claims about global warming are a hoax, women who are really red think they are green, but one day soon a new mayor may arise.



Inspiring Women's Afternoon in Berry

BY BONNIE CASSEN

Australian Women's Day is a relatively new day among our various national days, this one centred around connection, diversity and story - Australian women in all her different sizes and forms. More than celebration, it is a recognition of what it means to be a woman in Australia today and is a remembering of our connection to the earth, to nature and to what feels right to us.

AWD is a day of connection and cultural celebration bringing women together, igniting conversation, acknowledging the wisdom innate to women. There will be AWD events all over the country with a South Coast event at Silo's Estate, Berry. A country afternoon of inspiration, music, food, wine, conversations, stories, fun and sisterhood.

The date of AWD - September 22nd also marks the beginning of the football grand final roundup, the horse racing spring calendar, and the Christmas, new year period; a period when domestic violence incidents against women spikes each year. With domestic violence killing one woman for every week of the year, it is a time to call once again for all violence against women to end and for us to recognise the impact violence has on our society overall.

Definitely not an event to miss, Sunday 22nd September, 3pm to 6pm, at Silo's Estate Berry, B640 Princes Highway Berry. Tickets \$25 through South Coast Tickets. <https://www.facebook.com/events/462308824352028/>

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Medivac Bill in the Balance

BY BONNIE CASSEN

THE MEDIVAC BILL was passed in February this year to improve health outcomes for refugees under Australia's care on Manus and Nauru. The legislation initiated by independent MP Kerryn Phelps during her brief stint in federal parliament provided solutions and hope for the huge number languishing with declining health.

The government in a mean hearted move has attempted to overturn the legislation with the repeal bill successfully passing the lower house in July, before being referred to a Senate Enquiry.

Twelve people have died in offshore detention in the five years before Medevac was passed. Numerous Australian doctors and whistle blowers have gone public with their account of the political bureaucracy that overrides the opinion of doctors, fails to treat people who are critically ill, and fights in court against transfers to Australia to receive medical care. Prior to Medevac long legal cases were the norm and urgent cases sat unprocessed for not just months but years. Clearly not a suitable process for critically unwell people.

We know that both PNG and Nauru are small communities without a full range of specialist medical care available. High level mental health services in particular are

lacking on both island nations. The local medical facilities, already overloaded, provide no resolution for refugees with complex medical conditions slowly worsening in the hollow void of no-care-land.

The Medevac law successfully addresses these issues by allowing two Australian doctors to provide a medical opinion about whether a sick person needs transfer for the purpose of treatment. Despite it being a laborious task, a huge team of GP doctors and specialists have been formed, all offering their time pro bono, free; finishing their work each day, then going home to prepare reviews of cases and reports for the Medical Evacuation Response Group (MERG). MERG is the partnership of specialist refugee support organisations, including doctors and lawyers that are implementing the Medevac legislation, independently of the Australian, Nauruan and PNG governments.

As a protection, the law also institutes an expert panel of Australian doctors, including government appointed doctors, who can review cases if the Minister disputes a finding. This is like a 'get out of jail free card' for the Australian government, protecting its participation in the decision making process.

As of 16 August 2019, there are 128 people (from both

Nauru and PNG) who have been approved under the Medevac legislation for medical evacuation to Australia for treatment. Of those 97 have been transferred to Australia, with a further 12 applications currently before the Minister, and many more being prepared.

The issue is not Medevac, but the failure of the Government to stop 12 deaths. There are around 800 people still in offshore detention, most of whom have been accepted as refugees. After six years of indefinite detention in such harsh conditions, few have escaped the clutches of mental health decline. Depression so deep that many rarely leave their rooms, rarely communicate.

This treatment of refugees, those who sort asylum, help, from Australia is beyond despicable and shadows our country with great shame. Prolonged continuous torture towards vulnerable people rates as appalling, something that would not occur if we had a human rights bill.

With the Senate Enquiry submissions closing as this article goes to press, those who respect international law, human rights and human lives will continue to hope that good political processes prevail and the Medevac legislation survives to see the legacy of its intention - to achieve medical transfers and proper medical treatment for those in need.



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