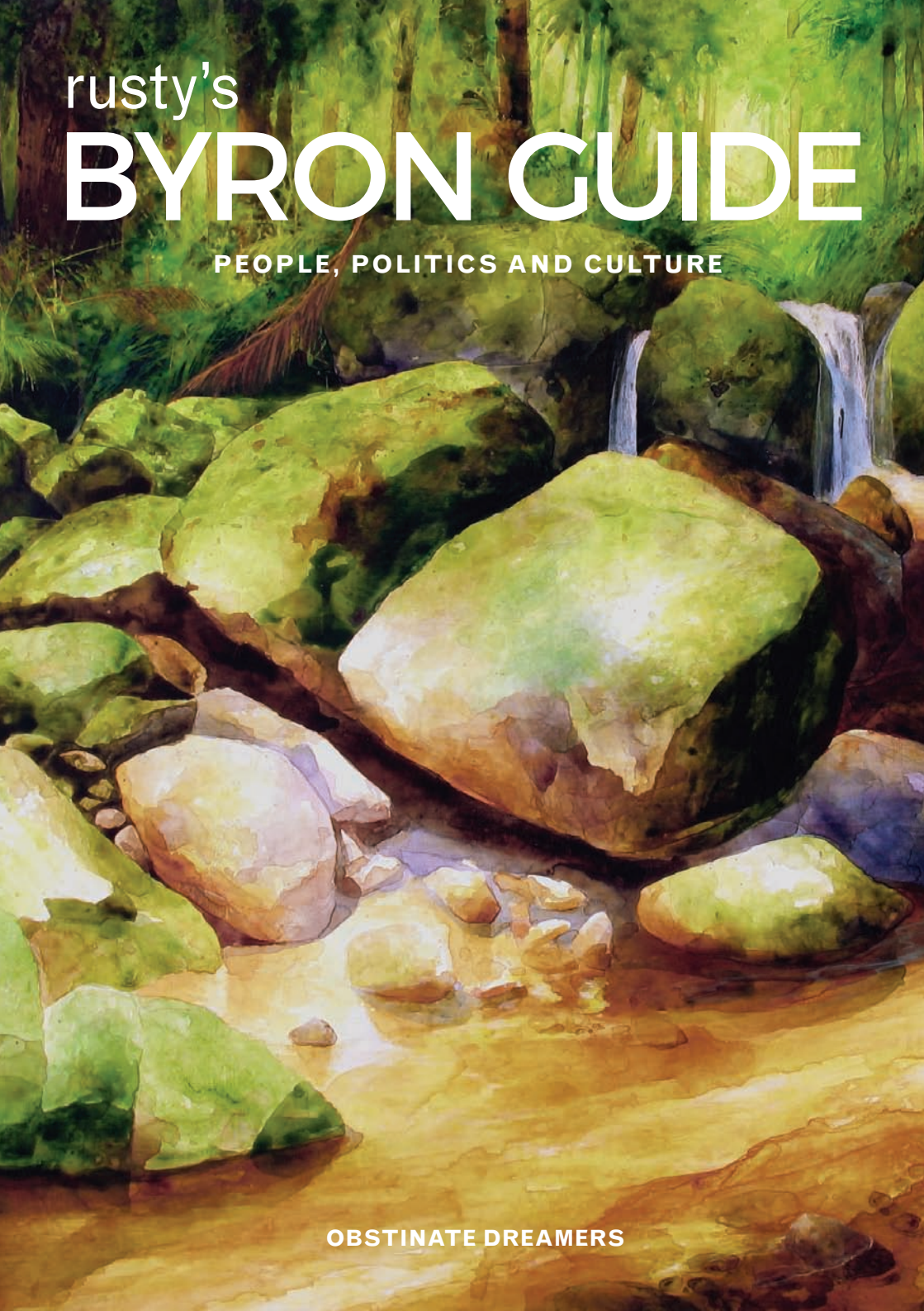
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Belinda Baggs takes flight, Luzon, Philippines. JARRAH LYNCH ©2020 Patagonia, Inc.

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MICHAEL KING-PRIME

Our cover this year is paying homage to artist Michael King-Prime, who passed away at the end of 2020. He left a successful legacy of spectacular paintings of our northern rivers landscape from the Byron beaches to rainforests to the main street of Bangalow.

He began his career working in advertising and animation, while painting on the side. Mike and his wife, Ev (Evelyn) were both born in Argentina with British parentage coming to the Northern Rivers via London and Spain. They were living in Sydney, sold everything, bought a kombi van and with their two children they arrived in the early 1970s when the Aquarius Festival was on. They fell in love with the area and stayed, buying acreage in Federal and building a house. Mike would travel back to Sydney to work at Hanna Barbera in animation to earn an income and even further to the US. Ev started the Cape Gallery, Byron's first art gallery circa 1984. This was part of the new cultural shift in Byron. There were art openings with each new exhibition. Mike exhibited his work there for the first time and it took off from there, taking them to the US to live for eleven years. Upon coming back they lived in Bangalow, opening another small gallery and selling Mike's work at the monthly Bangalow markets.

READING

RUSTY'S BYRON GUIDE MAGAZINE

2021

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The charities we have supported are: BAY FM, NRCF, The Village Well.

We acknowledge the Arakwal/Bumberlin People of the Bundjalung Nation as the traditional custodians of the land.

Photo: Tao Jones

OBSTINATE DREAMERS

RUSTY MILLER & TRICIA SHANTZ

Well, what can we say about the year that was? So much has already been written about The Plague Year of 2020. And as we write we are still enmeshed in all its dramas and consequences.

Here in Byron, by late March and April, we thought business had fallen off the cliff into the abyss. No one could come here from overseas, or even interstate. Airbnb rentals, a major source of contention over the years, were non-existent. All the festivals were cancelled. We could walk down Jonson Street from the Beach Hotel all the way to the newsagency IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD. There were no cars. So, we did the walk! That's never happened in our lifetime before and likely won't happen again.

Time and Tide, a 1984 local history by Maurice Ryan, tells how Byron has always been a place of Boom and Bust. We thought the Bust had definitely come. Sadly, we thought we wouldn't be publishing another Byron Guide magazine, something we've been doing since 1984.

As we know, if you're reading this (thanks to the support of our local Byron businesses), Byron didn't fall off the cliff. As our winter and spring showed, it thrived. All the Airbnbs filled up. People who could escape before the Victorian lockdown in July did so – and came to Byron. Even Sydney people fled the city and came here, as did the CEOs of major companies. In Habitat, (that prescient brainchild of Brandon Saul from 25 years ago) in the Byron Arts & Industry estate, there are cubicles of office space housing executives from major companies and even a member of the Reserve Bank of Australia. Because if people couldn't go into their CBD Sydney offices – and could afford to – they came to Byron to work and live while the cities were shut down. Who would have thought you could build a work/living precinct?

There are three eras of profound change that we can chart in the modern Byron era: 1983 when the Belongil meatworks closed. This was the end of the industrial town and the heralding of tourism as the saviour industry. Next was the arrival of celebrity with Paul Hogan's wedding here in 1990, and the building of the Beach Hotel, circa 1992, which coincided with the low Australian dollar and the rise of the internet. And finally, now, Covid-19. What an irony that Covid will probably mean the biggest change of all. With people forced to work from home, home can be anywhere. Suddenly Byron has been home for many, and will continue to be so even after the pandemic emergency has subsided.

But, why Byron? The recent Covid arrivals appear

Sometimes the truest proof of love is caring enough about another human being to argue with them.
LECH BLAINE, WRITER - THE MONTHLY

to want what Byron has to offer. But which Byron? The Byron of the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s, or later? Each decade brought something new and different to Byron. The '60s brought surfers, both Americans and Australians. The '70s brought the alternative community/hippies and their various businesses. The '80s brought the tourism surge, and the '90s brought more tourism. The town has not stood still. It has long been a place of dreamers and dreaming, all the way back to the original owners of the land, the Indigenous people, the Arakwal.

While Byron Council estimates tourism numbers will decrease by approximately 1.2 million because of Covid, more than 90 percent of visitors here are domestic travellers with 78 percent being day trippers from southeast Queensland. We'll be all right. But that's not all that's happening. Until now, it seems, Byron has been a "bloody hard place to make a living". The digital age is changing all of that.

What would you do if you didn't have to work for money? This is an oft-asked question that most of us will never get the chance to put into practice. How about this as a twist? Where would you live if you could live anywhere? Well, to many Australians it's Byron Bay. And Covid has allowed this question to be considered and explored. If you can work from home and don't have to work in the city, then why would you live there? Covid is breaking open a different Australia, a different world.

Hopefully, 2021 may be the year where we see something different happen in the world. The financial supports from the Australian government have to end. What will Byron look like with all the new Covid refugees having discovered that it's a damn good place to visit, live and work, even in winter. Craig McGregor, one of Australia's foremost journalists, wrote in the introduction to *Time and Tide*, "The soils, social structures and comparatively extreme climate of the region have somehow combined to make Byron Bay and its hinterland a bloody hard place to survive in."

What is a Byronite anyway? A classic, a bohemian or an almost extinct species? The classics of the Greeks and Romans were something of lasting worth and a timeless quality. The classics in literature live because their ideas have remained fresh and true through the ages. A bohemian is defined as an obstinate dreamer for whom art has remained a faith. (Henry Murfreesboro in Scenes de la Vie de Boheme in 1845). Bohemians are unconventional people who question rules and practices and attempt to come up with something new and better. Or at least test the limits.

Perhaps this best sums up Byron people: obstinate dreamers. Despite many obstacles, from developers pushing inappropriate proposals (West Byron), to major visitation levels, unbearable traffic, unaffordable housing and rents, to major Main Beach erosion (threatening the very thing that attracts people here), many of us still believe we can hold back the tide and have an impact on decision-making.

What is the alternative?

COMMUNITY, WHAT'S IN A WORD?

MAGGIE BROWN

When contemplating the word community, even as a community development worker of 35 years in the Byron Shire, I hesitate to know where to begin. Community is a term much beloved by a disparate group of social advocates, politicians, real estate agents, and social influencers. In the social sector, we often add it to the names of social innovations as a symbol of good intentions(for example, community mental health, community policing, community-based philanthropy, community economic development).

"Community" just rolls off the tongue. The word itself connects us with each other. It describes an experience so common that we never really take time to explain it. It seems so simple, so natural, and so human. But the meaning of community is complex. Essentially, community is not about place, buildings or structures; nor is it an exchange of information over the Internet. It is about people. You and me. At best, members of a community have a sense of trust, belonging, safety, and caring for each other.

A few years back I met a bloke who told me that he had moved up from Leichardt in Sydney, where he had lived most of his life. He said he couldn't have told me the name of a single local official of the Leichhardt Council or who the mayor even was. Since moving to the Byron area he knew the names of all the councillors the issues affecting the Shire and had joined a couple of environmental groups. He felt he had awoken to a shared sense of belonging in a place he cared about and felt responsible for. When you feel you belong you have an individual and collective sense that you can, as part of your community, influence your environment and others.

This was certainly the case for me. My extended family were all in Europe when I migrated to Australia in 1981 and I found my way with my own little family to the hills behind Mullumbimby. We lived in a dome and various homemade houses in the lush abundance of the hinterland. We found common cause and built soul groups amongst the young families with our kids, the chronic dreamers, travelers and fellow seekers of a simple way of being. Many of us had been on the road in Asia and Europe for years and what we found here was a place where we could express ourselves in our own homes, blending all we had learnt and loved into a wonderful kind of cultural stir fry. Materially we had very little and that was a choice; tough but character forming.

The local farmers and business people seemed to enjoy the arrival of us newcomers not only for the dollars we brought to town, but they also seemed to have an intense curiosity about us. Over years a mutual acceptance developed and occasionally even overlapped our social mores. Their tolerance was often remarkable. An example was the year that the 'alternatives' took over the running of the annual Mullumbimby Chincogan Festival and Ball. Burned into my mind to this day, is the image of Mayor Stan Robinson waltzing with an impressively dreadlocked young woman , who was decked out in a velvet emerald green figure-hugging evening dress. For a moment there I witnessed perfect assimilation.

By 1981 most of the major primary industries had ceased and land was still cheap as farmers

The ideal of sliding is therefore a sliding that does not leave any trace: that is, sliding on water.
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

Photo: Tao Jones

sought to rid themselves of cattle and banana farms. The new settlers were not cashed up but some were able to scrape up the money to get into to what would later become the 'property market.' At the time of this transition however, the relative lack of resources created an even playing field and brought us together in collaboration and innovation. Since meeting common needs is the driving force behind the formation of communities, most people identified and participated in several of them, often based on neighbourhoods, belief systems, ideologies, politics, hobbies, or sexual orientation. Living together on shared land and forming community (sometimes intentional and sometimes not) became a challenging and rewarding way of life.

The region attracted artists, surfers, makers, performers and creatives from all over Australia. The counter culture arts and music Aquarius festival of 1973 sparked the expectation of a new way of building a society that intended to be fair and respectful of our forests and coastal habitats.

Epic battles were fought for the protection of coastal and forest land and were won through people power and the seeming realization, (at the time by progressive government) that things were changing. The gap between farmers and the newcomers seemed to narrow as environmental science grew and the demand economy required large scale agribusiness. Sadly, these old battles are once again being rejoined with the push for the monetization of our remaining scarce natural resources both above and below ground.

In 2020 for many, community lies beyond the Shire. Technology and transportation have made community possible in ways that were unimaginable just a few decades ago. With social media, better roads and transport we are now within easy reach of every major city. The Byron Shire and its hinterland attracts in ever growing numbers, those who are looking for the balance of nature, work, lifestyle and connection. Many sacrifice potential careers, higher earnings and more comfortable lives to achieve this, as the Byron Shire is no longer a cheap or even affordable place to be. Wages are low and employment tenuous. Notwithstanding, the dream is still alive.

I have spent so many years advocating for folk at the margins of our community and have worked hard to resource the types of services and supports needed to improve the lives of the less advantaged. It is sad now to see that many older less affluent and less established residents are being pushed out as they cannot find secure accommodation or work. Our own children are struggling to be able to maintain a foothold as the Shire increasingly is accessible only to investors and cashed up city refugees. The challenge facing our towns and villages now is one of equity and awareness . How do we as a society, safeguard what we all find precious and make sure that it is shared equally and not spoiled by greed and hype. How do we make growth sustainable? How to encourage the haves to help the have nots?

Through my retiree volunteer work with the Northern Rivers Community Foundation I know that on the up-side there are more and more innovative, smart and conscious people choosing to be here too. Hopefully they will develop and conserve our unique and quirky Shire in a responsible and caring way for future generations and not allow us to become a victim of our own popularity.

Finally, when I ask young people who move here what they love about it, I find that they feel exactly as I did; the sense of belonging, a wonder of nature, of having time to develop friendships and yes, a community. My friend Frank Koori once described Byron Shire as the 'three S's: Socialites, Socialists and Sociopaths. In most cases the people I meet and know including myself, turn out to be a little bit of all three.

Maggie Brown has lived in the Byron Shire since 1982. Her 35 years of community development and social planning experience informs her professional life. Her background is in both community based and Local Government practice, with a particular interest in partnerships and collaboration. Awarded the Centenary of Federation medal In 2000 for the development of services to the Byron community in a complex environment.

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.
HENRY FORD

Painting by: Michael King-Prime

THE BORING BOHO

I'm the square peg in Byron's round patchouli hole

TOM GLEESON

Byron Bay has changed the way I see myself. I had a picture in my mind of who I was before my extended stay here but Byron sees me very differently. People think I'm a National Party member. I can just tell. When I first arrived in town, the locals looked at me like I was a politician that was lost. All of a sudden I've woken up with a new identity - a conservative, white, middle aged man walking down Jonson Street in a Helen Kaminsky straw hat. I'm an artist but somehow in Byron, I'm out of place. Ironing my shirt feels like an act of rebellion.

There is a delicious irony here. People have forgotten the bohemian fundamentals. Going against the grain, riling against the status quo, being an agitator and a free thinker. I'm now the rebel! I've unwittingly engaged in a covert operation, so deep undercover it is possibly being overlooked entirely. I'm so boring, I'm boho. I've miraculously come out the other end with cred.

It all began when I walked into the local bike shop to buy a new helmet. The guy nearly fell off his chair. I don't think he'd sold a helmet in the last decade. 'You sure you want a helmet man?' He asked, baffled. 'Definitely. It's to stop me dying.' I said. It's pretty simple. I wear a helmet and don't crack my head open. Easy. Job done. Science at its best, I thought. Since that day I've been riding around town with my helmet on my head observing everybody else riding around town without theirs. I'm a maverick. Game on, I thought.

There are other things too. I wear a belt. It's to hold my pants up. I find it very helpful. Nobody else wears a belt. It's like you all set fire to your belts on a cold Sunday in August. You're a 'no plastic bags and belts' town. Not only are everybody's undies hanging out of their pants, they're also in a knot over 5G. Now that's a joyous discussion to have with the locals, isn't it? Always goes so well. 'What's an extra G when we've already got four?,' I say. 'Surely one more G won't matter? Let's jump straight to 6G! Go on! The more the merrier!'

Mornings are tricky too. Shaving seems like a subversive act. Walking around with a clean shaven face amongst a sea of beards is now counterculture. Then there's milk. I insist on calling cow's milk 'milk' when I order a coffee. Baristas don't like that. They live in a world of many, many milks, all made equal apparently. My milk, cow's milk, shouldn't need any qualification. It is the original. It's the default setting from which all other paler imitations derive.

The one instance where I've genuinely tried to join the Byron mainstream, it's backfired. Every day I ride my bike to Belongil Beach and meditate. I lie down, close my eyes and think calm whale thoughts. Like clockwork, a dog will come right up to my face and sniff my eyeballs. Always. I've decided this dog is my spirit animal, calling me on my own bullshit. He licks my chin, snuffles in my ear and whispers, 'Nice try buddy. You're fooling nobody. Put your stack hat back on and fuck off to that great unknown land beyond the shire where you belong.'

There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.
VLADIMIR LENIN

If you see me swimming upstream, going against the grain and simultaneously desperately trying to fit in, say hello. I'll be the one wearing the helmet and a belt. Your local boring boho.

Tom Gleeson won the Gold Logie for most popular personality on television in 2019. He is a core cast member of ABC TV's The Weekly and hosts his own TV show, Hard Quiz on ABC TV. He has performed at every major comedy festival in the world. tomgleeson.com.au

Photo: David Young

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF MUSHROOMS

JEFF CHILTON

They seem to come out of nowhere. In areas where there was no visible sign of their presence, they suddenly appear - overnight, or so it seems. Such is the nature of mushrooms, the higher order organisms of the world of fungi. Everyone has had some encounter with mushrooms. Whether on a walk through the woods, strolling through the park, or just finding them in our lawns and gardens, mushrooms are a phenomenon of nature that is hard to overlook.

North Americans tend to be somewhat fearful of mushrooms. This attitude is sharply contrasted by other cultures. Europeans are wild about mushrooms and hunt them with a passion. In Asia it is no different. Wild and cultivated mushrooms fill the markets and are looked upon with great favor. And nowhere are they so highly prized than Japan. With approximately 12 species cultivated for the marketplace, the Japanese surely lead the world in their appreciation of edible mushrooms. And although their use as food is the most obvious way mushrooms have been utilized by cultures, the use of mushrooms as medicine could be their most important contribution.

Certain mushrooms have been employed as herbal medicines for thousands of years in Asia. These mushrooms were some of the most effective, yet benign, of the many plants that formed the Oriental herbal tradition. One mushroom, reishi, was so highly revered that whole mythologies were built around it and representations of reishi can be found throughout Oriental art.

So why haven't we heard more about these "medicinal" mushrooms? For the most part they were rare and therefore expensive. In the case of reishi and maitake, only in the past 40 years has successful cultivation made them more widely available. Other mushrooms such as turkey tail and shiitake have been enhanced by modern fermentation and extraction processes in order to manufacture PSK and Lentinan, approved drugs in Japan.

To fully understand mushrooms and mushroom products, an understanding of their life cycle is helpful. Most mushrooms are composed of a cap and a stem. The underside of the cap has many thin blades called gills that are the spore-bearing surface. Spores are the "seeds" by which mushrooms can spread to new areas. A mature mushroom produces billions of spores which are carried away by the wind. The shiitake is an example of this classical mushroom shape.

Not all mushrooms are so classically formed or even edible. Polypores, the group to which reishi and turkey tail belong do not have gills, in many cases lack a stem, and are hard like the wood they grow on. The underside of a polypore cap is composed of a tightly packed layer of pores where the spores are propagated.

What is not readily visible however is the actual fungal body, called mycelium. Just as an apple is the fruit of an apple tree, so too is a mushroom the fruit body of a mycelial "tree". Mycelium is a network of fine threadlike filaments that originates from the germination of spores. Unlike green plants that convert sunlight into

The darker the night the brighter the stars.
DOSTOYEVSKY

Photo: David Young

energy, fungal mycelia derive their nutrients from dead organic matter, like leaves, annual plants and wood waste, recycling this material into humus. As the mycelia spreads throughout the nutrient base or substrate, it is amassing nutrients. When environmental conditions are right, the mycelia uses these nutrients to produce mushrooms. At this point the life cycle is complete as a new generation of mushrooms mature and spread spores into the environment. While we can readily observe mushrooms, the mycelial network generally stays hidden within the nutrient base materials.

The use of mushrooms as food has been somewhat of an enigma in North America. Years ago, classically trained nutritionists stated that mushrooms have minimal food value based on the fact that mushrooms are low in calories. Today we know that mushrooms are a nutritionally sound food with 20-40% protein, 40-60% high quality, slow acting carbohydrates like mannitol and beta-glucan, low in fat, high in fiber and with no starch. In general, they have good amounts of the B vitamins thiamine, riboflavin and niacin, and the minerals potassium and phosphorus. Just keep in mind that each mushroom species will have a different nutritional profile.

It is fair to say that mushrooms, in a cooked or processed form, represent a valuable food source. But mushrooms have been used in Asia for thousands of years in a much different way; as herbal medicines. Some species can be traced to the earliest records of Chinese traditional medicine, the "Shen Nong's herbal", dating to the first century BCE.

Despite the relatively large number of mushrooms identified as having medicinal properties, only a dozen or so species have been seriously utilized or studied. The common bond that is shared by these mushrooms is the occurrence of complex carbohydrates called beta-glucans.

Beta-glucans potentiate immune cells such as macrophages and T-lymphocytes and enhance the cell-mediated immune response. They also play a role of regulating homeostasis and immuno-modulation in the human body. Of importance is the fact that beta-glucans have no toxic effect on humans and are clinically safe. Given that most of these mushrooms are also used as food strengthens this safety observation.

According to Traditional Chinese medical theory, herbs such as mushrooms are classified as "superior", and are called tonic herbs. Such herbs increase disease resistance and normalize bodily functions. They are also called "harmony" herbs, which is a basic definition of the term "adaptogen". Mushrooms should therefore be seen as a cornerstone for preventive medicine and a means to maintain a high level of overall resistance to disease in general.

Specific benefits of each mushroom species are as follows:

Shiitake - Lentinula edodes

The most widely cultivated mushroom in the world, shiitake is a culinary delight and a mainstay in the Japanese diet. Because of its use in folk medicine and its availability, it has been the subject of intense research. Shiitake extracts have anti-fungal, anti-tumor, and anti-viral effects.

Maitake - Grifola frondosa

A choice edible mushroom that is now being cultivated on a grand scale, maitake has shown promise as an immune system modulator in recent Japanese research.

Turkey tail - Trametes versicolor

The Chinese call this mushroom, Yun-zhi, which means cloud fungus, an apt description for its wavy concentric shapes which cover dead hardwood trees with cloud-like formations of multiple small stemless mushrooms. Traditional Chinese medicine uses turkey tail for pulmonary disease and it's a strong immunomodulator.

Cordyceps - Cordyceps militaris

A small club-shaped fungus, it is said in ancient herb books that cordyceps builds up the "gate of vitality". It has been used as a tonic for treating general debility, anaemia, lung disease and

Revolutions start from the bottom.
YVON CHOUINARD, FOUNDER PATAGONIA

fatigue. Today cordyceps is often used in sports products to mitigate fatigue and help recovery.

Reishi - Ganoderma lingzhi

Reishi, or Ling zhi, is a legendary mushroom that has been called the "mushroom of immortality" and is considered a symbol of good fortune. Reishi is unique among mushrooms in that it not only contains ample immunologically active beta-glucans, but also a high content of triterpenoids. Triterpenoids increase our resistance to stress and "restore harmony". Research with reishi indicates that it calms our nervous system, provides relief from insomnia and improves liver function.

Lions mane - Hericium erinaceus

Lions mane mushroom has become very famous as a nootropic, a substance which enhances mental performance. In some clinical trials, lions mane has demonstrated cognitive improvement and also some benefits for dementia, depression and memory. It is also a delicious choice edible.

So it's time to think of mushrooms as a delicious forgotten food and missing dietary link as well as a preventive medicine that can play an important role in our overall health and well-being. And remember the wise words of the Greek physician Hippocrates, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food".

Jeff Chilton studied Ethno-mycology in the late sixties, then spent 10 years as a commercial mushroom grower. He is co-author of The Mushroom Cultivator and in 1989, Jeff established Nammex, the first company to supply medicinal mushroom extracts to the U.S. Nutritional Supplement industry.

REAL PEOPLE, MAKING REAL FOOD, AT REAL PLACES

GEORGINA INWOOD

We live in times, at least in the western world, where food is equal parts entertainment, therapy and escape. We've all got the lingo down pat, and know our mise en place from our mirepoix. Plating up is a thing; chefs are celebrities; and social media is swamped by food trends that defy belief.

It seems that cooking is no longer mere functionality. In lots of ways, that's a trend to be grateful for. It's gotten lots of people out of the drive-through and into the kitchen, cooking up a storm for themselves and for their family and friends. We've reconnected with that uplifting feeling of preparing a meal as a way to nurture people around us, in times of celebration, sadness or of happiness. And haven't we all needed that lately.

We've aspired to be more creative and we've started to see that food, that ingredients, can provide an experience as well sustenance.

But, if we only engage with what we see and taste on the plate, have we missed out on an equally profound part of a meal?

I think so, because arguably the most enriching part of the act of preparing and enjoying food is embracing the connection with the people who raised it, made it or grew it.

I firmly believe that everyone has a story to tell, and that everyone's story is interesting, if only we stop to listen. I'll never tire of meeting a farmer or a grower and talking to them about what they do.

And here in the Northern Rivers, there is an amazing network of foodies whose stories are compelling. They are incredible people; relatable in their normality and intriguing in their quirkiness. There are characters and comedians. There are poets and punters. There are truth-seekers and trend-setters.

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.
ALLEN WATTS

For many of them, food wasn't their first calling, yet they've found their way to it.

There's the architect and builder couple turned protein farmers Georgina and Morgwn Goddard, whose Brooklet Springs Farm turns out chicken, pork and beef that you have to taste to believe. Inspired by health issues and the struggle to find a responsible source of pasture-raised protein, they threw caution to the wind to start their own small scale farm. Love them.

There's former teacher turned producer in Steve at The Australian Native Bee Company and there's an IT specialist who now specialises in sublime ice cream in Mark at Teven Valley Farm. Seriously, try his pumpkin spice ice cream. Divine!

There's a film-maker who smokes fish at The Bay Smokehouse, a former music industry staffer whose cheese is superb (Cheeses Loves You) and chefs-turned pecan farmers at Barefoot Farms.

How about two former military officers, Jed and Sana at Esperanza Farm? Raising heritage breed pigs on their farm at Corndale is a world away from the life of an Army engineer and the first female Australian Defence Force Academy graduate to complete the Army's pilot training course. Their ham is hands down the best I've ever tasted.

There's a Russian chef, who had an epiphany at a temple in the Himalayas, who now makes an incredible range of seasonal krauts, ferments, tonics and tinctures right here in our neck of the woods. That's Katerina from Suria Foods.

There's a French surfer who came to Byron on holidays, and never left, and now has us all addicted to pickled garlic. That's Antoine at Byron Olive Co. There's even Pam Brook,

Photo: Kitti Gould

a dentist who became Australia's macadamia queen at Brookfarm, and whose family went on to create Cape Byron Distillery, in 2020 crowned as Sustainable Distillery of the Year at the Icons of Gin Awards in London.

And if the tales of how these folks came to do what they're doing doesn't blow you away, the story of the human effort, not to mention passion, that goes into growing, producing or making their local products will. Or at least, it should be if you really want to understand where your food comes from.

Take Katie at La Finca Booyong, Her pasture-raised eggs have to be handled by a real person (that's most likely her) about seven times before they find their way to a local shop. It puts the price of a carton of eggs into a different light when you think about it.

Or how about Claire at Wattle Tree Creek, who makes superb pickles, chutneys and jams. She has to wash, chop and cook something like 150kg of fresh veg every week. I get RSI even thinking about that!

So many of our local food characters are quiet innovators, testing boundaries and carving out niches and opportunities that we all reap the benefits from.

Frank at Nimbin Valley Rice and Pecans took the family dairy farm in a new direction, with an initial foray into nuts and then into unique dry land rice. People are always amazed that rice can grow outside of a paddy field, let alone in a paddock much like you'd expect to see wheat or oats. To enjoy local rice, grown just up the road is pretty incredible.

Jonas from Fair Game Wild Venison has one of those businesses that make you wonder why no one thought of it before. He's trying to solve the environmental problems created by feral deer through a simple solution: wild-caught venison. With a team of field-harvesters and access to a number of properties where deer are especially problematic, Jonas provides quality venison for local tables. Win, win, win.

Have you heard of kombucha for sheep? Warren from Local Dorper Lamb makes something akin to that for his herd! He makes a very funky sea weed fertiliser that he ferments for eight weeks before using. It help keep his sheep's digestion healthy and fertilises the paddocks at the same time.

And then there's Mullum's local craft brewers, Wandana Brewing Co, who are putting into practice research that shows music can impact on the way yeast behaves! Ananda, Chrissie and co brew each of their different beers to a different style of music. Who would have thought!

Yes, there is something very special about the food culture of the Northern Rivers. It's not just the quality of the produce or the depth of the local cafés and restaurants that use it. It's not only the vibrancy of the region's network of farmers markets and the community members and visitors that frequent them. No, the Northern Rivers food culture is much more than that, much deeper than a trend or a passing fad. It is the cumulative, layered enthusiasm, eccentricity and toil of real people, who are making real food at real places. And that's sustenance for the body and for the soul.

Georgina Inwood is the owner/operator of award-winning small business Table Under a Tree (www.tableunderatree.com.au). Table Under a Tree delivers locally grown and made food direct to locals and visitors as well as offering private farm and food tours of the region. She is also on the executive of Northern Rivers Food, the region's not-for-profit member group which supports and advocates for the local food industry from the paddock to the plate.

Photo: Kitti Gould

Voltaire said in the late 1700's ... Men argue, nature acts.

PRIVACY AND TRANSPARENCY: FRIENDS NOT FOES

YANYA VISKOVICH

On a balmy January evening, as Rusty, Tricia, our friends and families gathered on the grass at Wategos, Julian Assange - of Lismore origins and Wikileaks fame - came up in conversation. Our collective outrage at our own Government's treatment of this hero of the Information Age ultimately led me to write this article. Raising awareness about transparency, privacy and cybersecurity is my passion and focus. Why? Because alongside the climate crisis and public health, these are some of the defining issues of our time. And, as the Coronavirus Pandemic and the climate crisis highlights, only when we begin to understand something can we become an agent of change for it.

In the era of "surveillance capitalism", our lives and identities are increasingly reduced to data points - for analysis, profiling, profit and extortion - by Government, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and cybercriminals. Whilst the citizen's private life is increasingly scrutinsed by these entities, in contrast, many of those same third parties use the figleaf of "privacy" to erroneously justify their lack of transparency, evading electoral and stakeholder accountability for their actions and decisions.

The persecution of Assange for Wikileaks' unearthing of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, intercepting his privileged conversations with his lawyers, and the subsequent abandonment of our fellow citizen by the Australian Government, is a case in point and a clarion call to us all. If we wish to hold Government and big business accountable and retain any agency over our private lives, we must all become better informed and more cyber resilient.

I've spent a large portion of my professional life advocating for and advising on laws that protect our right to privacy, and just as it is with the environment, until people value it, they are unlikely to guard and protect it. The misnomer: "I have nothing to hide, so I have nothing to fear", is the common response to warnings about threats to our privacy. The thing is, "you" don't get to decide if or what you need to fear; "they" do. The recently released Netflix docudrama, "The Social Dilemma", powerfully illustrates this.

Growing up, one of the things I cherished most was freedom of thought. Whether retreating within my own cranial walls during school lunchtimes, or sitting on my surfboard at The Pass waiting for the next wave and contemplating life staring out at the vast oceanic expanse, my thoughts were the one part of me that was safe from others. They could not be seen, or touched, or heard. It was the last frontier that was truly private; impervious to being 'colonised' by 'outsiders'.

Some thirty years later, that last frontier is being invaded at an alarming pace as intrusive technologies and ad-targeting practices exponentially outpace laws and regulations that define their limits. This includes monitoring our every move with personal tracking devices (AKA our smartphones), big data analytics that link up what we hover over or 'Like' on Facebook and Instagram, with our shoe size from the website we just placed our order through, and our heart rate from our FitBit. From Artificial Intelligence

Education the educator especially in the history of ideas, is about the culture we make. It is our best defence against world collapse. Education is survival.
ELIZABETH FARRELLY, COLUMNIST SMH

that knows more about how we think and act than we do, to the Internet-of-Things (IoT) which has turned our cars into computers on wheels that predict our driving behaviour, and our fridges into computers that keep our food cold and tell us when to throw out the hummus, to Virtual and Augmented Reality that analyses and stores our facial imagery: we are the product.

Businesses increasingly use data to drive their decision-making and create profit. As the oft-quoted saying goes, "data is the new oil". Unlike oil, however, data is not a finite resource. Instead, it's the trust that we as citizens and customers place in public and private organisations to handle our data responsibly, that, once eroded, is difficult (if not impossible) to rebuild. Indeed, given security and privacy concerns, many Australians opted out of the Federal Government's $2 billion dollar online electronic health record system, and to date, over half of the records created for it remain empty.

Even Byron's small independent operators and gig economy workers must become increasingly cyber resilient in order to protect client, customer and employee data and therefore retain their trust. Every business that has a digital presence is vulnerable to cyber attacks, including Phishing scams, malware (viruses of the computer-not Corona-variety), ransomware, IoT-hacking, website spoofing, identity fraud, cyberextortion, cryptojacking, and theft of financial and card payment data. It's not something we can afford to be complacent about either: cyber incidents have multiplied during the Pandemic, and a recent analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that Australia is the world's sixth most-targeted country in terms of 'significant cyber attacks', which cost Australia $29 billion each year (equating to 2% of GDP in 2019). Addressing cyber threats must therefore be prioritised. In doing so, however, we must be careful not to conflate the actions of ethical hackers, whistleblowers and publishers who hold Governments accountable, with the actions of cybercriminals. Cue Julian Assange, who is now being criminally pursued by the US for his journalistic role in Wikileaks' publishing of the Iraq and Afghan War Logs.

A month before Assange took refuge in London's Ecuadorian Embassy seeking political asylum and protection from said extradition to the US, I gathered with locals at the Byron at Byron to hear North Coast resident George Negus discuss "Australia's Place in the World". I had just returned to Byron after a stint in New York working at the UN Refugee Agency, where the humanitarian situations in Baghdad and Kabul

were frequently on the agenda. I wondered what George thought would be the legacy of Julian Assange's contribution to journalism and Wikileaks' direct-to-the-public publishing model. As a fellow journalist, was George concerned for media freedom in Australia more generally, given the Government's abandonment of one of its Walkley Award-winning citizens? London-based Australian human rights lawyer Jen Robinson - the longest-serving lawyer on Assange's legal team - and a fellow surfer and university friend of mine - has often publicly expressed grave concerns that if Assange were to be prosecuted for his journalistic activities, it would effectively gag investigative journalism and thus undermine press freedom - a cornerstone of democracy. A decade later, those fears are materialising in the context of Assange's extradition hearing, judgment in which will be handed down in January 2021.

It is a tragic irony that in the Information Age, being a journalist is now one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. As the Pandemic has highlighted, the level of mistrust in the media is at an all-time high (understandably so when considering the Murdoch monopoly). But claims of "fake news" have only added fuel to the disinformation-and-conspiracy-theory fire in the unregulated universe of social media, hindering public health communication efforts to contain the virus, and endangering journalists and democracy in the process. Meanwhile, the collection and sharing of data about who we associate with, when and where, gathered from contact tracing information and COVID-tracking apps - such as the Australian Government's "COVIDSafe" app - poses further serious threats to our privacy.

And then there's the logical fallacy that the protection of personal information and transparency of Government decision-making are mutually exclusive ideals. There's a lot of (deliberate?) muddying the waters as a result, which dangerously confuses these symbiotic concepts to the detriment of the fundaments of our democracy. The distinction is critical, however, because the public should be subject to scrutiny, whilst the private - well, is just that: private.

Privacy, the protection of personal data, cybersecurity are defining issues of our time. Their relevance for our wellbeing, our community, society, our rule of law and democracy is increasingly important as data becomes the new currency of our digitalised world. In the 1950s Space was considered the last frontier for human exploration/exploitation. In the 2020s, it's human privacy - or, the space between our ears: what we think, like, do, and what motivates us. Like all tools, technologies can be used for good as well as bad. It's up to us as citizens to demand that they be designed with (our) privacy in mind from the outset, define their boundaries, and decide how they are wielded, by whom, and for what purpose. Will you answer that call to action?

Yanya Viskovich is Chair of Cyber Risk and Law at the Swiss Cyber Forum, Zürich. In her 15 year career she has advised the former Australian Federal Privacy Commissioner as a Federal Prosecutor, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Commission's Horizon2020 Project, tech startups and corporates on data protection, privacy, cybersecurity and ethics.

Photo: Tao Jones

Imagination is more important than knowledge... Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.
ALBERT EINSTEIN

Photo: Tao Jones

HOW LOCAL INVESTMENT CAN SAVE YOUR COMMUNITY

MICHAEL H. SHUMAN

True confession – I've always been a beach bum. I grew up on Long Island in the 1960s and spent many of the best days of my childhood building sandcastles and body surfing at Jones Beach. So when I spoke at the Economics of Happiness Conference in Byron Bay in April 2013 and was asked if I wanted to join with two dozen other speakers and learn how to surf the next morning at the crack of dawn, it was an easy "yes."

At the time, I was 57 and one of three people in our novice surfing gaggle over forty. My recollection is that the younger speakers did great. People like Manish Jain from India, Bayo Akomolafe from Nigeria, and Charles Eisenstein from the USA executed magnificent 60 second rides. My two peers, Mark Anielski from Canada and Winona LaDuke, a prominent Native American activist, were both carried out of the water with injuries. I was merely black and blue from having fallen off the board perhaps 25 times, but the experience left me feeling exhilarated—about the sea and about Byron Bay.

Byron Bay is that kind of community, where the sea invites your wild abandon and most of us ultimately give in to the temptation. Since 2009, when I made my first trip to Australia, I've spoken in Byron Bay four times. Each time I'm impressed by the intelligence, talent, and innovativeness of its people. Which has only deepened the shock when I ask my Byron audiences how many have at least 1% of their investments in local businesses and no hands go up. None.

The most prosperous community economies in the world are filled with a diversity of locally owned businesses in every sector imaginable. They are teaming with creative entrepreneurs, loyal local shoppers, and collaborative business networks. Byron Bay has all these assets but is missing one other critical requirement for success. Like almost every community in the world, the residents and visitors of Byron Bay are not investing locally.

In the United States, we know that locally owned businesses comprise 60% to 80% of private economy (depending on how you define "local"), are highly profitable (except for startups), and have been remarkably competitive despite public policies that favor global companies. In Australia, the percentage of the economy occupied by local businesses is larger still. And yet in both countries, almost all our savings for retirement go into nonlocal, publicly traded corporations. We are all systematically overinvesting in the big businesses we distrust, and underinvesting – or not investing at all – in the local businesses that are critical for community well-being.

The reason for these perverse results is an outdated system of securities laws that make it expensive and difficult for grassroots investors to put even a penny into small businesses.

If we could fix this system, how might our communities benefit? Americans currently have $56 trillion invested long-term in stocks, bonds, pension funds, mutual funds, and insurance funds. Australians, with 8% of the U.S. population, have about $3 trillion in their

Certain events in history are like lightning; for a moment they reveal the world not as it seems but as it really is.
VLADIMIR LENIN

Photo: David Young

superannuation funds. I've calculated that if Americans shifted 60% of those savings into the 60% of businesses that are locally owned, our Main Street businesses would have $100,000 per capita. To put this in Byron Bay terms, where the shire has almost 32,000 people, this would mean $3.2 billion available for the startup, strengthening, and expansion of your local business.

Actually, in a well-functioning investment ecosystem, local businesses in Byron Bay would probably have more capital. Australia's superannuation system legally mandates more savings per capita than the United States does, and your economy is more dependent on small businesses.

Now for some good news. Recent legal reforms in both our countries have cracked open tremendous opportunities to invest in local businesses. In the four years since investment crowdfunding has been legal in the United States, half a million Americans have put $340 million into 1,500 small companies. The average raised by each business is $270,000, and the average investment is $750. The biggest beneficiaries have been women and nonwhite entrepreneurs – precisely those people that the existing capital markets have overlooked.

Australia legalized investment crowdfunding in 2018 and already can point to a number of great success stories. For example, Food Connect in Brisbane, the largest community supported agriculture network in the country, was able to raise $2 million to buy a critically needed warehouse. Remarkably, 95% of its 570 grassroots investors were women!

Many who would like to invest locally nevertheless believe that they can't, because their retirement funds are locked up in funds or programs with no local options. That's why I wrote my most recent book, Put Your Money Where Your Life Is. It shows Americans how they can use unfamiliar tax tools – the self-directed individual retirement account (IRA) and the solo 401k – to shift their investments from Wall Street to Main Street.

Similar tools exist for Australians who wish to self-direct some or all of their superannuation savings. My friend and colleague Gilbert Rochecouste, founder and CEO of the Village Well in Melbourne, used part of his superannuation funds to purchase a property that will serve as an incubator called the Epoch Centre for cutting-edge local businesses in the city.

Americans have used their self-directed pension funds: to buy a home, a greenhouse, or a solar energy system; to get themselves or their kids out of high-interest debt; to make loans to local businesses, nonprofits, or co-ops; and to place their money into local-reinvesting banks, credit unions, or investment funds. Most of these options exist in Australia, though someone will need to write a book like mine to show you exactly how to find and use them. And the laws for self-directed funds in Australia need to be reformed to bring down their costs.

The unexpected damage that COVID-19 has inflicted on our economies makes it urgent that we learn about and start using local investment tools as soon as humanly possible. As the virus started to hurt local businesses in my community in Maryland, my partner and I adopted a business called Busboys and Poets, which is a combination bar, bookstore, restaurant, and event space. We estimated that we spend $1,000 per year there, and wrote the entrepreneur a check for that amount, telling him to use the prepayment to support his cash flow and retain employees. He was so pleased, he gave us $1,200 of gift cards - giving us a 20% rate of return.

How about setting up a website in Byron so that every local business can make this simple kind of pre-purchasing opportunity available to every resident? Your businesses would get a much needed "stimulus." Your investors would get a much higher rate of return than they do from global companies. And your community would have an identified pool of local investors to support future expansions of your local businesses.

We need to remember the immortal words of Sir Francis Bacon: "It would be an unsound fancy and self-contradictory to expect that things which have never yet been done can be done except by means which have never yet been tried."

Michael H. Shuman is a U.S.-based attorney and economist who has written ten books on local investing, including most recently PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR LIFE IS.
www.michaelshuman.com

At its core, the economy is the way we take our resources and turn them into the things we need to live.
MISHA KETCHELL, EDITOR THE CONVERSATION

Photo: David Young

THE POWER OF CRYSTALS

AZRIEL RE'SHEL

Looking to cheer myself up with a bit of bling I recently bought a beautiful Green Kyanite crystal pendant. Its striking colour is reminiscent of the rainforest, or mossy lichen on a tree trunk and I put it on in a brief minute before being lassoed by the maelstrom of the school rush morning madness of getting four children to their different schools and making it to work by 8:30am without injuring myself or someone else. Once at work I promptly forgot I was even wearing it. My work in drug and alcohol rehab is demanding, and once in the door it's pretty much on. After a long day I noticed when I got home how calm I felt. Even though the day had

Photo: Crystal Castle

been a bit relentless and very full, I felt somehow untouched by it. I wasn't drained, and instead felt strangely buoyant. Wondering about this, I put it aside until I entered that mindful place of insight: the bathroom, and while brushing my teeth, looked in the mirror and spotted the crystal. I pondered whether this crystal had somehow kept me going all day, so I decided to experiment. The next day I didn't wear the pendant, and guess what, I came home drained and irritable! Simple yet actually extraordinary.

Crystals have long been revered for their magic. Used in ritual and worn by royalty, today the not so exclusive domain of hippies and new agers, these wonders of nature are undeniably exquisite and somehow mysteriously powerful. So, why are we so drawn to crystals and what effect do they truly have on us?

The Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Sumerians, and Native Americans all used crystals for healing and protective purposes. In fact most ancient cultures utilised crystals. Today you are using crystals in your daily life without even being aware of it. Crystals are used in modern technology with Quartz the most commonly used crystal, due to its unique and amazing ability to change electrical energy into mechanical energy. Your computer has a Quartz chip that stores information, processes, amplifies and transmits energy. Clear Quartz crystal is used in computers, watches, radios, sonar, ultrasound, transistors, lasers, display screens, as well as to power amplifiers in electric guitars, microphones and nearly all digital electronic devices.

Just as crystals impact modern technology, they undoubtedly have an effect on us too. And somehow instinctively we seem to be captivated by their magical colours and formations. But, there is more to it than just their beauty. Crystals have a high consciousness, they act as purifiers and amplifiers. They were made millions of years ago through volcanic activity and under intense heat and pressure. The different minerals present in crystals give them their varied characteristics,

The key to living is to try to actively reduce each other's suffering.
NICK CAVE

colours and healing properties. The earth most certainly has healing properties. You just need to spend ten minutes in nature to confirm this. So, why not crystals? Deep treasures from the heart of the earth, crystals are nature's gifts that carry the magnetic power of the earth deep inside them. They are ancient formations, and we have yet to fully understand the impact of crystals upon our energy systems and psyche. The more we sensitize ourselves to the natural world, the more we can feel the power of nature. It is undeniable that we feel renewed, refreshed and recharged when near the ocean, or more peaceful sitting under trees. Crystals coming from the beating heart of our earth. They are mineralized rock and extraordinarily ancient.

Crystals have a physical effect on technology and matter, but what about their metaphysical properties? Many people report crystals support the release of negative energy, raise their consciousness, or protect them from harmful energies. Placing a crystal in the home most definitely alters that space. Perhaps we can't quite put our finger on exactly what it does, but we just know it does something. And it seems it's not just a positive mind set impacted by our beliefs in the power of crystals. Children in particular are very sensitive to crystals as are animals. I've had pets that will sit or sleep right next to a crystal, especially when unwell.

One thing's for sure, as life becomes increasingly complex and the pace of life grows exponentially, more than ever we need ways to find balance and calm. Perhaps crystals are the perfect antidote to our busy lives and working with crystals in our daily lives and using them as added support could be a beautiful way to connect with the wisdom of the earth and find inner peace.

Azriel Re'Shel is a Freelance Writer, Editor, Yoga Teacher and Social Worker.

Photo: Crystal Castle

WHY BYRON SHOULD STEP OFF THE GAS AND GO ELECTRIC

GILES PARKINSON

You can see the signs scattered proudly all across the Northern Rivers region. "We're 98 per cent gas free", says the sign nearest my locality. It's a declaration not just of intent, but also of independence from a big chunk of the global fossil fuel industry.

Right now those signs are directed at the would-be developers of gas extraction projects in the region. The message is clear: We don't want your gas fields here, with your fugitive emissions and your water and other impacts. But how long until it is also directed at the broader American definition of gas – petrol and diesel in cars and trucks?

Residents and visitors to the Byron Shire might notice the growing number of electric vehicles on the roads (one of them is mine!), and the number of charging stations scattered around the shire.

It's great to see. It's the result of the shire having a sizeable affluent population that are happy to pay for Tesla's and the Kona's, and some other pricey EVs, and the many people with lesser means but great conviction – who have been buying second hand Nissan Leafs, or adapting their own, as local identity Sapoty Brooks has done with his electric van with the fold out solar panels! But how long will it be before those "gas free" signs apply to petrol and diesel vehicles too? In Norway, sales of all new petrol and diesel cars – and even plug in hybrids – will be banned from 2025. That's just five years away, although in Norway full battery electric cars already account for two thirds of new car sales. The UK is following suit, with a 2030 deadline. Is Australia in any position to follow?

Happily yes, and sadly no. Yes, because Australia is in the midst of the most remarkable energy transition. Rooftop solar is becoming ubiquitous and is making life difficult for the ageing and dirty coal fired generators. Large scale wind and solar farms are being built across the country.

In the absence of the "vision thing" from the federal government, all the states and territories are taking responsibility for putting in plans to hasten that transition, with the ACT leading the way. Just a decade ago the idea that we would get even a 10 to 20 per cent share of our electricity supply from wind and solar was deemed to be crazy by some. Now, the Labor states are legislating targets, but they are being outdone by conservative governments in South Australia and Tasmania who want 100 and 200 per cent renewables respectively.

And that is thanks to a number of things happening: the plunging costs of wind and solar, the "arrival" of battery storage, and finally, after 50 years of talking about it, the emergence of the "hydrogen" economy, based around the technology of "cracking water" with wind and solar and so creating clean fuels.

All of that leads to a low emissions grid, and the opportunity for a low emissions transport system too. How long should it be before we start talking about electric or zero emissions vehicle

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.
JAMES BALDWIN, AFRICAN-AMERICAN WRITER

targets, or at least providing the incentives and infrastructure that will encourage the world's car makers to bring their EVs to Australia too

That's important. Australian consumers have been struggling for choice – there is simply not enough on offer to satisfy that desire to buy an EV. How many people do you know that say "my next car is going to be electric", just as soon as they can find one that they can afford, and which suits their lifestyle.

It's important we move soon. The environmental reasons are enormous – we must do all we can to keep global warming capped at an average of 1.5°C. The exhaust from petrol and diesel cars is a lethal hazard – responsible for up to 3,000 deaths a year in Australia, and millions across the world.

The cars we currently drive in this country are dirty death boxes. Australia has no vehicle fuel or emissions standards, so it has become a dumping ground for cars that no longer meet standards in Europe or elsewhere. Some engines have to be de-tuned so they can cope with the dirty fuels allowed to be sold in Australian petrol stations. Even the government's own data suggests that is costing the average Australian car owner around $600 in extra fuel costs a year.

The Byron region is blessed with natural beauty, and a caring and engaged population. It is coal free, and gas free. It could, too, set an example by encouraging the uptake of electric and other zero emissions transport – and that includes bicycles and walking!

The shire council should go first, and business should follow. It's a lot easier for companies who buy their vehicles on lease to unlock the savings from EVs. Car rental and limousine companies should follow. What about the shared car economy, and can we beat Uber's deadline of all electric drivers by 2030?

I wonder, on occasion, as I pass by a cyclist panting up one of the hills in the hinterland, if they appreciate the absence of fumes and exhaust from my EV. They can breathe easy!

So could we all if we got rid of vehicle emissions and exhausts! And the best thing of all – EVs are so satisfying, so much fun to drive, and so relaxing (even) when you get stuck in traffic. It won't happen, however, until EV models are plentiful, and affordable, and there is a strong second hand market (that's your job fleet owners).

So Byron, let's lead the way, and raise our ambition beyond a few EV-only parking spots, and let's make the shire even more gas free.

Giles Parkinson is a resident of the Byron Shire, and founder and editor of the online publications RenewEconomy, One Step Off The Grid, and the EV-focused The Driven. www.reneweconomy.com.au

Photo: Rusty Miller

BYRON BAY

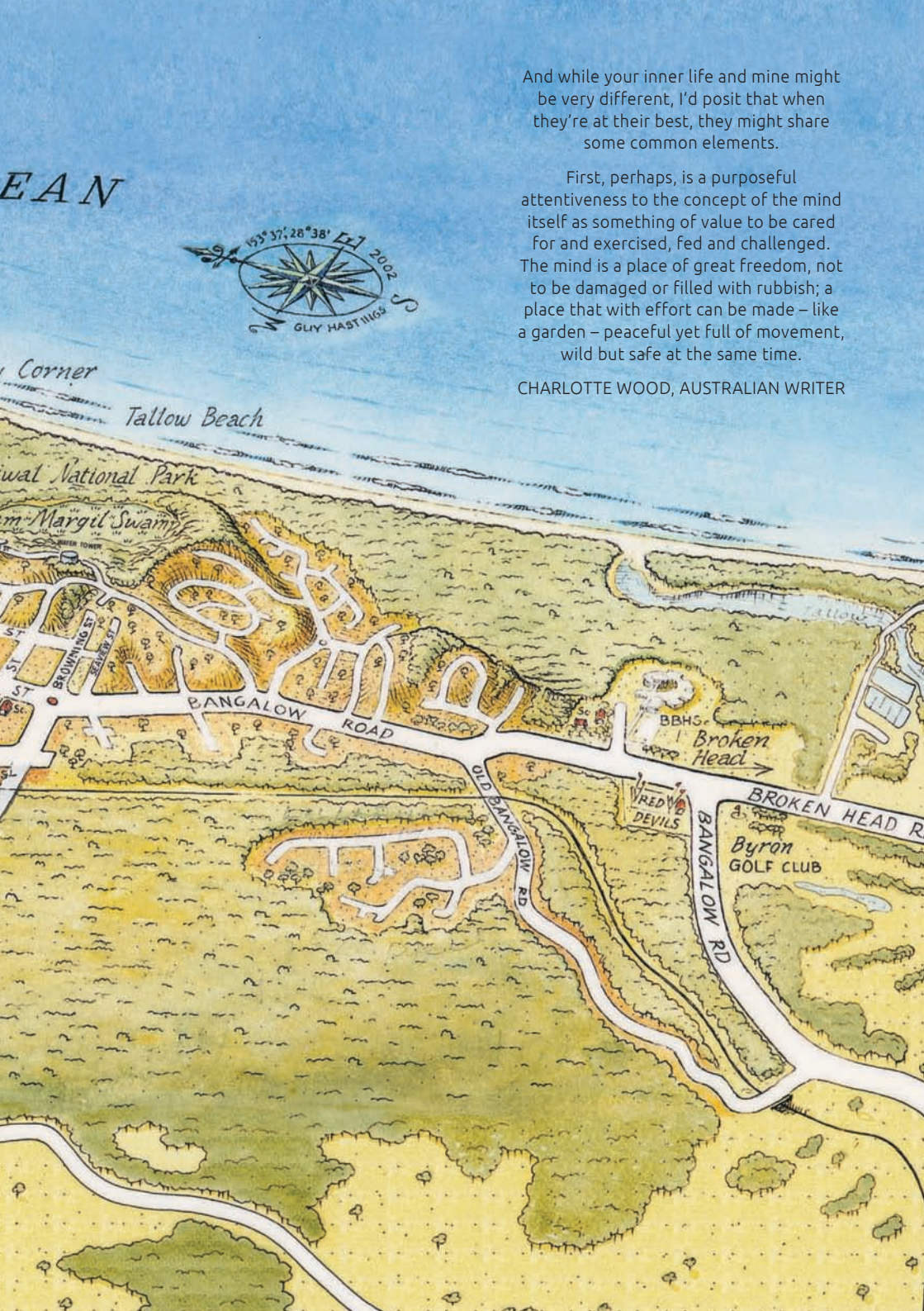
Australia's most easterly point

Guy Hastings hand drawn maps
www.guyhastings.com

And while your inner life and mine might be very different, I'd posit that when they're at their best, they might share some common elements.

First, perhaps, is a purposeful attentiveness to the concept of the mind itself as something of value to be cared for and exercised, fed and challenged. The mind is a place of great freedom, not to be damaged or filled with rubbish; a place that with effort can be made – like a garden – peaceful yet full of movement, wild but safe at the same time.

CHARLOTTE WOOD, AUSTRALIAN WRITER



WHY WE NEED GOOD PUBLIC POLICY

COURTNEY MILLER

What the world needs now is …governance, good governance

It's the only thing that there's just too little of

What the world needs now is governance, good governance

No not just for some but for everyone! *

It was a rubbish 2020 for most. Even in our little coastal paradise of Byron it's been rough. There has been the economics of the worldwide pandemic, the health elements - both physical and mental, and then there's just the overarching, seemingly endless not knowingness. Pile all the usual stuff of life on top and headspace is more sought after than a Wategos Beach property. I know some people learned to make sourdough, ferment kimchi or darn socks but all of us had an awakening to policy making on the run. Restaurateurs suddenly had daily changes to what was / wasn't / is allowed, Ballina-Byron Airport suddenly became the third busiest airport in the country. Many people heading to Queensland for healthcare had a rude shock when the border suddenly closed. The impacts have been a combination of effectiveness and overreach.

This, my friends, is what we in the industry call, Public Policy. Politicians are out the front but really Public Policy is our society. It's the agreed rules and government support shaping what and how we value life. It's why there is sanitizer in every conceivable nook around the country. Policy is how Job Keeper exists. It determines who can come into our country and stay. It's the framework that politicians, corporates, NGO's industry bodies, unions and others work to change and bend to their own needs and ideologies.

If we don't have good public policy, we can't have an effective political economy or a society that operates with fairness and equality. Maybe those are outdated aspirations for modern Australia, but having spent a couple of years in America, my biggest take away is don't let that chasm expand. We don't want to have a society where the bridge between those least fortunate and the most is the length of the Great Ocean Road. We need public policy that values fairness over mere efficiency, public policy that speaks a language of connection not division, and lastly it needs to lead us as well as listens to us – the populace. If we can act this quickly on Covid, what exactly is stopping us from having effective Climate Change policy?

I reference America because, from across the Pacific we're privy to its obvious imploding - a Caligula-esque figure became President, no healthcare for millions of citizens as the pandemic rages, ineffective safety nets that are designed to not catch everyone and thousands of undocumented workers putting their health to the side to merely survive. These are public policy problems which have solvable solutions. All jurisdictions are different, and have various components, that you can't just cut and paste but there are multiples of examples on how to structure healthcare, for example, that is more cost effective and better care than what's currently available in the US.

Tony Judt in his 2010 book Ill Fares The Land wrote - "we know what things cost but have no

You may not control all the events that happened to you but you can decide not to be reduced by them.
MAYA ANGELOU, POET

idea what they are worth." In 2020 countries - democratic, autocratic or other - saw their public debt dramatically rise and look down the barrel of a global recession. Increased public debt is not a new trend in America , even before the pandemic, it was higher than at any other point other than WWI. And its trajectory was up. Yet the policy outcome is the same as the effect of Covid. As this debt has grown, the statistics show it's benefiting the MOST wealthy in American society. Not the people who work regular jobs every day, all week, year after year. Not even upper middle-class professionals. These people are slipping further behind while the wealthiest of the wealthiest are becoming unfathomably rich. Between 1979 and 2005 the top 15,000 wealthiest individuals in the great US of A sextupled their already vast personal wealth!

Judt opened his book with the words, "Something is profoundly wrong with the way we live today". We all know it deep inside or for some, way up on the surface. Most of us don't know what 'IT' is exactly or how to solve 'IT'. Yet most of us realise that material self-interest is not 'IT', even as we walk the complacent path of that collective norm. This is in no way a rant against wealth, but an argument to ensure that governance structures public policy in a way to allocate what is needed to ensure we are ALL able to lead fulfilling lives. It's clear that's not happening in America. It's also clear that it hurts everyone. In Australia, despite Medicare, the wonderful Australian Electoral Commission negating gerrymandering opportunities and that old nutshell the welfare system, we could do with a little good governance to ensure we actually develop a climate change

policy, that all Australians truly get a good education and that any global pandemic that comes our way doesn't disproportionately affect those least able to afford it. Economics calls this the diminishing marginal utility of wealth which my Economics Professor translates as a poor person speaks with a quieter voice. A democracy needs to hear all voices to create a society we all want to live in.

** To the tune of "What the World Needs Now Is Love" is a 1965 popular song with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach.*

Courtney Miller is currently doing her Masters of Public Affairs from Berkeley, she has spent her career in policy formerly as a Labor policy staffer, Head of Communications at the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney and General Manager of the Australian Fashion Council. She was born and bred in Byron and is preoccupied with the question of how we change culture!

WHAT CAN YOU DO HERE AND NOW FOR BYRON? Byron Shire continuously ranks as having the highest proportion of volunteers in community in Australia. If you're a long-term resident, a new resident or just someone passing through and you're enjoying what this region has to offer, please think about how you could give a little something back if you can. Here's our top 10 picks on how to do just that…

1. **Become a supporter of our local radio station Bay FM 99.9: bayfm.org/subscribe**
2. **Get to know the original custodians of Cape Byron the Arakwal people: arakwal.com.au Do a tour with Arakwal Bundjalung elder Delta Kay - explorebyronbay.com**
3. **Read/Support our local independent paper The Echo: echo.net.au**
4. **Support our local farmers at the markets: byronfarmersmarket.com.au**
5. **Give to the Northern Rivers Community Foundation: nrcf.org.au**
6. **Get involved or support the Byron Bay Community Centre: byroncentre.com.au**
7. **Byron Youth Service: bys.org.au**
8. **Byron Writers Festival: byronwritersfestival.com**
9. **Surfers for Climate: surfersforclimate.org.au**
10. **Zero Emissions Byron Bay: zerobyron.org**

Painting by: Michael King-Prime

LONELINESS AND TYRANNY

RICHARD HIL

Is loneliness a threat to democracy? At one level the answer seems obvious. The more disconnected and disenchanted we are, the less likely we are to build social solidarity or to participate in political affairs. We become denizens, rather than active citizens.

There's little doubt that feeling disconnected from ourselves, from each other, and from nature, leads to a more siloed, beige existence. But loneliness is more than just existential despair. It also impacts our collective sense of wellbeing, safety and security, and our capacity to be agents of change. Pervasive loneliness, I contend, can inadvertently grant power to others, disconnect us from a sense of the social, dissuade us from organised, collective action, and ultimately, render us vulnerable to the malevolent and unscrupulous - a la Trump!

There's no blame being attributed here. After all, loneliness is not something we choose. It's different from occasional solitude, which, at times, we all crave. Loneliness can be soul-destroying; it's the embodiment of intense negative emotions that reflect our unwanted separation and isolation from others. But this doesn't just result from being physically cut-off. Many of us in work situations, in social settings, and even in supposedly intimate relationships can feel lonely. Indeed, proximity of this sort often serves to intensify our feelings of separateness. To be connected, we must feel that we're in reciprocal, meaningful and enriching relationships. We need to talk, trust and share parts of ourselves. We need to give and receive, in gratitude. Not a lot to ask, you might think.

Earlier this year, I co-authored an essay entitled Being Lonely: Making Sense of Australia's Epidemic of Social and Ecological disconnection. Published jointly by the Ngara Institute and Resilient Byron (see website: www.resilientbyron.org/noticeboard/beinglonely), the essay ended up raising more questions than answers. The more we delved into the meaning of loneliness, the more complex the concept seemed to become.

We were intrigued by the assertions of Guardian columnist, George Monbiot, who speaks of an "epidemic of loneliness" and Australian social researcher, Hugh McKay, who identifies an "epidemic of anxiety". Rather than viewing such phenomena simply as 'mental health problems' to be treated with pharmaceuticals and counselling - helpful as these can be - both authors venture into the world in which we live: the values, beliefs, structures and ways of being that shape our everyday lives. Monbiot fixes on the rise of neoliberalism, or free market fundamentalism, in the late 1970s, arguing that its preoccupation with competitiveness and materialism have intensified social disconnection, selfishness, and even narcissism.

More and more of us, Monbiot argues, have turned inwards, obsessed with our own wants and needs, privileging acquisitiveness and consumption over more pressing concerns of the soul. Transactional relationships, it seems, have triumphed over social reciprocity. Remember former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, saying that "…there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there

Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.
RUTH BADER GINSBURG

are families…"? This was, and remains, a recipe for social suffering: the dehumanizing of social solidarity in favour of rampant individualism and the almighty market.

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has served to entrench loneliness in Australia. It's the "shadow pandemic", a "once in a generation mental health crisis". Lockdowns and social distancing have made loneliness more apparent. We're no longer sleepwalking into a siloed dystopia. It's already here. The truth is that social disconnection was present in the social body well before the onset of the plague. But whose interests are being served by widespread loneliness? It's an odd question given what seems like a cruel and self-defeating experience. Why would anyone seek to benefit from this? What's the pay off?

Well, let's put it this way, the more estranged we become, the more we open up spaces for demagogues, charlatans and oddballs. Once common cause and collectivism are replaced by despondent individualism, the more likely we are to get authoritarian rule. In short, loneliness becomes weaponised. As philosopher Hannah Arendt once observed, loneliness is "the common ground for terror, it is weaponised to effect totalitarianism." Terror, she wrote, "can rule absolutely only over men [sic] who are isolated against each other… Therefore, one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical government is to bring this isolation about…Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capacities."

If this is so, then the opposite also holds true. The more we seek connection and common purpose - sharing each other's stories without blaming 'the other' or engaging in poisonous solidarity - the less likely we are to accept the diktats and delusions of autocratic leaders hellbent on advancing their own interests.

Remember, social disconnection is the road to totalitarianism. So, bathe in the social, listen, share your stories and connect, and don't blame the powerless and disenfranchised for your misfortunes.

Dr Richard Hil is Adjunct Professor in the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University, and a happy citizen residing in Mullumbimby. josephgora@hotmail.com

THE BIG SCRUB

TONY KENWAY

It's 1861, you have arrived in Cavanbah (Byron Bay) after a long journey aboard a schooner from Sydney. The south swell was too big to enter the Richmond River so here you are, peacefully anchored within the shelter of the Bay.

You and your companion are Irish farmers who have heard rumours of rich farmland to the north of the Richmond River. The government is offering free selection for those willing to work the land, and you are eager to find and claim your parcel.

After coming to shore at Palm Valley (The Pass), you gather supplies from the local Inn run by Mr Jarman. He tells you there is no way you'll manage to make your way inland from here; 'The scrub is so thick you can't see 10 yards in front of you'. He tells you the only way in is by boat up the Richmond River to Lismore and to get to the river, you must walk down the coast along the beaches and across the headlands.

At Broken Head you use the tracks used for thousands of years by the locals. Here you come across a camp of peaceful Arakwal people, who are just beginning to see the fate that lays before them. You continue walking south to Lennox headland and finally to Ballina township on the banks of the Richmond.

You secure a lift in a supply boat to Lismore. From the boat's vantage you peer into the dark forest which is so dense it looks impossible to penetrate and much of the river is engulfed under its giant canopy. The water is crystal clear; you see fish, eels and crayfish as you sail by. You pass floating rafts of red cedar logs chained together, displaying their branded markings securing ownership, on their way to Ballina to be sawn and loaded for passage to England. You arrive in Lismore, a bustling centre nestled in a basin within a confluence of tributaries surrounded by semi-cleared scrub.

You and your mate ready yourselves for the final part of your journey into the Big Scrub. You walk for days on tiny trails made by cedar cutters. You are young pioneers ready to test your strength against the forces of nature. You continue into the unknown, through impassable barriers, sliding into gullies full of sharp lawyer cane, crossing creeks, climbing up slippery rock faces. The dense forest is the enemy, but you push on.

On the fourth day before nightfall you hear the distinct sound of an axe on wood. You stumble into a clearing to find two men - cedar cutters Wilson and Cooper. These men are tough bush men; they have cleared the best stands of timber in the areas easiest to reach, ready for the floods to take the logs to Lismore. They know the land and point you in the right direction.

Fast forward 160 years to 2020.

You have just landed in Byron from Sydney. Over the years you have heard so much about the area and you are eager to explore its forests and hidden beaches and find out what makes it so special… or what makes for the almost magical reputation.

To discover why is it unique, what attracts so many… Is it the beaches? The people? The forest?

You learn that the region is geographically unique because of the Wollumbin Volcano that

Your sense of what you can do is profoundly affected by the people you meet.
PETER SCHIPPERHEYN, AUSTRALIAN SCULPTOR

Photo: David Young

was centred around Mt Warning. Millions of years of eroding larva has left deep deposits of rich red soil which sustained the largest subtropical rainforest in the Southern Hemisphere, until Europeans arrived and cleared the forest. By 1880 less than 1% of the Big Scrub remained.

Small hamlets were established and dairy farming was the main local industry which lasted until the 1970's when a new wave of settler arrived, spearheaded by the Aquarius festival in1973. Communities became more aware of the ecological value of the rainforest and in 1979 the successful Terania Creek blockade led to a new era of conservation, with some areas now protected.

Farming continues today, mostly beef cattle, macadamia nuts and hobby farms. But interestingly, you discover some innovative environmental projects are also happening - work which has been done by individuals and local organisations. You discover that millions of local rainforest trees have been planted, rainforest remnants have been restored and regeneration and riparian works are in full swing. Sustainable Cabinet Timber Plantations using local species have been planted on a relatively large scale on privately-owned properties with the aim to help localize the region's timber supply in perpetuity. On the coastal melaleuca flats, Byron Council's award-winning wetland is filtering the Shire's wastewater and more recently, privately-owned enhanced wetland systems have been established providing internationally significant nesting habitat for rare and migratory birds.

With the vast knowledge of the complex ecosystems now available it seems possible to work toward a sustainable balance in the landscape. Back in 1860 the government made a devastating mistake by making it mandatory to clear the forest to retain settlers' rights. If only they knew then what we know now about the complexities of finding a balance in nature, a sustainable balance may have been achieved; leaving steeper slopes for forest, gentle slopes for food production and wetland left untouched.

The Big Scrub region has the wealth and the knowledge needed to do our bit to lead the way forward to heal the land. The Big Scrub was not the enemy; it is our best friend and the soil is our life blood.

With the will, we can do better.

Award winning furniture designer Tony Kenway was born in Lismore and has had a life long association with the Big Scrub. More recently Tony has master-planned and project managed large ecological projects within the Big Scrub region including rainforest restoration, Cabinet Timber Plantations and wetland construction. www.tonykenwayfurniture.com

Painting by: Michael King-Prime





We need to develop a country of critical thinkers, who can think for themselves.
SYDNEY-BASED MUSICIAN ZIGGY RAMO, AGED 25

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION IN TIMES OF THE GREAT UNRAVELLING

DR JEAN S. RENOUF

Three years ago, I started a new academic research project, which led me to interview and survey close to a thousand climate change experts located in 84 countries. I didn't ask them about their work, but about how their work informs the choices they make in their lives, and that of their children and grand children. The findings of my research were greatly preoccupying and shook me profoundly.

The climate crisis will significantly disrupt our way of life. Expected changes in weather patterns will have disrupting societal consequences, ranging from increasing the incidence of heat stress, illness and death particularly among vulnerable populations, to considerable impacts on bushfire danger, infrastructure development and native species diversity. Similarly, rainfall changes will also provoke floods and droughts, and impact water quality and soil erosion, while sea level rise will pose a major risk to property and infrastructure. The increasing frequency, severity and sometimes consecutive and compounding natural disasters will place more pressure on our societies.

Indeed, climate change will not affect weather patterns only. It will impact every aspect of human society, from access to basic essentials such as water, food, shelter and health to more complex aspects of human societies such as energy production, infrastructures, transport and the economy as well as the arts, culture and education. Large parts of our planet will become uninhabitable this century. Social unrest will occur too, especially if global and regional migrations of scales never seen before in history, are poorly planned. Considering the gravity of the situation, climate change will also affect human ontology – the way we see ourselves in the universe and the meaning we give to our life, with associated existential and mental health crises.

But you know this already. We've had a taste of it in 2020.

As we emerged from the shock of the never before seen bushfire season, we got hit by intense rains creating localised floods, leading the Federal government to declare the Byron Shire an area of natural disaster. We barely got back on our feet, and without having had the headspace to process what these unprecedented bushfires meant for us, we had to lock ourselves down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We separated from each other through physical distance at a time when we needed social connection the most. This, coupled with the economic crisis that made hundreds of thousands of people lose their job, led to a generalised experience of loneliness, massive spike in anxiety and despair, and record cases of depression and other mental health challenges.

The Great Unravelling has started and will be part of our story for the rest of our life.

It is a process that began when our ancestors' ways of living started to significantly alter the fragile balance of our ecosystems, but has accelerated greatly in the past few years. The Great Unravelling is an ineluctable dismantling of the fabric of life as we know it, leading to rapid

It is all here in a house which is me.
SIGMUND FREUD

and at times violent, changes to human societies. It is the result of humans pushing the boundaries of our planet beyond sustainable levels, leading among other things to climate change, but also rapid loss of biodiversity, chemical pollution, ocean acidification, pressure on freshwater, conversion of wild lands to intensive agriculture and more. We are currently going through an acceleration of the Great Unravelling due to the confluence of the environmental crises with other crises, including an epidemic of loneliness and depressions, a massive inequality between rich and poor, persistent unemployment, dramatic shifts in migrant numbers, a rise of nationalism and populism throughout the planet, an uncertain geopolitical shift from the West to the East, the 'digitalisation' of daily life, including the Internet-of-Things, big data and disappearance of privacy, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these profound but rapid changes lead to uncertainty and succession of crises at personal, community, national and global levels.

The Great Unravelling will lead to a gradual deterioration of living conditions, with moments of accelerated disruptions and differentiated local dynamics. However, while we witness our familiar world unravel before our eyes, we are also at the cusp of unprecedented social and technological innovations. Humans will provide responses to these challenges that we can't even think of, and some societies will drastically reorganise themselves, in ways and forms that we may not even be able to imagine today.

In the Byron Shire and the Northern Rivers at

large, we have chosen to face this new reality and, in light of it, to resolutely strengthen our communities. An example of it is Resilient Byron, a charity which I founded just before last year's bushfire season, in anticipation of such disasters and inspired by what I had seen in my previous career.

Prior to moving to Australia, I worked as an international aid worker, implementing projects in Afghanistan, Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Palestine, North Korea, Yemen and more. I have seen the impact of natural disasters and wars on local communities - communities just like ours in the Byron Shire. And while these are stories of destruction and pain, I can also recall many stories of incredible resilience from people all over the world. Throughout my previous career, I was struck by the fact that even in the darkest times, some people rise to support and provide care for their community and strangers alike. It inspired me to found Resilient Byron.

Resilient Byron brings together local residents via a web of geographic groups (e.g. streets, neighbourhoods, valleys, shorelines, etc.) organised as interconnected areas of local resilience, themselves supported by residents organised in thematic groups (food security, water security, housing security, energy security, health and well-being, and, safety and emergency) aiming to create projects that benefit the wider community. One of these projects is the setting-up of a network of Community Carers and Responders, who support their community to respond and recover from disasters but also build community resilience and regeneration in between disasters. Resilient Byron also collaborates and partners with existing organisations, including councils, emergency agencies, businesses, community groups and others. We are determined to help our communities build our resilience and regenerative capacities to survive - but also thrive.

As I see it, regenerative and resilient communities are designed to ensure that they leave more than they take from the environment, but also from others and from themselves. Cooperation and connection is rewarded, creating abundance rather than depletion, allowing communities to live within their natural and social limits and build resilience for times of disasters and crisis.

We can achieve this.

We can have a symbiotic relationship with our natural environment, leading to its protection, restoration and increased biodiversity. We can produce enough organic food for everyone, setting the foundations for a sharing economy and equitable prosperity – with multiple community gardens, food forests, lawns transformed into veggie gardens, indoor vertical gardens, regenerative agriculture and fishing practices, regional networks of farms and farm-to-plate type business models. We can use agricultural lands in ways that allow their regeneration and retrofit our cities to allow urban farming.

We can produce, through renewable community-owned technologies, more energy than we consume and be off-grid capable. We can reuse all of our waste in closed-loop systems so that more energy is created from these wastes.

We can be a community that genuinely cares for our most vulnerable, understanding that any society is only as healthy as those who are the least well. We can teach and learn in ways that lead to shaping resilient and generous human beings. By being truly inclusive, by learning to count on each other, we can also be safe.

We can, and we must, give respectful attention to the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the multiple social, environmental, economic and political crises our world is experiencing. With mindfulness and presence, we can support each other to grieve the end of the world as we know it, and be empowered to transform our society.

Of course, in these times of physical distancing and hardship, such a vision may seem idealistic, and maybe it is. But this is what we at Resilient Byron are intending, nonetheless. As we see our familiar world unravelling before our eyes, we have no choice but to envision a world in which we want to live.

If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
AFRICAN PROVERB

We wish to nurture a resilience and regeneration movement across the shire and beyond and of course, you are welcome to join the movement. In effect, we are all Resilient Byron.

Jean, chair of Resilient Byron, is an academic, a firefighter and a dad. He spent years working in war zones and natural disasters, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, Congo, North Korea, Haiti, Yemen and more. All of this informs his interest for climate change and community regeneration and resilience. www.resilientbyron.org

Photo: David Young

MORNING OF THE EARTH

LISSA COOTE

As I write this, it is 50 years since the starting of *Tracks* magazine, and in 2021, it will be 50 years since the making of the seminal Australian surf film, *Morning of the Earth*, both of which I was involved with.

Life is but a dream and dreaming back to those youthful days, I was a beach baby, and Palm Beach NSW was my dreaming. In 1969 I persuaded my then partner David Elfick, to move to the Palm Beach Peninsula. I don't think he had even been over the Harbour Bridge, being a south-side person. At Palm Beach we connected with John Witzig, a friend of mine since school days, and his brother Paul, an early surf film-maker. David was editor of a music magazine, *Go-Set*, (along with now Byron resident Phillip Frazer). John Witzig, with his fellow surfing photographer, Alby Falzon, approached David to start a surfing magazine, and *Tracks* was born.

The Gods smiled, and this newsprint magazine, printed locally, took off. Unlike the other glossy surf magazines, printed in colour in Singapore and Asia, and taking three or more months to be on the shelves, *Tracks* was printed in Sydney, in black and white, and could be on the shelves within days with all the latest surfing information. It started as a surfing lifestyle magazine, the first cover story being on the evil sand mining at Myall Lakes. It had a cooking column, how to make ugg boots, a very lively letters page, and other things. We ran drawing competitions and other ephemeral content. I was able to persuade the boys to let my friend Tony Edwards have a cartoon strip, and lent Tony my underground comics from California. One was 'Wonder Wart-Hog, the Hog of Steel' – the genesis of 'Captain Goodvibes – the Pig of Steel.' *Tracks* was very casual and carefree, the antithesis of the rival glossy surfing magazines.

I was an adventurous young girl. I had spent two years hitch-hiking through most of Europe, and in 1966 aged 20, running out of my savings, I answered a two line ad in *The Times* in London. The ad said 'London to Kathmandu 30 Pounds with a phone number. I had 30 Pounds, answered the ad, and thus began the most amazing adventure, travelling with the five other paying guests and the two maniacs who were the organizer and driver and off we set in an old 1940's van! We loosely followed the route of Alexander the Great. Camping in Istanbul, Lebanon, Jordan, Jerusalem (before the 7 day war), and following oil pipe-lines through the desert countries of Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan then to Kathmandu and India. What a trip, the old van breaking down all the way. I then hitch-hiked through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia to Singapore. In Singapore I ran out of money, so didn't get to Bali.

When the *Tracks* team floated the idea of making a surfing movie, inspired by films such as 'Endless Summer,' I was keen we go to Bali – my mother

Why waste your money looking up your family tree? Just go into politics and your opponent will do it for you.
MARK TWAIN

and grandmother had been there in the 1930's – and I could finish my 'hippie trail' adventure. Russell Hughes, a notorious and well-known surfer, had surfed there, and given it the thumbs up, so if my Mum and Grandma had visited, we could visit too! So off we set.

Of course going straight to Bali was too easy, so we went to Djakarta and made our way via rickshaw, train, ferry and bus to Bali. We met the rest of the *Morning of the Earth* crew – Alby Falzon, Rusty Miller and Stephen Cooney in Kuta, Bali.

Bali in 1971 was magical. We stayed in Kuta, on Jalan Pantai. Just a dirt road then, with a cow track through palm groves to Legian. There were lots of very cheap losmens, providing rooms, and lots of warungs for delicious Balinese and Javanese meals. There was one tourist shop. This shop had tourist carvings, plus shorts made from used cotton rice bags, with all the rice signage on them. These were very popular with the itinerant surfers, and also the old rice farmers. Electricity was limited, and at night it was magical, with kerosene lanterns being the reliable form of lighting.

We would travel to Denpasar by Bemo – old vans that stopped for anyone who waved them down. Pigs and chooks welcome too. In Denpasar we would get 'milkshakes.' There was no milk, so the 'shake' was made with avocadoes and chocolate sauce. Delicious.

When Alby, Rusty and Stephen surfed at Uluwatu, the first surfers to do so, the locals were terrified. Sea demons lived there. They would die.

Morning of The Earth was made with a $25,000 investment from the Australian Film Development Corporation. One of the first films that received funding. The film-makers matched that sum, but their contribution was their effort. Albie Thoms, an experimental film-maker was involved in the early stages of the editing, bringing rhythm to the movie based on the sound of a gamelan orchestra. He step-printed some of the footage, so that each frame was repeated three times, slowing the rides down by 300%. This allowed every minute variation in the wave and the surfer's response to it, to be examined in detail, with the result resembling a slowly-moving version of Hokusai's *Great Wave*.

The film opened in 1972 at Manly, and the step-printed sequences were magnificent in their elongated elegance. Inspired by pioneer surfing film-maker Paul Witzig, the film had dispensed with narration, with the footage only accompanied by music. The music was selected by David Elfick and G. Wayne Thomas with new songs by Australian performers including Taman Shud, Terry Hannagan and Brian Cadd. Their contrasting sounds and styles helped to build the mood and atmosphere that made the film such a huge success, a success that continues 50 years after it was made.

When *Tracks* began, in 1970, David and I started driving to Byron Bay. We would stay with Nat Young in his little Queenslander on Old Bangalow Road, overlooking the ocean, and I fell in love with country life, and Byron Bay. In those days Byron was a run-down workers' town, and ripe for a take-over by surfers. Byron became the

Photo: Rosarita Juice Bar

'nirvana' of *Tracks*, and we would spend one or two weeks here most months.

After we had made *Morning of the Earth*, for our Christmas holidays we would do the picture-show run up the coast. Halls in little country towns would be booked, and full page ads and announcements would be run in *Tracks* to a captive audience. We would arrive the day before the screening, put up posters, and hand out leaflets. There would be queues of surfers to see the film. David would project the film, and I would do the box office, taking the cash, sometimes still wet from an itinerant surfie who had had it in his boardie pocket whilst surfing.

1973 was the year of the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin. We were there. We thought it was the beginning of a new universe. After the Festival we decided to buy a house in the countryside near Byron. We found an adorable little cottage at Coopers Shoot on one acre, with ocean views. We had sold *Tracks* to Alby Falzon, and with our $10,000 bought this little house, and our lives took another turn.

That summer I decided to open a Juice Bar in Byron. In 1972 David, Alby and I had lived in Carpenteria, California for six months, filming surfer George Greenough at his family house in Montecito, making the surfing film *Crystal Voyager*. During that adventure in California, I was introduced to juice bars, and decided to have one. My friend Tricia Matthews had a homewares shop in Byron called 'All Things Bright & Beautiful.' It was opposite the Great Northern Hotel, now the bread shop. This was the end of town. What is now the laneway to a carpark, was just grass, a paper road. There had been a plant nursery behind the Homewares shop, and the nursery was abandoned. I turned the shade house into the Juice Bar, and furnished it with furniture from an abandoned hut down the dirt track to the cemetery. This was where the fringe dwellers lived – now Lilli Pilli. For the plumbing we dug a trench into the sewerage pipes of the bank next door, a shambles of a backyard, and no one noticed. The follies of youth. I had bought all the old chairs from the abandoned Picture Theatre at Bangalow, now the A & I Hall, for $1 each, and empty Telecom (now Telstra) cable rolls obtained for free for tables. These were placed on the grass that is now the asphalt road to the carpark behind the shops. Beach umbrellas in the Telecom cable rolls gave it a festive air.

The Rosarita Juice Bar was the name we gave it, after a beach I had visited in Baja California, Mexico. It was an instant success. Surfers brought us magic mushrooms, and these could be added to any juice or shake. Nothing was legal, and when a council official came and visited, he held his head in his hand! We had him flummoxed. My business partner and myself – two young girls – what could go wrong? For me it was only a folly, something to do, and three months after we opened, and I had recouped my $400 investment, I gave it to my business partner, and headed off to India. I was going to buy homewares and that's another adventure.

Lissa began work at the ABC, which led to a film career in over 30 Australian films and received an AFI award as production designer for 'Newsfront' – an iconic Australian film. Now retired in Byron Shire she is back to the beginning, enjoying watching movies, and hoping to travel more.

Justine

Elliot MP

ON YOUR SIDE

YOUR LOCAL MP

I'm always available to assist you with any federal issues you or your family may have.

Please get in touch if I can be of any help.

Labor

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BAD ART FOR SALE

RON CURRAN

Our creativity is at the heart of who we are. In the end our creativity recognises us. Recognises the things we feel / the debates we have / the choices we make.

Art history was never a skills test. It has been much more about peoples' originality, the way we see things and how these things constantly change. There has never been a 'proper' way of seeing as far as art goes. The way it 'looks' changes entirely according to circumstance; in other words, it is not about everybody going to the same hairdressing salon and coming out with the same haircut. In fact, when you look at it, the history of art has been, largely, one massive experiment in diversity... and that diversity has been characterised by extremes of impropriety in the way people see and interpret the world around them. If anything, it is more like a giant ferris wheel all lit up and turning in the sky rather than a theory in someone's head or words that they read in a book. That is, there are literally hundreds if not thousands of 'ways of seeing', as many ways of seeing as there are languages on this earth. Art is a flashing light. Art is an accident scene in which we are all involved, there are no bystanders. Ultimately it is an emergency of the spirit.

All the best art moves beyond the external image and declares and identifies the author and his or her dilemmas, joys and visions. It is about blind trust and inspiration. It is as unpredictable as it is risky. Creativity is not something academic, it is as radical as a ride on the big dippa. It is self-governing and invites and builds its own structures and ultimately its own cities of imagery and demands its own language. Techniques are not a foregone conclusion and cannot be bought at the corner shop but are exactly appropriate and equal to where you are coming from and where you are going to - whether you are in your car sitting in the parking lot or decide to go up to the 57th floor; whether you choose to swim or go to the moon, ride a bike or walk... that is where technique enters the equation... not in someone else's head but exactly according to your own needs and the territory in which you find yourself. Every person involved needs to choose their own transport, their own range of 'techniques'.

Art is not predictable nor does it behave. It has to, it will and must dance to its own beat. Art is as vastly internal as it is delinquent. It's about people developing the much deeper skill of recognising and meditating upon their own identity, debates and upheavals. In that way art is almost anti-art because it argues against the common notion of the very word 'art'. The history of art did not happen 'outside' of people. It's much more a history about truth and dilemma and the cultural intimacies of people; about all the stuff we experience and feel that isn't always immediately visible or easily explained... and how we sit in proportion with all of that. In the end there is no realistic or abstract, everything is an abstraction of experience. For instance, if you look at a Rembrandt portrait closely enough, you will not necessarily see a 'nose' but wild flames of paint that, when viewed from further back, become a nose. It's all a matter of perception.

If you think the economy is more important than the environment, try holding your breath while counting your money.
GUY MCPHERSON, SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCES, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Or looking at Van Gogh's 'Crows Over The Cornfield' you might ask where do the crows end and the clouds begin. Again, it's a question of perception.

One has to, at some point, draw directly from one's language from the stories of one's own experience. Even if that language is fractious, distorted, unfamiliar or even outrageous, it is what is necessary to explain the often extremely personal, chaotic and deep seated nature of our experience. Art is a testament to our collective vulnerabilities. In the end it refuses mediation and demands its own voice and set of structures, its own mythology. And paradoxically, that is the very thing that is the history of art, especially in the last 150 years, when the ownership of 'art' was finally extricated from control of the Aristocracy and the Church in the late 19th Century. The grand age of academic excellence, of privilege and white-gloved, white-horsed, frozen elegance that served to glorify and celebrate the power of the Church and the Nobility, was a largely narcissistic and colonial narrative.

Frontierland! Even within the strict confines of this tradition, great signature and great work still broke through just by the sheer nature and force of its talent, by the extraordinary genius of its practitioners: Rembrandt, Goya, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Giotto etc. The spectacular and blinding work of the High Renaissance, is as unforgettable and transfixing as a jet in the sky, in the Grand Tradition with its grand architecture and its great mythologies and rituals. But as impressive and brilliant as this all was, it represented a particular culture

at a particular time. By the end of the 19th Century this hierarchy was disintegrating and an explosion of new language was happening. Art was returning back to the commons, to its grass roots - which brings us back to the original point. That is, for most people, the Grand Master Tradition has become what art is, or what art is largely about... the grand tradition of a kind of super-realism, devilishly clever crafting or a boutique illusionism or simply sentimental idyllic fantasy.

But ironically it is at this point, in a way, that 'art' in the truest and most profound sense of the word actually begins. That is, when art is released back into common practice, back into intimacy and regains its subtlety and humanity, regains its human face and can embrace an enormous diversity. But for most people, the Grand Tradition is almost addictive. It is almost like a mainstream cult to view and assess 'art' this way. And to break this belief is the same as trying to get someone out of a cult into some kind of rehabilitation or returned state of reality. To break this nexus is not easy. If it can be overcome, it opens up a whole new panorama, a whole new way of seeing for that individual. And it is the one issue (in my role as a drawing facilitator) that, by a mile, is singularly the most significant obstruction people face and the biggest hole that people fall down into in their art practice, which prevents so many people from ever understanding or being able to embrace what art really is or what drawing might be. It is entrenched in mainstream culture by things like the 'genius' club or the top heavy head maze of post-modernist critique and elitism, dialogue and wank that surrounds it; the dreaded art oligarchy.

And it all comes back to that 'Inside/Outside' thing. That art does not happen outside of us but it is integral and ultimately intrinsic to our experience. Art is not our ability to imitate but rather how well we can translate our experience in real terms into our own language.

Art that digs deep and acknowledges our debates, our dreams and visions, no matter how radical or brutally unexpected, brings them into visible and authentic terms. Art is a 'stuntman', crazy as a clown... that dives from a 50 foot platform into a bucket of water just for the hell of it, just to see how it feels.

It's only our attitudes and thinking that limits us or prevents us from really seeing that art is the boundless mystery.

Ron Curran has lived and surfed in Byron Bay since the early '70s. He has been running Dynamic Drawing classes for the last 20 years in Byron Bay and Mullumbimby. Nature and art are his passion and teacher. www.dynamicdrawing.com.au

The unexamined opinion is probably not worth expressing.
AARON JOHN BETH'EL

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DAWN DREAMING

MICK O'REGAN

Everything separates in the morning. At dawn the elements of sky and sea emerge from the darkness. Announce themselves, as a silvery-green palette unfolds. The sun's not up but the first light has arrived. For me it's the perfect time to walk. It's the transition. Change and renewal. A reliable moment of optimism where one of the things I love most about Byron replenishes. The coast. That restless relationship between land and liquid, which is so contradictory in its energy and its calm.

Walking in the morning is an opportunity to unwind. Sometimes it feels more like unravelling. I needed to process adversity and grief, personal changes that blindsided me. The ritual of the dawn walk gives me a context to separate the twisted strands of ideas and emotions. I don't exactly know why. But something in the way the light brings clarity to form and colour, depicting the ocean, the trees, the clouds, helps disentangle thoughts as well. I walk energetically, but everything still seems to slow. I notice things. The contours of the ground; uphill exertions, the ease of coasting down. The textures of bark and the fall of light and shadow through foliage. The sound of the waves, their relentlessness, and birdsong. That amazing declaratory chorus. All providing such a varied yet subtle soundscape for daydreams.

I surrender to random thoughts. Stepping out as tangential connections trace filaments of memory and misunderstanding. I think about how opportunity emerges, sometimes, from calamity. I have had to sort through grief and loss and love and desire as another's illness recast the substance of my life. Walking opens me to my head and heart and body. The rhythm of movement, focussed and determined - this isn't a stroll - propels me. I consciously aim to be open to feeling. To slowness and to patience.

In that slowness small gifts appear. Ways of seeing for the unhurried eye. Being surrounded by delightful choices: to swim laps in the natural lagoon at Clarkes Beach, to watch an osprey diving for fish, to see the hot air balloons rise silently over Chincogan. The things money can't buy are here in such abundance. The amenity of the coast is like a magnet. To start the day meeting friends to walk and swim, to enjoy a coffee before heading home. To feel the pleasure of living somewhere like this.

Sometimes in the quiet of the morning the town has an almost nostalgic attraction. A slower pace, a gentler vibe. I have had to learn to soak it up. To unclutter the jangled demands of what has to be done, and when and how? Relinquishing the fullness of a frantic life was once a scary thought. Doing is being. Until it's not, because it can't be. Caring for someone else creates obligations, and in that commitment lingers the unexpected. When you have no choice but to slow down then your options change. You can't control what happens, so it's all about the response. Being not doing. Patient not urgent. Open not closed.

So at daybreak I try to reboot. The first few steps recommit me to a decision to relax. To settle into right now, with its changing colours, and people and vistas. Some days I walk the rainforest track that climbs the spine of the headland. A sandy

Wellness is about learning and it's about growing. It's not about fixing things.
DR JOHN W TRAVIS

path that gives way to a hundred or so steps, steep and uneven. I hear my breathing and feel my sweat. I put in.

I love the familiarity of it. How the exposed roots of trees provide a woody lattice to negotiate. Where it gets slippery after rain, where you can best glimpse the ocean.

It's a secret garden open to all. It's a thousand miles from business, and a short walk from Clarkes Beach. It's Wategos festooned with brightly coloured Malibu longboards, as surfers hang five and have fun. It's the gaggle of tourists at the lighthouse waiting for sunrise, intent as Incas marvelling at the golden blob inching up from the horizon. It's the view to the south as the resolute headlands push against the waves. But more than anything it's a feeling. A chance to lean towards joy. A moment where what's beautiful and free can saturate your day.

Recently a much-loved friend of mine had a brief Byron respite from her hectic capital-city life. She walked, swam, read, slept and hung out. When I asked how she was feeling she replied, "I feel so relaxed I almost don't know myself." Mission accomplished. There are so many things to do here it's easy to forgot that doing not much is perhaps the best thing of all. Nothing like daydreaming to re-set your system. Especially in Byron.

Mick O'Regan is a journalist / broadcaster who has called Bangalow home for the past 21 years. Most of his career was spent at the ABC, primarily with Radio National. Along the way stints with Channel Seven and community radio revealed the contours of the media landscape. Mick regularly works as an MC, public discussion moderator, and has enjoyed many Byron Writers' Festivals. He is working as a researcher for Griffith University and as a webinar facilitator for Zero Emissions Byron. He simply loves living in the Byron Shire, but still can't surf, which is a lifelong regret. mickoreganpr@gmail.com

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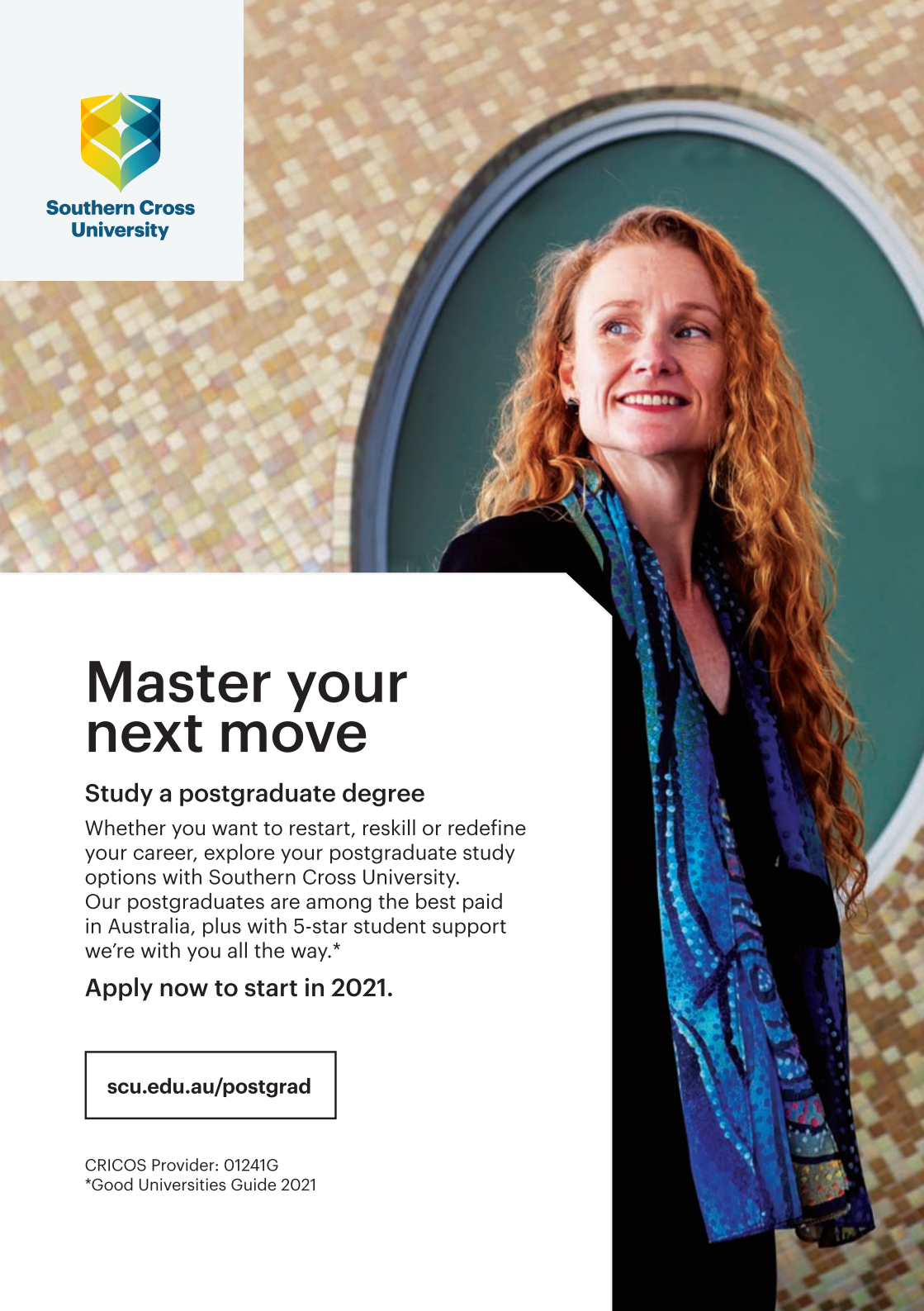

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WARREN BUFFETT

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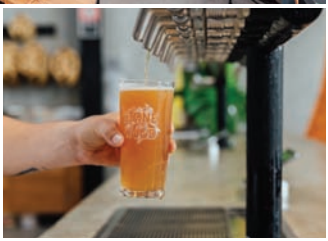

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