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BYRON GUIDE
PEOPLE, POLITICS AND CULTURE



AFTER THE FLOODS... COMMUNITY



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Captain Liz Clark takes her place as the "I" in #ClimateActionNow, somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Jianca Lazarus © 2022 Patagonia, Inc.

"Atoll life is not always how it seems on a postcard. Surviving requires courage, rich knowledge and connection to the surrounding ocean environment. Over the years, while scouring the Pacific atolls for surf, I fell in love with the waves, landscapes and people who live interconnected with these remarkable ecosystems. At the same time, I felt overcome with guilt and helplessness, knowing that climate change threatens to swallow these atolls and their people's way of life completely. The irony is pain-

ful—those who have the smallest possible carbon footprints will lose everything. And generations to come, of all origins, may only know these magical places through photos and stories. My quest to find the perfect reef pass seemed insignificant compared to the urgent need to stop climate change. So on this voyage with Jianca Lazarus, I wanted to create an image that would make people think about what we could lose out here in the Pacific. I hope we did that."

—Captain Liz Clark



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MAKING POETRY

I did not learn from books any recipe for writing a poem, and I, in my turn will avoid giving any advice on mode or style which might give the new poets even a drop of supposed insight ... The poet is not a 'little god' ... He is not picked out by a mystical destiny in preference to those who follow other craft and professions. I have often maintained that the best poet is he who prepares our daily bread: the nearest baker who does not imagine himself to be a god. He performs his majestic and humble task of kneading the dough, consigning it to the oven, baking it in golden colours and handing us our daily bread as a duty of fellowship. And if the poet succeeds in achieving this simple awareness, this too will be transformed into an element in an immense activity, in a simple or complicated structure which constitutes the building of a community, the transformation of the conditions which surround mankind, the handing over of mankind's products: bread, truth, wine, dreams. If the poet joins this never-completed struggle to extend to the hands of each and all his part of his commitment, his dedication and his tenderness to the daily work of all people, then the poet must take part in the sweat in the bread, in the wine, in the dream of all humanity ... Each and every one of my verses has chosen to take its place as a tangible object, each and every one of my poems has claimed to be a useful working instrument, each and every one of my songs has aspired to serve a sign in space for a meeting between paths which cross one another or as a piece of stone or wood on which someone, some others, those who follow after, will be able to carve the new signs ...

PABLO NERUDA

PART OF HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH FOR THE NOBEL PRIZE, 1971

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RUSTY'S BYRON GUIDE

2023

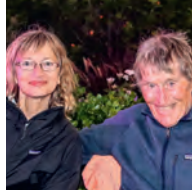
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AFTER THE FLOODS... COMMUNITY

TRICIA SHANTZ & RUSTY MILLER

The year 2022 was a tough one for a lot of people around the country and the world. Byron has not been immune to this. It is part of the Northern Rivers region that suffered through two major floods. We came to understand the difficulties of business through engaging with business owners who are the supporters of our publication. Hard copy publications are hard to keep going in the age of social media. They either have to be funded by billionaires, ala Rupert Murdoch, or in our case by local advertisers. A big thank you to our advertisers this year, who keep this publication afloat. And, for the most part, they are small, Byron businesses, which is what we like to champion and showcase: locally owned and operated. And, many of these, too, flooded. Community.

After the floods!! All you need is a roof over your head, food, clothing, family, friends and community. As Pierz Newton-John wrote in the August 2022 Dumbo Feather, “We must weave small webs of meaning around us, in our families, communities and friendships.” Byron has been good at this. Covid tore at it. The floods seem to have repaired the tear. Community.

The last house left on Fletcher Street is now known as Fletcher St. Cottage. It is a place to help those without a home. A house/home invites people in for a meal, helps them out when in need. As people who attend the Cottage say, ‘Byron is my home. I just don’t have a house.’ Community.

“My computer is in my ceiling, in my house which has gone under, so I wrote this email by dictating it on the phone... At 5am on Monday morning,

water was coming into our house. We knew there was nothing left we could do, so we got in our tinnie, and went out to rescue other people” wrote Aiden Ricketts in Lismore to GetUp the morning of the February 2022 flood. We remember hearing the local SES worker on our local ABC radio being interviewed early that morning and he asked for anyone with a boat to come and help. He did say he would probably get in trouble for saying it. We’re sure he did. Within a short time the head of the SES was on local radio, saying no one should be bringing their boats in to assist. But, it was too late and thankfully so. The community tinnie army came out in huge numbers, saving people and animals. It is not worth thinking about what would have happened had they not. Community.

In the book *A River with a City Problem. A history of Brisbane Floods*, flooding was perceived as a problem of water control to be solved by engineering works, which reflected the late- nineteenth century view that science and engineering could control nature and ensure human progress. We are seeing that it can’t. Community.

Who has the privilege of time to think, in amongst the major flooding events in 2022, the increasing cost of living, overseas wars and increasing extreme weather events generally. We need to think now more than ever about where our food is grown, where our clothing is made, where our energy comes from and where/how we spend our money. There is a lot to think about. Community.

Oscar Schwartz wrote an essay in *The Monthly* magazine called A Tightening Knot: ‘On Freedom’,



“Only that day dawns to which we are awake.” —HENRY DAVID THOREAU



where he references Maggie Nelson around “her frustration with how we talk about freedom, she is more frustrated with how we define it in opposition to obligation, as if they’re contradictory. If freedom means personal liberation, reckless abandon, death-drive selfishness, then obligation has come to mean the opposite: care, self-sacrifice, duty, willing subjection.” We are all in this together. Individualism won’t save us. Community will.

Australia has never been a particularly philanthropic country. However, that is changing and our region is a beneficiary of this change. The Byron Bay Community Centre set up a fundraising website to raise funds for the region after the floods and the Northern Rivers Community Foundation distributed the over \$1.7 million raised. Community.

After decades of trying to define and describe what the essence of this place, ‘Byron’, is even when we consider our constant analysing of what is our magic, magnetism or substance of what this life here is, we can’t actually ‘nail’ what Byron is about. We try to deliver its pulse lifeforce in the articles and photos. What we really endeavour and delightfully love to search for is our social, cultural and physical DNA. DNA is ‘The molecule

inside cells that contains the genetic information responsible for the development and function of an organism. DNA molecules allow this information to be passed from one generation to the next.’ Hopefully we can, through this combination of stories make readers feel that they can more understand its essence. Community.

Patagonia, the clothing company, was sold in 2022. Not to another company, not to investors, but to a non-profit dedicated to fighting the environmental crisis and defending nature. The founder, Yvon Chouinard, wrote, “If we have any hope of a thriving planet—much less a business—it is going to take all of us doing what we can with the resources we have. This is what we can do.” Community.

At the 2020 Future Directions for the Australian Economy Summit held in Parliament House, Filmmaker Rachel Perkins, stated, “If you are looking for the one thing that makes Australia unique, it is that it is home to the oldest living cultures in the world.” This is our oldest community. It’s all of our responsibilities and in our interests, to see that it is recognised and endures. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation to do this. Community.

Craig McGregor was a long-time Byron resident and the prize-winning author of over 20 books, including several on Australian society. Craig passed away in 2022. This article appeared in the

first Byron Bay Holiday Guide in 1984, the first ever writer for the publication. Over the many years we have been doing Byron Guides since then, Craig was a regular writer for us.

WHALES, PEOPLE AND THE BYRON BAY MIX

Woke up the other morning and saw the first whale I've ever seen at Byron Bay. It was one of those half-stormy, half-sunny early mornings which are so typical of the Cape coast, the sea running in long lines towards Watego's Beach and the Pass, the southerly carving wind runnels in the wave faces, a bleach of sunlight falling across the bay, the coast receding behind salt spray — and there the whale was.

"My God, what's that?" said my daughter, who saw him (or her) first.

Dolphins? Often see them there, leaping right clear of the wave, surfing, three or four at a time. A fishing boat? Too early for the dive boats heading for the Julians. Too big for a shark, too small for a school of mullet. The gannets were wheeling and plummeting in that windy air, whitecaps ran shorewards. A mythic seascape.

Then we saw him again. He was like a visitor from an alien world, or a time long past. An enormous forked tail broke the surface of the water (tales of the Brave Ulysses?), waved, disappeared. Then the great black hump came up, slowly, with its disproportionately small fin, slid forward, and submerged. A few minutes. Then the great pale fluke of the tail. Everyone was watching, shouting. He seemed to be playing in the stormy green-blue ambience of the bay, only 150 yards offshore, submerging, reappearing, blowing intermittent spouts of water which the wind flung over the wavetops. We watched for half an hour as he headed eastwards out past the Cape's daggerpoint of land, turned, travelled west between the Julian Rocks and the town, and finally faded from eyesight amid the cloud shadows and horizon to the north . . .

It's not every day you see whales at Byron Bay. But you expect to, because there's something spectacularly and primaevally unaltered about the landscape and seascape here, something natural, as though the whales and dolphins and seabirds and schools of fish and that flat ruled horizon and that mountainous coastline, indeed everything, has been like that for centuries and hasn't moved since Captain Cook sailed past in a leaky *Endeavour* and wrote in his diary (Tuesday, May 15, 1770):

"A tolerable high point of land bore north west, distant three miles; this point I named Cape Byron."

Too romantic. Nothing stands still.

Yet surprisingly, not much did change for the first 100 years after that; it's easy to forget just how recent the Bay's history is. It wasn't until halfway through the 19th century that the first cedar-getters arrived and began shooting their logs over the escarpment to be floated out to schooners anchored in the bay — hence Coopers Shoot, Skinners Shoot, Possum Shoot, etc. A former editor of *The Northern Star*, N. C. Hewitt, reported that:

"No land had been taken up in 1869 and there was no trace of man save for an occasional cedar getters camp there."

Then, however, the free selectors arrived and began turning the place into a thriving dairy town; and ever since then, slowly and subtly, the Bay has been changing. Shops, pubs and schools appeared; then the railway line; the old jetties, two of them, were built out into the bay to meet the steamships from Sydney; there was a fishing fleet, and later Norco, and the meatworks, and the whaling station . . . living off the humpback whales which migrated up the coast each spring to calve in tropical waters, and which, like the one I saw, are reappearing in the bay again now that whaling has stopped.

Then came the surfers, who discovered that the Byron area has some of the best surf breaks on the coast. And the hippies (alternates), in search of peace and utopia in



"When people ask me where they should move to be safe from climate change, I always tell them any place with a strong community." —BILL MCKIBBEN, AUTHOR & ACTIVIST



PHOTO: EBEN McCRIMMON

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the lush hinterland. And Californians, seeking one final 'new frontier'. And refugees from the metropolises of the south, who began coming up here for holidays and then stayed on to run pubs, shops and businesses, or worked as solicitors and architects and teachers.

By this time what I regard as Byron's unique cultural mix had begun to jell' a mix of north coast hedonism, and urban sophistication, and small town provincialism, with a heavy input from the environment itself: sun beach wind rocks cloud trees skyline space space space space. You can feel that mix every time you walk down Jonson Street on a Saturday morning, or drift into the mural-smart Community Centre, or head off for a drink at the Railway, or watch the cyclonic rains of the wet season sweep through the pines of Shirley Street.

And then came the tourists. Byron has been 'discovered' , it's become fashionable. People who have tired of gold-rich Noosa and the highrise jungle of Surfers Paradise have found it a real alternative. A *natural* alternative. It's changed, but it hasn't been spoilt.

Right now, it seems to me, Byron is a better place to be than it's ever been. It's at an exciting stage. It's grown, but it's got that crucial mixture still. It's held out against skyscrapers, metermaids and concrete foreshores. On the miles and miles of beaches which curve out from the town centre it looks and feels much as it ever did.

Maybe, at last, people have begun to realize that what is most precious about where they live is *the place itself*: the bay, the beach, the bushland, the sense of space and play, a sensitive balance between people and environment.

Well, they've got a chance. Of bringing it off. So that you can come here and still see, on a pre-storm morning when some 'monstrous continent of air' is shifting across the Pacific coast, a humpback whale from the Antarctic taking time off (like us?) to spout and blow and explore the Bay.

(C) Copyright Craig McGregor

Australia's most easterly point. Photo by Nick Poutsma.





"We read for illumination, we read for edification, but perhaps in times of crisis we read for comfort and for escape." —MICHAEL WILLIAMS, EDITOR, THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE



PHOTO: TAO JONES



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HISTORY IS CALLING

JULIANNE SCHULTZ

Forgetting, scholars tell us, is an essential part of creating a nation.

There are some things that are too painful to remember, and others that get swept aside in the relentless cascade of events. It is the reason authoritarian leaders target historians and dismiss the real and potent stories of those on the losing side of big debates. People who threaten to upset what I call 'terra nullius of the mind' are often silenced.

Best we forget, rather than *lest we forget* could be Australia's national motto.

Australia has for a long time chosen to 'forget' the violence of settlement. To 'forget' about the richness of First Nations cultures. To 'forget' about the pain of assimilation for many new arrivals, the treatment of women, abuse by institutions, the decimation of plant and animal species.

We have even thrown the 'white blanket of forgetfulness' over the details of the joy and creativity of forging a distinctive society that at its best can be fair, generous, innovative, and open-minded.

That is why the slogan supporting the Voice referendum, 'History is Calling' is so powerful. If we chose not to forget the past, we can make informed decisions about the future.

The same applies to people and places.

Anyone visiting Byron Bay today would be hard pressed to find any signs that fifty years ago it was a smelly little industrial town where most men worked in the piggery, dairies, or processing minerals, whaling or timber-getting. Nothing very romantic, best forgotten.

But when Tricia Shantz put the past and present together in *Neverland* and explained how American

surfers arrived in the 1960s and filmed themselves surfing at The Pass they attracted others and a different Byron slowly emerged. When they decided to stay, making and selling surfboards, opening organic cafes and music venues, the transformation to the place we know today began. Knowing that bit of history, it makes more sense.

The tussle between remembering the past and forgetting it shapes us all. It's how myths are made. Half true stories fill a void and comfort us.

Finding a way to learn from the past, but not be a captive of it, is a challenge. It is also essential to sustainable growth and positive change.

This tension between remembering and forgetting has played out in the most dramatic way over the past three years.

Plagues have a troubling place in human history. We don't like to be reminded of the fragility of human life, of our vulnerability to almost invisible organisms. But for all the wonders of modern medicine, public health, and sanitation, pandemics recur. Climate change and globalisation will probably mean they become more frequent, so remembering and learning from the Covid years is important.

Sometimes pandemics trigger profound change but still we forget. Until the coronavirus devastated the world in 2020, the impact of the 'Spanish flu' a century earlier was virtually invisible. Most learnt about the Black Death in the Middle Ages in school, but the miasma of the great twentieth century plague evaporated. There were few books or paintings, no public monuments, or days of remembrance, although around the world it claimed more lives than the commemorated war that preceded it.



"You can't control the waves but you can learn to surf." —BEN CROWE, MIND COACH

But in 2020 there was a hunger to remember, to learn how that flu had challenged the new nation of Australia, how borders were closed, 15,000 died and masks were reluctantly mandated.

This is a dark subject to raise in *Rusty's Byron Guide*, which is designed to help you plan and enjoy your holiday, and better understand Bundjalung Country, one of the most stunning parts of Australia.

I don't want to lower the tone or detract from your beautiful, restorative break. But as this is possibly the first time you have been able to visit the Byron Shire and Northern Rivers since the Covid lockdowns it's worth thinking a bit about the good that came out of those dark days.

Byron and the surrounding villages were hit hard by the pandemic. People lost their jobs, businesses closed, tourists stopped visiting – but even in lockdown the community was strong and the natural

environment, the beaches and forests, the mountains and rivers were a tonic for those of us fortunate enough to live here.

I used the time to write *The Idea of Australia: A Search for the Soul of the Nation*. I wanted to understand how unspoken past events live on and shape contemporary behaviour, to learn from the stories we tell ourselves and those we chose to ignore, to draw from my own experiences for clues and insights.

I was trying to psychoanalyse a nation that had gotten out of the habit of introspection.

I reflected on what we could learn by looking closely at what I called the Covid X-ray. How the crisis that kept us all at home revealed the fault lines in our national skeleton. It was a picture in sharp relief, the strengths and weaknesses of the society were on display.

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The well springs of decency, kindness, fairness, and connection were clear, but so was the lingering corrosion of racism, abuse, self-interest, and greed.

After years of obsessively dwelling on case numbers, lock downs, home schooling, vaccines, hand washing, masks and border passes, it was hardly surprising that in 2022 we just wanted to put all that behind us, wish it away.

Three years on, even as the virus continues to take a toll, and the full costs are still being revealed, the Covid X-ray has become a blur. Like one of those old X-rays you stash in the bottom cupboard and can't find when a new doctor asks for your history.

One thing plagues always do is remind people of the power of community. You can't make it through a pandemic alone. There are communities of survivors, communities of grief, communities of researchers, communities who work together and communities who imagine different ways of doing things.

So it was during this pandemic. Community ties were strengthened. That was a gift when the flooding rain devastated the area, people had learnt to trust each other and reach out. Then a few months later the pattern of local engagement was felt politically. Community independents in electorate after electorate were sent to Canberra because they were really listening to what their neighbours were saying.

Being confined to a five-kilometre radius meant you had to get to know your neighbourhood in a way you didn't when home was a base for going elsewhere. Walking local streets and joining Facebook groups revealed a lot and made it possible to make connections and ask questions. Not just about the here and now, but about the past.

This is where the enforced localism of the Covid years meets the big national opportunity to support

the proper recognition of First Nations people, enshrine a Voice to parliament and begin the process of treaty and truth-telling. Truth-telling will be another local activity. What happened here after James Cook sailed north noting Wollumbin and the smoke as he passed, and decades later when the new settlers arrived and began felling the trees and punishing the people who had always lived here?

At my hairdresser in Bangalow people asked, what is the story of the Bundjalung nation, what is the language, what are the stories, what do the names mean.

I reflected on what it meant to live in a suburb modelled on a gated community on the other side of the Pacific, near a river named for a German princess and a village named after an English town.

History is calling, and that means we need to learn more about the past to create a better future. There is no time to waste.

Julianne Schultz, AM, is the author of The Idea of Australia: A Search for the Soul of the Nation (Allen&Unwin). She chairs The Conversation, was the founding editor of Griffith Review and is emeritus professor media and culture at Griffith University.



PHOTO: NELLY le COMTE

An advertisement for Cape Byron Distillery. On the left is a photograph of three people in a distillery setting, one is pouring liquid into a glass. Below the photo is the text 'THE HOME OF Brookies BYRON GIN'. On the right is a black and white graphic with the text 'ESTD 2016 CAPE BYRON DISTILLERY' above a QR code, and 'TASTINGS TOURS COCKTAILS' below it.



“Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” —GEORGE ORWELL



PHOTO: RUSTY MILLER

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A DAY IN THE BAY

JOCK SERONG

I'm not sure how it looks from the outside, but touring a book can be hard work.

There's the driving ("do you know how fast you were going, sir?"), the flights ("remove your belt, sir"), the hotels ("I'm afraid there's no such booking, sir"). There's missing your family, forgetting names, eating rubbish and plonking yourself on a stool trying to say something coherent in an hour about a book that took years of careful thought to create. It can be draining.

Or it can be an absolute joy.

I arrived in Byron the other day, fresh from some - let's say - *interesting* events on the highway (I'd need another 800 words). I wasn't late but I was in that zone where you're looking at your watch and assessing whether it's personal hygiene or eating that's going to have to go. Then I was picked up by the irrepressible John and Karen Mitchell from The Book Room, and I watched with a cold beer in hand while they turned their Fletcher St. store into a performance space: a long-practised art that involves a team of staff in silent choreography around massive stacks of books. If you're sipping a beer while people are working it's important to ask now and then if you can do anything to help. You already know the answer: *you sip the beer and I'm going to roll this shelf of Penguin Philosophers over your foot.*

The seats filled up, John did a stunning Acknowledgment of Country that took in Makarrata and the Redfern Speech, and we were away.

Interviewing is a little like wicketkeeping: the better someone does it, the less visible it is. And Chris Hanley, the real estate guru, bibliophile,

corporate mentor and long-term backbone of the Byron Writers' Festival, is about as good as interviewers get, anywhere. We chatted like I'd bumped into him in the street (which I actually did do later). He'd read everything and committed it to memory. He made the book feel like it was worth something. And I looked out in the middle of all this and saw that there were good friends in the chairs and the miles fell away and it felt like home.

We got a long table at Yulli's afterwards, and in the middle of a number of long conversations I made various promises about the following morning. Rusty Miller and Tricia Shantz, the proprietors of this publication, offered a surf (there was talk of a Van Straalen fish surfboard on loan). I was booking coffees, breakfasts and beach walks with no heed to the multiple clashes I was creating. Which I guess is one of the most enjoyable things about a night out in a faraway town: tomorrow morning is – pah! – tomorrow morning.

There were margaritas and they were cold and salty. There may have been some beer.

I wandered off around eleven with a pleasant buzz on. Given that the lit scene is nothing like rock n' roll, I looked forward to donning slippers and eye-shade for a solid twelve-hour snooze. Then Courtney Miller casually floated an invitation to go hot-air ballooning – at 4:15 in the morning. *The body said you are a slow-moving diurnal mammal, no longer in the first bloom of youth. Stay in bed.* But for some reason the mouth said *umm, okay*, and six hours later I was gently lifting off a paddock to the west of Byron, among a lumpen basketful of tourists like a selection of unsold produce from a farmers' market.



"Community has warred incessantly with individualism for pre-eminence in our political hagiology."

—ROBERT PUTNAM, AUTHOR, *BOWLING ALONE*

Courtney's incredibly able sister Taylor was our ground crew, and Taylor's partner Emiliano was our pilot: they operate the local ballooning business, Balloon Aloft (five stars, heavy recommend, book immediately or sooner). As I watched their cheerful competence at an hour when I can barely butter toast, I was reminded that it's a good thing there are jobs like writing novels for those of us who can't juggle four propane burners and a constant internal weather analysis with a witty speech to fifteen paying customers in a basket at eleven hundred feet. People are remarkable, aren't they.

The flight was surreally beautiful; one of those moments when your companions are whispering to each other, not because there's a need for silence but because they're overawed by beauty. Courtney and her friend Sabine (from Chile, via Barcelona) leaned their chins on the soft rail of the basket and watched the fog-bound cows wandering past below us. 'Close your eyes,' said Emiliano. 'Your body can't feel the motion, because we are travelling at exactly the same speed as the air.'

We put down in someone's paddock and the ground team came to retrieve us. Curling back towards Byron, Taylor stopped our bus on the

roadside at a farmhouse letter-box, and Emi got out and dropped off a bottle of sparkling. Apparently it's a system of informal payment that ballooners have used all the way back to the Montgolfier flight in 1783: a champagne for your trouble. How delightfully French.

Breakfast was at Three Blue Ducks, and it was glorious. Of course it was. I needed to hoof it down because there was that borrowed Van Straalen to paddle, and at least six half-organised coffees to honour. I'd been in Byron for just over twelve hours. Then Emiliano said 'hey, you wanna go fishing?'

The internal monologue piped up again – an ageing *terrestrial* diurnal mammal – but I gave it short shrift because it had been wrong about everything so far. Emi's boat was as scrupulously organised as his balloon, and he'd brought along his friend Alessandro (also a Roman), who was something of an expert fisherman. We launched in the Brunswick River, and below my life jacket I was still wearing the jeans I'd worn to speak to an audience the previous night. Next time I do a book gig I will pack like a Montgolfier.

The river bar was flat, the sea was flat: everything was a brilliant, perfect blue. When we reached the

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fifty-metre depth contour I rang the guesthouse and informed them that unfortunately something had come up and I wouldn't be making the 10am checkout. They were surprisingly good about it.

Despite Alessandro's impressive array of tactics, we kept only one thrashing pink snapper, but we saw tuna and a remora and a shark, and we laughed at two blokes in a nearby tinny swearing and carrying on, their voices drifting over the mirrored sea, eight miles off Mullumbimby. Australians really only have about four adjectives.

The taxi to the airport was possibly my fifth form of transport for the day, and the plane would be the sixth. I went through my pockets in the departure lounge: a sinker packet, a receipt for some books

I'd bought from Anke at The Book Room, and a beer top. I had sunscreen in my eyes and I smelt vaguely of propane and fish.

The last thought I had before I commenced fly-catcher snoring in seat 17C: the Miller family, the Mitchells, all those friends who came along – I don't think any of them thought the whole thing was remotely unusual. Well, it was to me. I doubt I'll ever forget it.

*Jock Serong is the founding editor of Great Ocean Quarterly and the author of six novels, most recently *The Settlement*, which concludes his Furneaux trilogy and tells the tale of the Wybalenna settlement on Tasmania's Flinders Island.*



PHOTO: EBEN McCRIMMON



"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."
 —MARTIN LUTHER KING



PHOTO: NELLY le COMTE

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ON THE FRONT LINES OF CLIMATE CRISIS

ANNA ROSE

The era of climate warnings is over and the era of climate consequences has begun, writes Anna Rose.

"We are the first generation who will experience the impacts of the climate crisis in our lifetimes if Governments do not act now to reduce carbon pollution. Australia is the most vulnerable industrialised country in the world when it comes to extreme weather events like mega-fires and extreme floods. We need political leaders to step up and prioritise the next generation before the next election".

I was an 18 year old university student when I wrote those words in 2002, and I have dedicated my life to tackling climate change ever since. I attended my first UN Climate Negotiations when I was 21, went on to set up the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, run Earth Hour, co-founded Groundswell Giving, serve on the board of Farmers for Climate Action and now run an NGO called Environmental Leadership Australia aiming to support bipartisan progress towards greater ambition in state and federal climate policy.

Like all Northern Rivers residents, I have now also seen the devastating consequences of climate change up close twice - first through the bushfires and secondly the floods.

As a climate campaigner for the past 25 years, I have read a lot of peer reviewed scientific papers about the link between a warming climate and extreme weather events like flooding.

The science is simple – warmer air holds more water. The global average air temperature has warmed by over 1 degree C since pre-industrial times. It now holds three times more water.

I knew, intellectually, that these kinds of extreme events would happen in my lifetime.

But knowing something intellectually is not the same as seeing the library and community centre that you walk past every day turned into an evacuation centre for hundreds of people. Seeing the despair on people's faces and hearing their stories as you line up with them at the bakery you go to every morning.

Knowing something intellectually is not the same as receiving a message from a mum who's in your fitness class in despair because her breast milk has dried up after she and her baby spent three days stranded without food, water or power before finally being picked up by a helicopter.

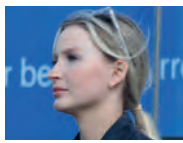
The Northern Rivers community is strong. But there's a limit to how much communities can cope and recover in the face of a climate that has fundamentally changed, and will continue to if the world doesn't stop burning fossil fuels and accelerate climate solutions.

This year, two things have happened that are often referred to as climate "wake up calls". One was the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The other has been the floods - stemming from extreme rainfall events which are still devastating other parts of our state as I write.

The wake up calls are all around us, if we look up. But are we really awake to the scale of what is happening?

I get it. There are kids to raise, jobs to be done, other global events to worry about like the war in Ukraine. It can be overwhelming and for some of us there's just nothing left in the tank.

If you're feeling overwhelmed – if you're stretched beyond capacity dealing with flood recovery, or preparing for the next one – I get it. Please stop reading. Rest, look after yourself, and accept the help of those around you.



"You are something the whole universe is doing in the same way that a wave is something the whole ocean is doing." —ALAN WATTS

But there must be some people out there who have a bit more they can give to climate action, whether it's funding climate action, volunteering with a climate group or meeting with your local politicians to let them know you want greater ambition - everyone can do something.

Because we do still have a small window of time left to make a difference. Scientists tell us we have seven or eight years left in this "critical decade" before the world passes irreversible tipping points in the Earth's system.

What will it take to turn things around? Community. Cooperation. Leadership. Partnerships. All of us reaching outside our comfort zone and outside the "usual suspects".

All Northern Rivers residents have seen firsthand that humans have an extraordinary capacity to help each other, to cooperate, to come together and act in a crisis.

In the same way, every single voter and politician now has the opportunity to step up and be a leader on climate. No matter the legacy of your political party in Australia's decades-long "climate wars", you can be a voice for change.

The Victorian Liberal party recently announced they have changed their climate position and now support legislating net zero by 2050. This means there is now bipartisan support - support from both major parties - for net zero by 2050 in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. It's far from enough, but it's a great platform to build on.

The other good news is that the economic opportunities of acting on climate are now abundantly clear. Australia has all the technological expertise and innovation to become a renewables superpower. We can export cheap energy to the rest of the world, and use it at home to finally revive the Australian



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manufacturing industry. We can create secure, well-paid jobs in regions like the northern rivers, and do so in a way that protects communities and shares the benefits of the renewables revolution.

When I think about the Australia we could create when we see leadership on climate from community, business and political leaders, it fills me with hope.

All of us alive today have a responsibility to ask: can I dig a bit deeper? How can I do more to be part of the solution?

Our kids won't have that chance. In 2050 my son will be 35. I know he will remember the floods forever, just like all of his classmates. Every time it rains he

asks me now if there will be another flood.

But I want him to remember it as the moment our community - local and national - came together to help each other; to have the hard conversations about climate change; to say enough - this is our time to do everything we can to solve it.

For those of us who are adults right now, we still have the chance to write how the future will play out. Let's not waste that chance.

Anna is a climate advocate and author of the book 'Madlands: A Journey to Change the Mind of a Climate Sceptic'. She is co-founder of Groundswell, which you should join at www.groundswellgiving.org



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THE WAY WE EAT

The Way we eat exhibition was on in early 2022 at the Art Gallery of NSW. The exhibition considered what we eat, how food is made, stored and consumed, the evolution of culinary wares, cultural exchange and the ritual and symbolic meanings associated with food.

The Way We Eat : “A human being is primarily a bag for putting food into; the other functions and

faculties may be more godlike, but in point of time they come afterwards... I think it could be plausibly argued that changes of diet are more important than changes of dynasty or even of religion.” George Orwell The road to Wigan Pier 1937.

Food is central to our lives, but it is far more than a simple daily necessity. What we eat and drink, the utensils we use and the way we consume food



"The dreaming has two rules: obey the Law, and leave the world as you found it."

—BILL GAMMAGE, AUTHOR, ENVIRONMENTALIST

define our lives and times.

Modern technology has enabled a vast network of local and international growers, processors and distributors to establish a 'food system' that is supposed to nourish 7.8 billion people worldwide. However, this sophisticated system has not solved the problem of food inequity; it has also created an enormous amount of food waste. As Mahatma Ghandi once said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."

Sharing food is a primary way of initiating and maintaining human relationships. The preparation and consumption of food are also, on occasion, ceremonial acts charged with symbolic importance.

Essential: An old poem says: Good food is not equal to utensils'... Plates are suitable for fried and sauteed food, bowls are suitable for soup. When

they are mixed, lustre arises. Yuan Mei Recipes from the Garden of Contentment (Suiyuan shidan) 1792.

Utensils and vessels used for cooking, consuming and storing food are essential to human life. We use them and throw them away as ordinary commodities, but we also collect and admire them as treasures.

Lacquerware and ceramic tableware items have been produced in Asia since prehistoric times. Ceramics have a particularly rich history in China, where the world's oldest pottery fragments have been found.

Today, plastic and glass are commonly used for their convenience and affordability. These same properties are disastrous for the ecosystem, with effective recycling one of our greatest challenges.

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MUSICAL MEMORIES

HILTON FATT

Looking back, my musical experiences have been defined by an array of venues. As the saying goes, nothing lasts forever. At least for a time, these halls, bars, hotels, events, all had their moments.

In the sixties, Lismore was where music was happening. Pubs closed at 10pm, whereupon everyone traipsed to Lismore City Hall to dance to the strains of a local band. Dances were also held in the holiday season at Ballina Surf Club. Byron was like another country as there was no coast road. For a better musical experience one ventured up towards the Queensland border and Coolangatta. The Patch was the musical night out and chick magnet.

In 1973, as part of the rise in music festivals, the *Aquarius Festival* at Nimbin was born. A hippy nirvana at the time, with a seemingly endless supply of abundant and free, magic mushrooms. My favourite band at the festival was *Blerta* from New Zealand. A psychedelic jam band with exceptional musicianship.

The seventies saw me in Sydney, but I did manage to see *Richard Clapton* when he played at a property called the Everglades, where Byron at Byron was built or Crystalbrook as it is now called. A lot of touring acts were playing at Lismore City Hall at the time. *Osibisa*, *Canned Heat*, *Blondie* and *George Thorogood*, organised and promoted by Dan Doeppel, and Keven Oxford.

Coorabell Hall was a venue that attracted a lot of local bands and visiting artists to run their own gigs. I attended many of these events but my memory fades as to who the acts were. The *Music Farm* at Coorabell was where a lot of artists recorded. In 1980 I joined a series of covers bands. I remember playing at the old Beach Hotel, where the stage backed onto

the toilet wall. The Beach Hotel in those days was popular with bikie groups for a Saturday night out from up north. As usual, fights erupted after the pub closed. A glassing was a common occurrence.

Bangalow Bowling Club was a venue that attracted touring bands in the eighties. I saw *Cold Chisel* perform a highly charged performance. Another not so memorable performance was by Steve Marriot (*The Small Faces*, *Humble Pie*) with an array of pickup musicians from bands whose reputations had faded over a decade ago. A shame to see Steve's comedown after playing stadiums post *Faces*.

The big change to touring bands coming to Byron was when Dan Doeppel and Keven Oxford established the Arts Factory in 1984 at the old Piggery. The transformation was amazing and due to Dan's American background and collecting mentality, the venue was a unique museum of Americana. My penchant for stuffed animals began then. The international bands that played there were too numerous to mention. I travelled over an hour from Casino to see bands such as *The Band*, *Albert Collins*, *Big Jay McNeely*, *Mick*





"People who don't understand the importance of cooperation and disarmament should quit politics." —MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Taylor, Dread Zeppelin, The Pogues, Jeff Healey and Roy Buchanan. At the end of the eighties I was lucky enough to play with *Rockinitis* featuring Johnny Gray. *Rockinitis* played regularly at the Arts Factory on the smaller stage, which was west of the bar. That stage had a great natural fold back and one didn't have to turn the amps up to 11.

We played a myriad of gigs on the North Coast, and in Byron at the old Great Northern and Beach Hotel. After John Cornell bought the Beach Hotel, he used to sit in the audience, I guess contemplating the vision for the renovation. John and Delvene did a tremendous makeover to create a venue that all local bands were anxious to play at. We played at the new Beach Hotel on the floor where the mixing console currently sits. They then made a stage below the collection of musical instruments on the southern wall. I wouldn't say the acoustics

were the best but the atmosphere was vibrant. In time, the larger and raised stage was set up where it currently sits. Some great shows were held in this new environment. Of note was a Renee Geyer performance. Yet another final farewell tour.

Around the decade change from the eighties to the nineties, the Lismore Blues Club was established. All local and national blues acts played at the Lismore Club's monthly get together. For a club in the sticks, some major acts played to usually packed houses. Some artists who played then were *Jon Cleary* (twice), *Maria Muldaur*, *Dick and Krista Hughes*. The Blues Club ended up closing because we ran out of acts. Just about every blues act in existence that ventured to the North Coast was given a gig there.

Another change happened when the first Bluesfest was established at the Arts Factory in

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1990. The line-up was limited, but based on Keven Oxford's extensive knowledge of blues acts, was off to a good start. By then I was playing with the only true local blues band, *The Dynaflows*. We played on the very first night to a limited crowd. The vibe was definitely good and we were fortunate to support *The Paladins* and *Smokey Wilson* on a side tour to Sydney.

As Bluesfest grew, so did complaints from neighbours who had to endure the hyped up crowd as it left the venue every night. Bluesfest was on the move to Belongil Fields. A large tract of land with cabins and camp grounds. The best night was Thursday, when some acts would have impromptu performances in a small tin shed. Blind Boys of Alabama was a highlight. The Belongil Fields was where Nola McMahon, from Mullumbimby, held a big New Year concert. Playing extended well past midnight as I remember *The Dynaflows* did not finish our set till 3am.

From there Bluesfest was moved to Red Devil Park. With an expanded audience capacity in the larger tents, and floor area, the festival could only get bigger. Traffic and parking was horrendous, but the audience didn't seem to mind. Being so close to town was a boon for Byron's businesses. The one great thing about Bluesfest since its inception,

and why I keep going back, is the discovery of new artists, that would never have been on my viewing radar. That said, some major acts have been disappointing. Hype? Probably. Of surprise is the energy of acts who are well past their use by date. Maybe they have more to prove.

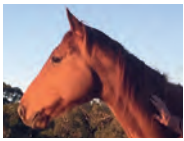
To find a permanent home, Bluesfest finally moved to Tyagarah. The flow of international acts keeps getting bigger, only the better ones are dying, or left on the shelf. One can only hope Bluesfest keeps going to support real live music. The backdrop of synthetic beats and pitched up vocals is not a good look.

In the nineties, the Byron Bay Services Club was host to many touring bands. Maybe this was a result of there being no more Arts Factory, with Byron still on the touring map. I saw some amazing acts in this smallish venue. Namely *Buddy Guy*, *Rocking Dopsie*, *Crowded House* with Tim Finn.

The shame in the area is the transfer of the iconic pubs to corporations. The publicans of old had an understanding of the mix of food, drink and entertainment. It is now replaced by a number on a balance sheet.

All play at the surf, snow, movies and music makes Hilton a dull boy. One day he will grow up and do some work.





"Every story has an end, but in life every end is just a new beginning." —MALCOLM S FORBES



PHOTO: EBEN McCRIMMON

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WHALE AND SERPENT

BRUCE PASCOE

Bingyadyan gnallu birrung nudjarn jungarung.

A woman stood in a cave sheltering from the rain. A man stood beside her. She was pregnant. Imminent. They looked out at the bleak sea, grey like lead, moody, mean. They stared at the sea waiting for the rain to stop. They knew this bay like they knew the path to their back door.

A reef appeared where none had been before. And grew and grew and grew until it loomed over the wave like a great tower. And there was an eye in the tower that swivelled to where the man and woman stood in the cave. The beast looked at them. Gurruwul.

She sank below the wave and another smaller one appeared at her side and the two swam away out to the horizon and the man and woman watched even though the rain had stopped and weak sunshine seeped through the clouds like the disappearance of tears. The whales returned to the bay and the man and woman saw the eye watch them before it turned to the ocean again with its calf. They repeated this giant pelagic loop time and time again. She was teaching her calf to swim and sift the ocean for food. This was a lesson for the woman whose child would become, of course, Gurruwul.

This is an old story. Older than everything. When the world was new the lore was created and the whale and the serpent looked about and saw the ocean. I will look after the land because that is my home but who will look after the ocean, he said.

I will look after all the salt water, said the whale, because the fish and the turtles, the crabs and the weeds, the coral and the caves all need care.

But you will need to return to the land every now and then said the serpent to bring back your lore.

I will, said the whale, I will beach myself on the sand, I will come back to the land to regurgitate the lore so that the lore can be complete and the land and sea can know each other.

And that's how it has always been as the whale patrols the oceans and the serpent slides across the land, creating rivers and mountains lakes and plains.

The dedication of the whale in regurgitating the lore can be seen in the deep south of the world where her many lives can be seen in a long row of her bones, thousands of bones, thousands of skeletons, all in a row, counting the aeons of the earth. Those aeons are remembered in the lore, as the lore is observed.

One day the people saw a great cloud sail down the coast, following the path of the whale. What is that cloud thought the serpent. The people called on the serpent to tell them what to do. Watch that cloud, replied the serpent. So the people lit fires from headland to headland all down the coast. At each point the cloud passed fires sprang up and the smoke told the people in the south that a great cloud was approaching them.

All the people were concerned and nobody knew how to act until an old man paddled a boat out to the island with no name so he could see the cloud more clearly. The old man had to ask permission of the whale and serpent to visit the island because it was the island of boys' blood and men's scars. A sacred place only visited at the time of blood and scars. He watched and he saw the ribs and the rigging. It is not a cloud the old man decided it is the giant pelican.

He paddled back to the land and told the people that the cloud was in fact a giant pelican and they



"As you get older, flexibility and circulation is everything."

—NICK POLITIS, AUSTRALIAN BILLIONAIRE CAR DEALER

must follow the pelican. I saw it from that island, he said pointing to the east. The island with no name, he said, Barrangooba, that land is the land of the passing pelican.

Long after that pelican had passed, long after the people saw white people climb from the pelican's back, the man from the cave visited the island of the passing pelican with his son and other young men. They made their knives from a stone from the sea. They ate the lobsters and shellfish from the sea as a spirit man instructed them in their ordeal. Each day the men and boys dived into the sea for the lobsters and they laughed because the sea was warm and the reef was safe but in the back of their minds were the stone knives wrapped in the cloth of kinny aha, the leaf marked by the serpent's head.

Every morning, an hour before grandfather lifted his golden head from the sea, they heard the wolves of the sea. Kwyy, wiii, yowroo cried the spirit birds. The men and boys listened, with their heads still resting on the roll of their clothes within which they had hidden their blade.

Tomorrow said the old man to the boys and the men and the man from the cave, tomorrow we will visit the whale and the shark. Do you have something for me. The men and boys felt for the knot of their narguns that tied their stone to them and they nodded, yes, we have something for you.

Next morning long before dawn, at the time when the wolves of the sea cried kwyy, wii yawoo and the men and boys shuddered because the air from the sea was as cold as a snake's tooth and was full of the sounds of wolves. They huddled in the heath and waited. From the corners of their eyes they saw the old man lead the man from the cave away and they waited. They saw the light of bird blood leak onto the very margin of the sky until one by one they were asked to contribute to their colour to the rising sun and that's when they saw looming above them the giant shark and the

gigantic whale and they stared between the two great figures and for the first time they realised that they had joined the contest of the deep sea.

One day they would be asked to observe the passage of the whale, witness her sacrifice, witness her escape from the shark, follow the journey of the whale to a point where all the land ends. There they would be told how that nothing they do will match the dedication of the whale and the serpent, because that is the lore and they are mere followers of the lore. They did not invent it and they cannot destroy it. For the lore is not about success or failure, greed or power it is about the land and the sea and our role in its continuance. The whale swims, the serpent coils; that is all.

Bruce Pascoe is a Yuin Bunurong and Tasmanian writer and farmer who lives at Wallagarough on southern Yuin land. ©Bruce Pascoe 2016



PHOTO: EBEN MCCRIMMON



JUST ENOUGH DRAMA

BENJAMIN GILMOUR

How often have we heard people in our lives say, 'I really don't want any drama'? Or, 'I can't deal with the drama'? Maybe we say this ourselves. It's understandable. Reducing stressful situations and creating peace is a universally accepted goal for happiness. But I'm not entirely convinced we actually want, or need, a 'drama free life'.

I find it curious that people who make these statements are often the ones with the *most* drama in their lives. It's as if they can't resist it. This has got me wondering if humans actually rely on some degree of drama. Not just to keep life interesting and exciting, but to *evolve*. Periods of retreat for recovery, healing and reflection are important. But what if a little drama is too? I believe a healthy degree of drama is essential for our transformation and growth. Because we are the story.

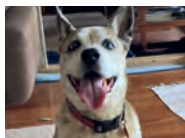
Stories demand drama. And there's a word for stories without it: boring. Without drama you wouldn't have much to tell, or reflect on. Quite frankly, you wouldn't be that interesting to hang out with either. Drama is essential to all good stories.

A few years ago I was halfway through shooting a drama film called *Jirga* in Afghanistan. It was about a former soldier who returns to the country to apologise to the family of a civilian he killed. We were in the mountains around Jalalabad with Daesh militants less than ten kilometres away and Taliban in the neighbouring valley. We were also at risk of friendly-fire and drone strikes from the Afghan Army and the U.S. Army. Local militants had just been apprehended by our security detail, suspected of hiding an IED on our film set. I was working with Australian actor Sam Smith, who was, by that time, rattled to the core. He'd stopped eating and was up all night clutching

a knife, listening to gunfire, mortar rounds and low-flying helicopters outside. It was around this time that I realised our story of making the film was running parallel to the narrative of the film itself. We were in a factual story that mirrored our fictional one. Later I came to see that the drama we faced was a gift, a gift revealed as authenticity on screen. Life imitating art. Or the other way round. And I asked myself: How can we expect our real life stories to be any different from fictional ones? After all, great stories are *about* life. They're *inspired by life*, *informed* by it and *flow back into it*. They do this like the hydrologic cycle, as water moves from one reservoir to another, from river to ocean, ocean to sky, sky to earth. We are stories, we express stories, we become stories and the stories become us.

Of course, drama is not meant to be easy. That's the point of it. Drama is created by conflict, obstacles, challenges. Drama represents a series of tests. As protagonists of our own story, we are tested in the same way fictional characters in books and films are. We can overcome, or surrender. But a story where the protagonist surrenders on page one doesn't make for a great read. And, almost no film or TV series would exist.

It was raining hard a few weeks ago when a friend of mine wanted to visit. She came to a flooded part of the road and rang me and said, 'It's a sign I shouldn't see you today.' There was of course another way round, a few kilometres longer, clear of floodwaters. All of us face blocked roads in life. The question is: Will we retreat, or find a way through? Imagine if Homer's Odysseus took one look at the lotus eaters at the beginning of the epic and said, 'This really isn't good for my nervous system'. Or if Harry Potter, when



"Argue like you're right. Listen like you're wrong."

—SYDNEY MORNING HERALD NEWSPAPER

he faced his first challenge, the troll, said, 'My body's telling me I need to go back to that nice spot under the stairs at my aunt and uncle's house'.

There's no story without drama.

Drama shapes us. Because when things go wrong we're invited to respond. We're able to use our inherent faculties of survival. Our intuition, our analytical and creative brains, our determination, resourcefulness and physical skills. These powers within are largely dormant in this convenient, processed world designed to cushion us. We become like an unused muscle. But a muscle only grows strong when faced with repeated, strenuous, resistance. When faced with great drama, conflict, peril, we have a chance to embody our potential. We can fail, learn, try again, and grow. Drama is an opportunity to engage in our own story-making. Sometimes that drama can be so devastating you wouldn't wish it on anyone. And yet, those tales are often the most riveting and moving stories of survival against the odds that others will be inspired and uplifted by.

Humans have a great ability to heal and move on. I know people who have faced enormous pain and have grown and evolved as a result. We see the very best in humans responding to drama. To conflict, crisis, and suffering. In wars and natural disaster we

see great heroism, sacrifice and generosity. And when we rise to the challenge, when we engage with the drama, we feel alive.

While shooting *Jirga* on the mountainsides of the Hindu Kush I felt most alive. Why? Because I was beset by dangers and seemingly impossible hurdles. I was deep in the drama of my own personal story, an invitation to meet the challenges. If we play safe and 'drama free' we are robbing ourselves of this enhancement. Because we are the story. And drama shapes us.

*Benjamin Gilmour is a former paramedic and author of six books, most recently *The Gap* (Penguin). He is also the director of *Jirga*, Australia's entry to the 91st Academy Awards. www.benjaminilmour.com*



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THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR ANCESTORS

HE'ENALU

He'e nalu. To ride a surfboard; surfing; surf rider.
Lit., wave sliding.

He'e. To slide, surf, slip, flee.

Nalu. Wave, surf; full of waves; to form waves; wavy, as wood grain. *Ke nalu nei ka moana*, the ocean is full of waves.

(Samuel Elbert and Mary Kawena Pukuki's Hawaiian Dictionary, Honolulu 1971)

"There are nights when the upper air is windless and the stars in heaven stand out in their full splendour around the bright moon; when every mountain top and headland and ravine starts into sight, as the infinite depths of the sky are torn open to the very firmament."
Colleen McCullough, author

EAN

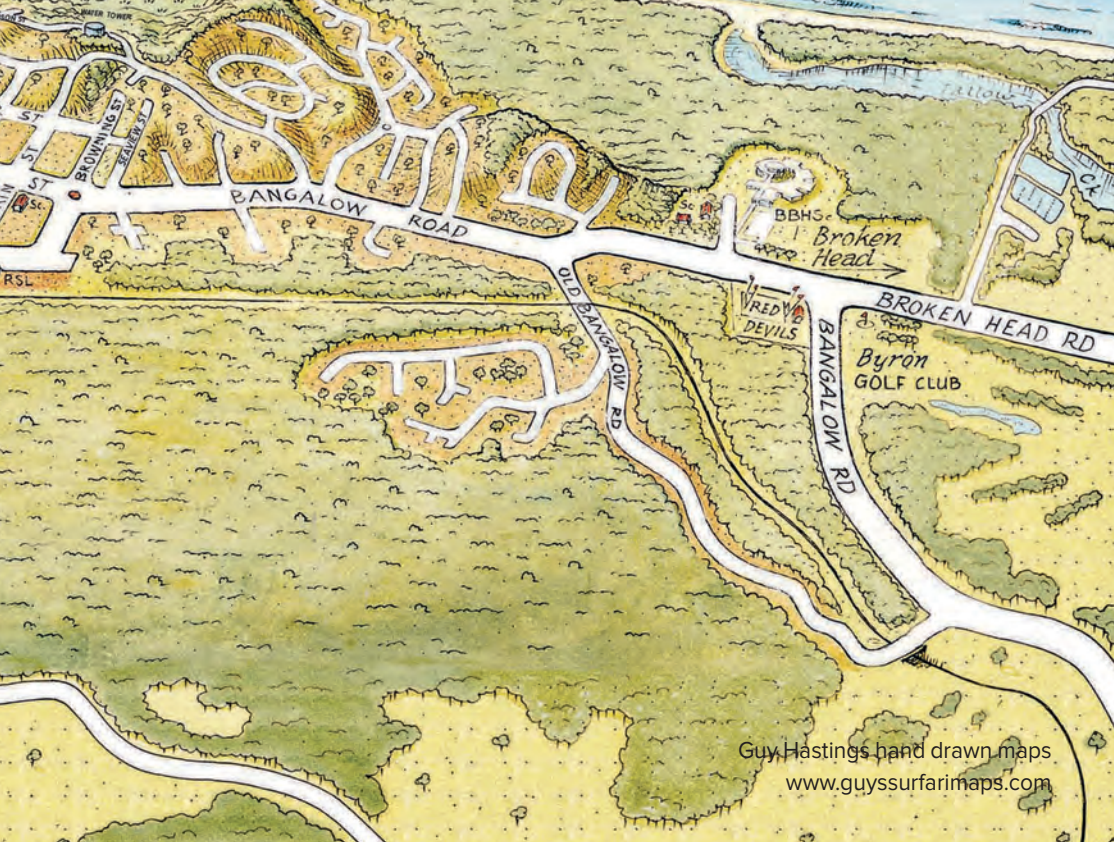


sy Corner

Tallow Beach

kwai National Park

um Margil Swamp





HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

DAVID COOKE

During my time in the corporate world, I became increasingly aware of the prevalence of human rights abuses underpinning the commercial performance of many corporations. A spectrum exists ranging from exploited workers who are not paid a living wage and working in appalling and unsafe conditions through to what has become known as modern slavery. The latter occurs when people are sold as slaves into situations of forced labour and are unable to leave. This phenomenon is prevalent in the manufacturing processes or supply chains of most companies in the world today.

You may be aware of several high-profile cases from some years ago such as The Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 in which over 1100 people working in appalling conditions were killed. Eighty percent of these garment workers were women working for sub-contractors who made clothes for the world's largest clothing brands. Or the continuing stain on the Nike brand from the revelations in the 1990s that they were using child labour in sweatshops where children worked 16-hour days seven days a week, or more recently the accusation that shoes were still being produced by hundreds of Uyghur women in a factory in China under conditions of forced labour.

I must confess to initially thinking that slavery had been abolished, at least in the UK through an act of parliament in the early 1800s or because of the American civil war which ended in 1865.

However, there are more people in modern slavery today than have been enslaved at any point in human history. The latest research published in 2022, known as the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery puts the figure at some 28

million people in forced labour and an additional 22 million trapped in forced marriage. Regrettably, this is an increase of 10 million people on the 2016 figure. We have more slaves in the world today than were transported on slave ships from Africa in the 400 years prior to the abolition of slavery.

My personal road to Damascus moment came when I was attending a work conference in Thailand, and we had a dinner on an old clipper ship one evening and we were invited to ask any questions that we might have. Someone asked about the fishing vessels all around us. A chilling story unfolded which shaped the direction of our company for years to come.

We were told that they had visited one of the boats only the week before and had asked if they could come on board. The Thai fishing captain welcomed them, however the first thing the cruise director saw was the emaciated figure of a man with a collar around his neck which was chained to the deck of the boat.

Alarmed she said, "Who's that?" to which the captain replied, "Oh it's a slave." She said, "But you can't have slaves!" to which he replied, with the sweep of his arm indicating all the other boats in the vicinity "Most of us have slaves." She then said, "But why is he chained up?" to which the captain replied, "Oh this one's a troublemaker but not for much longer it will be fish food soon." So, the intention was to murder this man by throwing him overboard.

The captain then said, "If you're so concerned about it, you can buy it off me if you want to" and they negotiated a price of \$US700. The cruise director returned to the ship obtained the money and bought this man's freedom. She could not have



“Class in most places is about making the differences visible. Class in Australia is about making the differences invisible.”—RICHARD FLANAGAN, NOVELIST/ WRITER

been aware that the cost of a slave is far closer to \$US100 so a tidy profit for the ship's captain.

They took this man to the nearest police station. He was from Myanmar and he and his family were living in an impoverished situation and were approached by a man saying that he was recruiting for jobs in big cities in Asia and that he could earn excellent money, would be well looked after, and could send his wages home to his family every month and at the end of the two-year contract, he would be able to buy a home for his family, educate his children and lift himself out of poverty. This seafood is finding its way into our supermarkets and restaurants, and it is generally bought and consumed without regard to the human cost. This man found himself trapped at sea for many years unable to ever leave the vessel, while for thousands of others, they are trapped inside factories or on farms.

Slavery will not be found in the factories owned by the brands that we have a direct relationship with, yet these same companies will apply considerable pressure on their sub-contractors to produce components or finished goods for them at the lowest possible unit cost thereby exacerbating the exploitation of workers.

The people being subjected to this level of exploitation are powerless and voiceless so it's up to us. If you own a company keep asking your suppliers how their goods are made and ask them to keep asking questions down their supply chain to ensure that they are sourced ethically. If you own shares email your super fund or fund manager and ask them what they are doing to ensure they are not investing your money in companies who don't care about vulnerable people. And consume consciously and use the power of search engines to investigate where products are made, and under what conditions. A free Australian app called Good on You rates clothing manufacturers

and is great to have on your phone to refer to before buying any garments. Here in Byron, there are businesses that have a B Corp rating. Seek them out and buy from them. Buy from the local food markets, direct from the farmers.

Remember that each of us can make a difference. As Mother Teresa said, “Sometimes we can feel that what we have to give is just a drop in the ocean, but always remember that the ocean would be a lesser place without that one drop.” And, living in Byron we have a good chance at keeping that one drop in the ocean when we think and act before we buy.

Dr. David Cooke is the Chairperson UN Global Compact, Founder Director of Anti-Slavery Australia, Chair of the UN Global Compact Network Australia, Executive Director of ESG Advisory.




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OVER THE TOP

CHRIS DEWHIRST

I landed a Piaggio 166 – the twin-engine, pusher-propellor aeroplane – into Essendon airport in August 1964, when I was sixteen years-old – with my father in the right hand seat. It was pissing with rain, at night and in a cross-wind, almost out of control.

Throughout the approach my dad puffed away on a *Rothmans* cigarette – his favourite fag – while reading the P166 maintenance manual.

“Land on the starboard wheel. And keep the other wheel off the ground until you’ve kicked the nose down the runway, otherwise we’ll need to return to Rome and collect another aircraft...”

“I can’t see the friggig runway...”

“Rest assured my son, the one-seven approach lights will be visible at about 100 feet AGL, below the cloud... we should have floats in this weather.” He went back to reading and didn’t look up again until we had taxied back to the north hangar, which is now Air Ambulance Victoria.

We had flown VH-PGA from Italy as a demonstrator, but sold it en route to Ansett Airlines, where my mother worked typing documents for the big man himself. On the way we refuelled in Bagdad, Delhi, Singapore, Port Moresby, Darwin and Sydney – and a couple of other places that are now a fading memory. My dad had swapped out from flying submarine-hunting Sunderland’s during World War II, into commercial aviation when we migrated to Melbourne in 1954. On arrival my mother ironed his shirts and wrote all his job applications. In the 1950s there were far more pilots in Australia than work available, but with her Irish blarney she landed him a ball-tearing, Chief Pilot position with the Bristol Aeroplane Company that later morphed into Forester Stephen Aviation.

Anyway, that particular landing, scared the bejesus out of me and eventually made me swap over to hot air balloons. “... because sooner or later you forget to put the wheels down,” which was a gentle reminder on that stormy night, all those years ago to drop the wheels. Of course wheels are never a problem on a balloon, and neither are cross-wind landings, or for that matter, engine failures.

Enter scientist and aircraft designer – John Tann – usually found planting trees, or quaffing coffee at the Rock & Roll cafe in Mullumbimby. However, in 1979 he and fellow scientist, (Professor) Andrew Collins, were young university students living in Melbourne. They put their heads together with parachute manufacturer, Joe Chitty, and sewed into existence a hot air balloon envelope from forty-two rolls of nylon fabric. It was a black and red 84,000 cubic ft. monster – embossed with golden dragons – large enough to carry four people. Afterwards they built a basket and burner. He took me for a flight and within an hour or so I got the hang of it.

“Burn propane to go up and stop burning to come down. Pull the red line as hard as you can to open the parachute flap at the crown, which will deflate the balloon once we’ve landed,” he said. “And bend the knees when the basket hits the ground...”

How simple is that, I thought, expressing confidence beyond reason, which is a boy thing.

“How do you steer these things?” I asked. The sun had just poked its big red dome above the horizon.

“We always travel with the wind, but there are different speeds and directions at various altitudes. At 3,000 feet, we’re heading north-west at about 20 knots. However, the cold air from overnight, flows down the hills and along the valleys, seeking the



"I have this strange phrase I use when people ask me why I chose philosophy. I tell them I wanted to become a professional human being."—ALEX POZDNYAKOV, *NEW PHILOSOPHER MAGAZINE*



The balloon is called Cyberiad, 1977. Photo—John Tann

lowest ground.” He pointed towards Mt. Stapleton, an outpost of the Grampians. “I’ll descend into the katabatic and we’ll slow up and change direction...”

Apart from the pilot, a hot air balloon has only one moving part – the blast valve that never fails. So swapping over to flying balloons for a living was a no-brainer, except that back in 1980 no one was doing it. There were only a handful of balloons in Australia, which was an emerging sport, but I could see the commercial angle from the outset and was keen to crank up a business model.

I sold my house in Melbourne and bought a balloon from Cameron’s – a UK balloon manufacturer – and started selling tickets. Since buying that first balloon, I’ve purchased thirty-plus subsequent balloons – all sponsored – from Kavanagh Balloons in Sydney, including the Star Micronics balloon that I flew over Mt Everest in 1991. Although Cameron’s make superb special-shape balloons (think Piccinini’s sky-whale), Kavanagh makes the best vents in the world for natural shaped balloons, which are the ones we see flying around Byron Bay, over Melbourne, and above most of Australia’s wineries. These pear-shaped balloons (perhaps I could use a more elegant description) are not too dissimilar to the first hot air balloon ever built, when in November 1783, Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d’Arlandes detached the tether ropes from a gigantic bag, made from silk and paper, stoked the fire underneath the opening, and in a cloud of smoke

and to the thunderous applause of a crowd bigger than the one that stormed the Bastille six years later, launched themselves into a Parisian sky.

Nowadays the envelopes are all made from lightweight nylon fabric – and not from silk and paper. The hand-made baskets are equipped with stainless-steel propane cylinders, quad burners, sophisticated vents, air-band radios, moving-map technology, transponders, altimeters and rate of climb indicators. The larger balloons carry up to twenty-four passengers, cost over \$300,000 (including ancillary equipment) and have a life of about 600 hours. Balloons have Certificates of Airworthiness and the pilots all have commercial licences (CPL) with ratings for balloon size. Pilot training is as thorough for obtaining a hot air balloon licence as it is for any other form of aviation. And it can take years of hard work and hundreds of early mornings to earn a balloon CPL.

When booking a Byron Bay balloon flight, or for that matter a balloon flight anywhere else in Australia, be confident that the aeronaut in charge is well qualified and will deliver you safely back to mother earth.

Chris Dewhirst is a retired CASA Test Officer and Test Pilot with 6000 hours piloting aeroplanes, balloons and airships. His awards include an OAM, the RAC Gold Medal and the FAI Diplome Montgolfiere. From Everest by Balloon & other stories is in the bookshops in 2023.



"Solutions is also the wrong word; there is no solution to run away climate chaos, there is only responsiveness."—AIDAN RICKETTS, LISMORE RESIDENT

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

MAREE LOWES

Western science says we are at a tipping point in planetary boundaries and in humanity. Changes observed in ecosystems worldwide and the lived experiences of communities who are most connected to caring for Country - First Nations Custodians and farmers - also corroborate this. As the realities of the anthropocene reveal themselves in wilder, faster and more uncertain ways than predicted, we human animals - alongside all animals - face a present and a future of cascading challenges.

Another word that we can use for this kind of challenge is 'disaster', and in the Disaster Risk Reduction industry, we say "cascading" to indicate that one disaster has started before the last disaster has finished. Disasters can be caused by natural phenomena that overwhelm our systems or they can be man-made. They can be fast or slow in onset and in all cases, their impacts are non-linear - as is how communities act in relation to their impacts. The relationship cycle we have with a disaster involves four phases: preparation, response, recovery and mitigation. But I reiterate - this is a cycle, not a line where one phase finishes before the next starts. Which means it's time for decision makers, and for us community members, to shift our understanding of how to live with disasters from linear to circular.

To see this disaster cycle in action we don't need to go any further than the Northern Rivers itself. The Spring of 2019 set blaze to the Summer of 2020. Whether we lived in the city or country, smoke entered our lungs and screamed at us from the inside that something was terribly wrong: the East Coast and our non-human kin were burning

by the billion. Before people, infrastructure, plants or animals had settled into the recovery phase, a pandemic took hold overseas and made its way to our doorstep. Soon enough, talk of a 'new normal' during COVID lockdowns was replaced by watching for flood warnings here at home on Bundjalung, Widjabul Wia-bal and Yaegl Country. Then, while local communities mobilised amongst shock and grief, a second flood devastated the mighty work still landing on its feet.

As Antonio Guterres stated at COP27, "We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator". And the truth is, we don't know how to keep up with the ride. The frequency and intensity of "natural" disasters is escalating at a rate faster than our human psychosocial mechanisms are adapting. To put it simply: the climate is changing faster than we know how to deal or feel. And of course, Mr Guterres is correct: we are on a highway. In fact, we are in a race against time to build resilience, as well as transition towards more regenerative systems, attitudes and actions. This presents significant issues, because peer reviewed research shows meaningful and deep behaviour change takes time.

So what can we do now? In the area of recovery from trauma and co-occurring disorders, an area in which I've worked and explored personally, again and again I have come across a phrase: we cannot decide outcomes, we can only choose our actions. I believe this to be true of all healing - healing in our self and healing of ourselves in a climate in crisis.

This is where my learning from research in psychology intersects with disaster resilience and it culminates into two words: 'psychological



"It took a devastation to teach me the preciousness of life and the essential goodness of people."—NICK CAVE, MUSICIAN

flexibility'. Psychological flexibility is the following question, and I believe it is also the answer:

... how do we keep moving towards what matters to us, when the goal posts keep shifting? When the scope of what's possible keeps changing?

You know that saying, "the only thing that's certain is uncertainty"... well, it's only becoming truer. Uncertainty comes hand in hand with cascading disasters and with a climate in crisis. Uncertainty rearranges our relationship with ourselves and with the world around us, like furniture in a living room where the seats keep moving and that familiar comfort we so long for is gone. When we cultivate psychological flexibility, we're more likely to know who we are and where to come home to, as uncertainty keeps swirling around us. Psychological flexibility allows us to find somewhere to rest a moment, even if it's not the same seat we sat on yesterday...

So how can each of us get some of this psychological flexibility? I like to say that action is the antidote to despair, because that's what I've witnessed in my own life. Or as so many people have known before me, "hope is a verb". This may resonate with echoes of toxic positivity or

privilege, I can hear that too, but in this context it is a purely pragmatic perspective based on peer reviewed research. Psychological flexibility is a process. It is not an ultimate state to be achieved once and for all. And here's what you really need to know: it's the little acts of faith every day, in the direction of what matters to us, that help us cultivate psychological flexibility.

There's a bunch of ways to do this, depending on what your values are and how you stay connected to the people, purpose and values that matter to you. But to keep it brief I'll share this, lending especially from the work of holistic psychologist Dr Nicole Le Pera as well as other brilliant minds: we need to build up our endurance in bite-sized bits during times of 'peace'. We can do this by undertaking small, endurance building activities each day (or week) that teach us how to tolerate discomfort (within a manageable margin) and then return to our baseline. We need to witness ourselves venturing out from comfort in small ways, within safe parameters, and know that we will make it home to ourselves. It's like practising resilience. Yoga and surfing are awesome endurance building activities. Growing your own food or garden is too.

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Lastly, while we undertake this journey privately, we can also choose to belong again. Over the past century, industrialised capitalism has conditioned us to see ourselves as consumers, rather than as citizens*. I believe that knowing i) how to belong to ourself and ii) knowing how to belong to a community, are key to our internal capacity for psychological flexibility. This is because psychological flexibility centres on how to stay connected to what matters to us. Hence, we need to remember ourselves as community members and citizens in order to cultivate it.

In action, this wisdom means that we can choose to buy from a brand that treats us as a citizen, rather than reducing us to a mere consumer. And when we do that, we are taking a small act of faith towards what matters to us.

And so, in all our forms - as Self, as animal, as community member, as citizen and as consumer -

we can cultivate psychological flexibility and be in reciprocal relation with the world around us while the goal posts of what's possible keep shifting.

**An acknowledgement on the topic of belonging and how to reimagine ourselves as consumers: people from Toko-Pa Turner and Robin Wall-Kimmerer through to Pia Mellody have done invaluable work. Just as so many communities outside of colonial thinking have evolving wisdom around this also.*

Maree Lowes, intersectional changemaker and Actress, is known to millions of families around the world as the beloved 'dirtgirl' from TV, is now the ambassador to Dr Bronner's Australia. Over the years her work with First Nations communities, farmers and families has led her to postgraduate studies in disaster resilience following a BA in Psychology and Indigenous Studies.

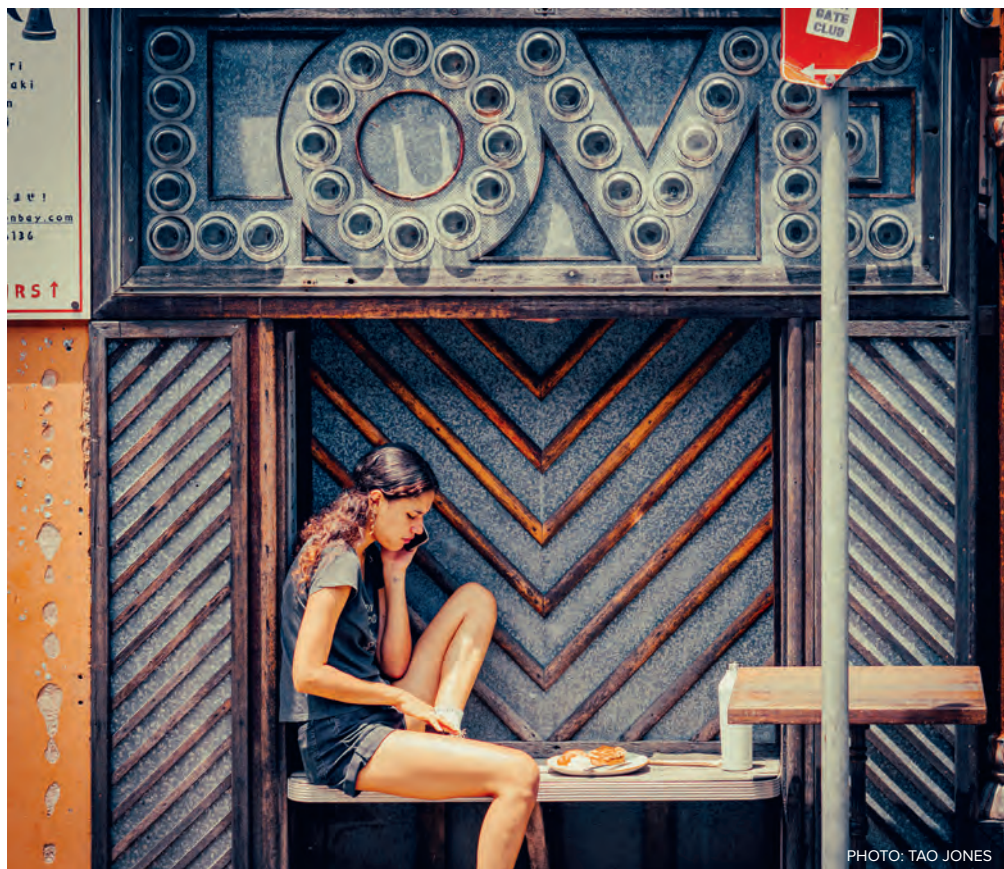



PHOTO: TAO JONES



"The pleasures of connecting with people are so much greater than the pleasures of condemning people."—JOHANN HARI, AUTHOR

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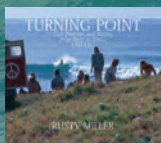
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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BAY

JOSHUA SASSE

Having chosen the somewhat haphazard and vagabond life of the Thespian, I have been fortunately employed enough to have travelled the globe pretty relentlessly the past two decades. The strength of the Pound and the proximity of the European archipelago lent a luxurious facility of travel to my adolescence, and there remain only a handful of countries unpinned on my map. My youth, however, was minted in the foothills of the Himalayas. I was raised in a small medieval village without electricity beneath the watching eye of one of the last great unclimbed and sacred mountains on earth – Machhapuchhare. Our life was lit by kerosene and cooked on coals and the only food and communication came via the donkey trains – these snaked for miles through the valleys all the way to Tibet, their brass bells announcing their arrival long before their bright plumed head-dresses appeared in high ceremony from out of the rhododendron forests.

I mention this because when looking back over my short mortal tenure, I can only conjure three sights in my mind's eye which have left me truly and absolutely conquered; that is to say, only three landscapes have so completely transformed my being with their spirit of place that I am obliged to call them transcendental.

The first was a Nepalese ravine of Tolkien-like proportions on the dawn approach to Annapurna base camp. Poised before a glacier tumbling statically toward a great glacial torrent, my eyes widened owl-like as I attempted to take in the gargantuan mountain canyon surrounding me. But for the Tibetan prayer flags fluttering along the ridge there was no sight or sound of man –

small rock falls skittered nearby and resounding avalanches echoed ethereally in the distant valley beyond. It was the first time I understood mortality in a less finite division. It was a profound moment in my life and I was awash with a spiritual liaison to the earth so visceral it has never left me.

The second was from the seat of a small canoe amidst a thunderstorm in the Nærøfjord in Norway. Great feathered waterfalls cascaded from sheer and glistening ebony cliffs that rose up until they imperceptibly melded with the clouds above. Wood-smoke from the few solitary red-painted farm-steads, perching on their tiny green beaches of grass, lingered above the great dark still-glass water below and the whole Fjörd, shaking with thunder, was so drenched in ancestral puissance that visions of Wagner's Valkyrie's have fixed themselves in my mind as absolutely factual.

The third was from the palm-framed talcum Shore of Wategos beach in Byron Bay. My experience of Australia to that point had been limited to the hot and humid crocodile back waters of the NT around Darwin, where my Anglo-Saxon sensibilities melted around me (rather reminiscent of the 'character puddles' in which I was forced to bathe in at drama school). Staring out across that bay for the first time was, to say the least, cerebral and two definite things happened to me that day; -

Just as the violet whisper of Mount Warning in the distance was calling my mind back to the blue-remembered hills of the quaint Shropshire idyll I had left behind - a Humpback whale and her young calf surfaced and began to play not 30 meters from my now somewhat catatonic frame. I realised, quite instantaneously, that I was in paradise; somewhere



"Climate change may be as profound as war."—JULIANNE SCHULTZ, AUTHOR

has to be the most beautiful place on earth after all – and I was sure, amid my ecstatic stupefaction, that this, was it. The other (somewhat daunting) realisation, was that this was the place I had been looking for all my life. It wasn't just the obvious exotic beauty of the place, but the juxtaposition between its ease of new-age existence and its bustling, vibrant heart – this was somewhere I could live for a long time and not long for more.

We all search the world for a place to call home. A culture that shares our ideals, a landscape that mirrors our internal expressions and aspirations – a land that all at once brings us an impression of both peace and prophecy. I had long thought that mine would be Homeric Cycladic islands of Greece or the romantic rolling vineyards of Southern France, but when I transpose the two – living as I have in Byron on and off for four years – I see less and less contradiction. The artisan heart of this town is just as stout as the feudal villages of Bordeaux, the beaches even more pristine than the Aegean shores on which I so often trod – and the Hinterlands surrounding Byron more verdant and, though I never thought I'd say it, more rolling and picturesque than the Shires of old England. It's one thing to holiday in a place, and quite another to live there – as Baz Luhrmann said "live in New York city once, but leave before it makes you hard – live in California once, but leave before it makes you soft" – I would add to this maxim – 'Live in Byron Bay once, and you'll never move again'. There's not a day goes by as my wife and I drive around this halcyon place with our two young children that we don't shake our heads in awe. Not, of course, that moving here was a walk in the park.

My darling wife Louisa and I married here at a small reception at the courthouse in 2018 (not long after our Wategos encounter) and we immediately began brainstorming how not to leave. I have personally failed at this endeavour in Paris,

Rome, Greece, Florence and Oviedo so I was well primed for disappointment. I am, however, blessed with a very savvy and incredibly forward-thinking girl from the NT to call my better half - who dragged me, bridle and bit, towards the arts and small industry district. I'll be the first to admit that my snobbish Pommy nose began to turn at the thought as we headed 'out of town' and away from the classic white slatted bungalows on the hill. I have never stood so corrected. What I found was a booming, vibrant new town quite of its own, where an energy reminiscent of a gold-rush was taking charge. From every colourful corner poured young, eclectic, electric business', all with a flurry of hipsters habituating their grassy knolls. Getting lost in the wild bush-lined maze of streets felt like going to the famous Portobello market in London and not knowing which way to turn next. Designer

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café's doubled as vintage outlets, surf shops sold croissants and cold-press over their longboards while jewellery workshops and carpenters worked away under a sweet-smelling cloud redolent with freshly baked cookies thanks to the local cookie company. My prior experiences of living in warehouses in East London whilst performing in the West End was...somewhat more dank and ignoble, let's leave it at that.

I wasn't sure how we were going to live and work in a place where the price tag of the average house is \$3M, but the more we explored the area the less I felt apprehension and the more I felt impatient. We have had two beautiful children in the interim of moving here full time and as any resident knows, building and renovating is far from a joy ride – but even had it taken us into the very mouth of hell (which I'm not sure it didn't) it would have been worth it.

I have only lived in Australia for a handful of years, but in those we have all suffered through desperate droughts, fires and floods. There is, of course, a collective agony across not just Australia, but the world, that as a species we have taken too much and cared too little for this planet.

I was raised believing we were the wardens of the Earth – and as these biblical-like catastrophes become more and more common, so too does the agony we share in our communities.

Each and every person that lives here in Byron does so because they share a common ideal – a deep-rooted ethos of calm and collective respect for the natural world. It is an unspoken agreement, a quiet and undeclared pact that we are all concerned in: - the surfers and the farmers, the tradies and the tarot card readers, the poets the policemen, the baristas and balloon riders. But there are now thousands of homes rendered uninhabitable and thousands of shire folk still in temporary and emergency accommodation – with La Niña promising to stick around this summer. Being a new Byronian; working with the Byron Bay Wildlife hospital and teaching poetry at the local 'Living School', what I have come to understand is the way to truly care and respect these magical Northern Rivers is to look past the Point Piper Tractors and tourists and see the people at its beating heart who have been through so very much. I hardly find it surprising at all, given that it was an American surfer that put Byron on the



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"Welcome, What is your purpose?"—INDIGENOUS WELCOME TO COUNTRY IN VICTORIA.
CLARE WRIGHT, HISTORIAN, ACADEMIC

global map, that it was another American, Abraham Lincoln, who coined, what I believe is the one thing we all share in, in this small cosmopolitan cape on the Coral Sea; a vision of a future, a collective community working together – of the people, by the people, for the people.

Joshua Sasse grew up in Nepal and schooled in England before becoming an actor in America. He now lives in Byron Bay with his wife and two young children.



PHOTO: TAO JONES



PHOTO: EBEN McCRIMMON



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THE ART OF BYRON BAY

JULIAN EDWARDS

Undoubtedly, the last three years have been weird. One of the silver linings though has been an explosion of art and artists everywhere, including in our local community. Byron Bay has seen a burst of activity in the arts, with numerous new creative spaces and art galleries opening their doors, some for the first time whilst others are back for more!

As circumstance has compelled people to innovate their practise, these challenges have created new opportunities. In some cases, artists have shifted entirely from one art form to another. Take local Chayne Hultgren, aka The Space Cowboy, whose performance art is legendary the world over: unable to travel and perform, he turned to paint, creating stunning works, some inspired by the circus he knows so well, others by his passion for the weird and wonderful. The result is an emerging visual artist with works that are intriguing, playful and a little bit dark – giving a nod to Keith Haring and Basquiat. Chayne, being the natural innovator he is, quickly introduced augmented reality into his work, taking it to another level and moving towards NFT's (we will come back to this).

The Byron Arts and Industry Estate has also once again become just that, with more creative spaces, studios, workshops and galleries than ever before. The shift from town to the industrial is gaining momentum, with new developments on the horizon. We are seeing an exciting creative hub once again. As a thought, it would be interesting to explore the idea of creating Byron's own regional gallery in, or around, the industrial estate. The Tweed Regional Gallery is fantastic, but it's not technically in our shire, and how amazing would it be to see Byron have its own.

Interestingly, the last two years have also seen a very buoyant art market. With collectors not able to spend their money elsewhere – and as with everyone, having spent a lot of time at home – we have seen a massive increase in art buying in general. This is of course what the art world needs to thrive, but as we enter a new phase and with other forces at work, the next few years is likely to be a lot tougher, especially with less buyers and more artists!

A lot of technological advancements have appeared in the last few years too. And for better or worse, new technologies are playing as important a role in the evolving art world as they are elsewhere. Using free platforms like Instagram, in a very real and positive sense, this has allowed more and more artists to take their art practise into their own (literal) hands, and take their work direct to market. Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) have taken the world by storm in the last two or three years, allowing artists to create an entirely new medium with global reach.

So, what is an NFT? Essentially these platforms allow artists to create, mint, market and sell a digital creation, and present them to a global market of collectors. Currently the market for fine art in the NFT space is under-represented, largely taken up with cartoon, sports and gaming digitisations. Whilst these creations are artistic and fun, as well as fetching huge sums of money, for the most part they are certainly not fine art!

In Australia, there are a few small players that have popped up in the last few years, including Byron Bay's very own Dropspot. This newly founded company, which is launching as we go to press, is gearing up to take a seat at this very lucrative market



“The healthy looked after the sick, the strong looked after the weak, the young looked after the old. Collectivism was the key to saving society.”—TOM UREN, AUSTRALIAN LABOR POLITICIAN

and all that it promises. Whether we like it or not, NFTs as an art form is impossible to ignore, with the global market already worth billions.

Having been a professional in the art world for nearly 20 years, I’m excited by all these new opportunities that have emerged (though I still haven’t managed to fully get my head around NFTs yet!) What I do know is that an amalgamation of the next generation of internet (the so-called ‘Web3’), digital technology and art are colliding, opening new prospects for artists. This challenges old paradigms – which can be confronting – but also has some interesting potential upsides. For example, an NFT operates under blockchain technology, and with smart contracts mean artists are able to imbed all aspects of ownership within it, including how it can be used whether for corporate leasing or other public digital displays, as well as guaranteeing a percentage of any re-sale value, amongst other things.

The way I see it, art digitisation, particularly NFTs, can be viewed as an art movement no different to any others that have emerged throughout history: it is a product of our society and with new technology comes new opportunity. We probably all need to be cautious in our enthusiasm (particularly when money is involved), but this is certainly a space to watch.

No doubt we are emerging from one time and diving into another. Ultimately though, while we

are seeing more opportunity for the art world to globalise and decentralise, it’s important to remember the art community is actually quite small. There are numerous working parts, and everyone relies on someone else for something. Working together and supporting each other – as well as capitalising on individual opportunities – will help grow and sustain a vibrant art community, and be a win-win for all.

Julian Edwards is an art consultant and gallerist in Byron Bay. He has 20 years’ experience as a professional in the Art world, and runs JEFA Gallery in the industrial estate. Julian is a member of the Art Consulting Association of Australia and a board member of the Byron Bay Chamber of Commerce.



PHOTO: EBEN McCRIMMON



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BYRON STILL HOME, FOR THOSE WITHOUT A HOUSE...

JENNY RYAN

Welcome to Byron Bay, the idyllic coastal town surrounded by the magnificent hinterland with intriguing villages, hosting a diverse array of characters, communities, businesses and all matter of curiosities to explore. Bundjalung Country.

No other town or region in NSW, has higher rates of homelessness, with the exception of Sydney. It is a social dilemma and a catastrophe. It's an unhealthy ecosystem. Housing is fundamental to wellbeing. Surely in a first world country, adequate shelter for all community members would be a priority need?

It's crazy to think in this day and age, we are still fostering communities which allow and even create, such exorbitant numbers of people without secure, safe affordable housing. What are we doing? What are we not doing?

Fortunately, the Byron community set the wheels in motion years ago and seeded an idea to create a warm and welcoming space for all those who are most vulnerable and find themselves sleeping rough. Fletcher Street Cottage was reimagined, discussed and debated, redesigned, and operationalised. A hub for homeless people in the centre of Byron Bay. Strikingly profound, given usually such places are generally planned to be out of town, out of sight, out of mind. But here we had a Council - owned property, having been used for this purpose previously, the Byron Community Centre keen to make a difference and Creative Capital offering commitment to support the refurbishment of the place.

Fletcher Street Cottage opened in April 2022. Collaboratively with visiting services, it offers basic

relief opportunities and specialist support for people who are homeless and sleeping rough. In the first six months, on average, over 35 hot breakfasts were served each week day and our community support workers had numerous individual support appointments. It is a local response. It is absolutely unique. I am not aware of anything like it, that is fully donor funded. All wages, all operational costs through the generosity of donors.

It is softly vibrant. I love walking in before opening, when the sun is still emerging, and the lights are on in the outdoor café and there is music playing and the space is being set up and the volunteers are happily preparing and cooking up food. You can feel the sense of comfort and security being created. The space is clean, there is someone putting out fresh towels and toiletries for those who might want to enjoy a hot shower. It's like preparing a little sanctuary.

Visitors come in as the gate opens at 7am. The café fills up, becoming activated and the facilities come alive. Everything is humming. Some people come for a short time, some stay and utilise other offerings. Some come regularly, some come occasionally and there are always new faces each week. The place is light and new and functional. It is welcoming and embracing, offering care and comfort, like the hearth.

There is a whole community of people who are sleeping rough who visit Fletcher Street Cottage. They all differ, they sometimes bond, sometimes compete, are often caring to, and protective of each other. They sometimes flip out, lose it, even



"The secret to health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly."—BUDDHA

bully or victimise others. Much the same as any community of humans.

This is not about deficient individuals. People without housing exist within a society which does not support them, in fact it fails them. Structures which pop them out onto the edge, off the page and into the fringes. Systems which disadvantage, disempower, marginalise and exclude them. The way things have been done isn't working. We need a paradigm shift and it's as simple as we need more sharing, more care, more kindness.

Often one incident, such as loss of work or a broken relationship can be the catalyst for a downward spiral. People who are sleeping rough often face numerous complexities. They may have chronic health conditions, or mental health stressors. Often, they are generous, grateful, resilient, creative and inspiring. They demonstrate a shared collective experience and a deep understanding of what it is to be human facing extreme challenges. Often, they are exceptionally compassionate to others in similar circumstances. All of these people are doing their best.

Alongside this I witnessed a strong, kind and giving community. The number of people contributing financially, offering materials, their time, their energy, their effort and commitment, is beautifully astounding and inspiring.

The staff team, the visiting services staff, the neighbouring businesses, the coffee shop people, the local Council workers who mulch the garden and maintain the streets, the volunteers who turn up every week and enliven the place with their joy and their work, the efforts of Liberation Larder, the maintenance people, who fix and improve things, the cleaners, the arborist and the solar panel team, the gas bottle man and the sanitary bin person, all the delivery people and all the others, are those who help bring Fletcher Street Cottage to life.

This is community. People helping, people

being curious and interested. Spreading the word of what we are doing and achieving. Nurturing and growing this caring community, by broadening connections amongst the wide array of sensational people here, long time or newly grounding in this magical place. Even taking the news globally back to other individuals and communities who might be keen to contribute. This enables us to continue and to build upon and extend the support on offer for those who are vulnerable. This is community development in practice and it moves us toward collective wellbeing.

We know there are also some, who have no idea how many homeless people we have here, nor, what daily challenges they face. People who might rather not see or think about it. People who might rather have it all cleaned up and out of sight, out of their backyard. Maybe they have never had the interest or opportunity to understand. Maybe our dominant, individualist society enabled them to maintain feeling disassociated with these people, as if they are not part of their world.

In 2022, Fletcher Street Cottage also saw flood affected people and families arrive for services. This was unusual and hard for them. The impact for so many was deeply traumatic. The disruption because of the floods has been felt throughout the community.

I struggle witnessing the pain for both; for those

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who have been extremely uprooted because of the floods and for those who are impacted by homelessness, regardless of any additional natural disaster. This second group of people have largely not had any extra supports through all the flood relief efforts and they still face the lack of pathways and the necessary ongoing support to move out of their current circumstances. Why? Because there is no emergency accommodation. There is no supported accommodation. There is no affordable accommodation for them here.

Whilst Fletcher Street Cottage will continue only through those with surplus and goodwill donating funds, we also need sustainable solutions. We need to be different. We need to share wealth and resources. We need political will, backed by a community of people who demand new ways of being and living, if this region is going to support all of our community members to thrive. What better place than Byron Bay to model new and innovative ideas.

Ending homelessness is solvable. We need to believe this. It is happening in other communities in Canada and the USA. The Byron Community

Centre through the efforts of Fletcher Street Cottage, are working nationally with the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and locally with the End Rough Sleeping Byron Shire Collaboration. We are committed to taking steps towards ending homelessness in our community.

We need to remember everything is interconnected. Every single act, any of us do, or don't do, has an effect on everybody else. We live in relationship with each other, the land, the waters and the sky. We need to want everyone to have what they need and to share more, so that we can all enjoy collective wellbeing.

Cash donations to Fletcher Street Cottage can be made through the Byron Bay Community Centre website: www.byroncentre.com.au or www.fletcherstreetcottage.com.au

Jenny Ryan is a Social Scientist who has worked in Human Services for over 30 years, in the community, public and the private sector, was the Manager of Fletcher Street Cottage July 2021-December 2022 and is inspired by nature and human creativity.



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DRONES

SIMON JARDINE

I've been living in Byron Shire for 25 years. This is the life of a super nerd, who spends his days soldering and programming drones. They never used to be called drones, that term came from the media back in 2010.

I started my company *Eye In The Sky* back in 2006, with a background in photography, Radio Controlled Cars and ethical hacking. I was one of the first to build a Quadcopter "drone".

My dream was to have a camera placed in any given 3D space. I spent time with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), the government body that regulates aviation safety in Australia, helping with the regulations you see today. I even gave CASA a manufacturing certificate!

Drones have taken me all around the world, I've been inside live volcanoes, worked with the BBC, National Geographic, Top Gear. I've built tiny drones under 100 grams and huge drones over 100 kilograms. I work closely with the Special Forces, building all kinds of fun stuff. That's my background, but I'm here talking about something else; where drones are today and what the future looks like with our little flying friends.

Technology moves so fast, that governments have to constantly come up with new laws. You MUST understand that technology is its own entity, we don't control it, we don't own it, we have a hard time keeping up with it. I can buy the latest Flight Controller Version 1. And by the time it gets here, I've got an email asking if I'd like to buy and test Version 2! We can't turn off technology or stop it evolving, it's too late for that now. Artificial Intelligence is here and I mean it's arrived. Should we be scared? Honestly, I really don't know.

So let's quickly chat about where drones are today, then I'll finish with where I "think" they will be in the future.

You can buy a drone from just about anywhere nowadays. Recently, I purchased a new DJI Mini 3, which is tiny, the weight of only 249 grams. Flight times of 47 minutes, you can't hear it, it's incredibly silent. It's so small that at 10 meters away you can't see it. It will fly 25 kilometers away, anyone can fly it, because in actual fact you are not really flying it. It flies itself. This drone, as well as most other drones, has many cameras, optical flow sensors, biometric sensors, accelerometers, gyro's. YOU are not flying the drone, you are merely asking it to move over there, or go up to this altitude.

This obviously is all fine and well, but you are breaking laws, which is difficult to police. CASA's aim is, 'safe skies for all'. Even though I think we need policing, CASA's rules and regulations are, in my opinion, not about safety but more about money. The "Wings" Google company is now using drones for delivery of goods. Coles being the latest company to start using drones for delivery. I can only imagine what they paid CASA for approval. The weight of the Google drone is 5 kilograms and has 14 propellers. The problem is that flying over traffic and residential areas is a no go area, unless you first pay CASA to make it "safe".

Anything could go wrong: a bird strike, another drone user, bad weather, compass error, even a sun flare will corrupt the G.P.S positioning system. Then we have interference in busy areas, hackers.. The list goes on.. Who would be responsible if it falls from the sky? CASA?

Already residents in Brisbane are complaining



"The biggest mistake that flows from neoliberalism isn't how small it makes our government, but how small it makes our imaginations."—RICHARD DENNISS, ECONOMIST, AUTHOR, PUBLIC POLICY COMMENTATOR

about noise, "like a sound of angry bees, everyday over my house." Canberra is now classed as the drone capital of Australia. It isn't going to stop there. Amazon and other large companies are also in line to start delivery of goods via drones. I think it will get worse, with Google asking CASA for night flying operations. So these things will be buzzing around at night, but don't worry, CASA has made it "safe skies for us all".

Don't get me wrong, I think drone deliveries could be a good thing, for example dropping off a medical pack, or dropping supplies to places which are flooded. However, dropping off a can of coke and chocolate to a kid up the road, because his mother forgot to get his sugar fix at the shops, is just stupid and lazy.

When you pay your money to get a drone license these days, it's ridiculously simple. I've had customers in the past pay thousands of dollars to get a license, but the joke here is that the whole time the drone is under G.P.S control. Like I said previously, you are not really flying. It would be like taking your driving test, but you're sitting in the passenger seat.

Laws and regulations of course need to be in

place, but I think having a government body say what you can and can't do only slows technology down. I could build a flying car here in my garage, but I can't fly it. I can't even test it. Unless that is, I have \$100,000 to give to CASA to make it safe.

Let's talk about potential threats of drones, we all know they can take good pictures and shoot hi-resolution video. Have you seen any footage of the war in Ukraine? The same drone you are buying from a local store is also the same drone dropping 30mm grenades. There is nothing stopping anyone from doing the same thing in any part of the world, but what's stopping me driving a big truck through a crowded street? They, of course, can be used for good or evil, is my point.

Drones are now everywhere, annoying the crap out of me, up and down the beach even flying over here in sleepy Bangalow. Well, get used to it, because this is only the beginning. We are now seeing cars coming out with no steering wheels. My friend drives a Tesla and half the time he's watching YouTube. He's done over 500,000 kilometers and barely touches the wheel and it still doesn't need servicing. Electric cars are a whole debate at the moment, which is for another time.



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Talking about sensors, a typical lidar, bought a few years ago was about the size of a small set of travel binoculars. Now they weigh only three grams and are accurate to millimeters. This type of technology is all possible thanks to mobile phone technology. Drones are essentially flying phones.

With technology moving at such a fast rate, and everything getting smaller and lighter the future is obvious, we are no longer the smartest beings on the Planet. We will have robots doing all of the work for us, picking the kids up, washing the dishes. Educating us..... Our gardens, washing our self-driving cars... you name it.

So we, you and me, will have to just get along with our new found electronic friends. In my humble opinion they are here to guide us and show us the right path towards a much better

future, Worlds away from here, because let's face it, humans seem to only care about profit and not for our beautiful blue Planet. I'm saying A.I. will do a better job of everything, which as of right now is incomprehensible.

Uncertainty of the unknown can bring all kinds of worry, and rightly so, but hopefully I've put your minds at ease, to embrace the unknown and boldly go where no one has gone before.

"We are just an advanced breed of Monkeys on a minor planet of a very average Star."
—Stephen Hawking

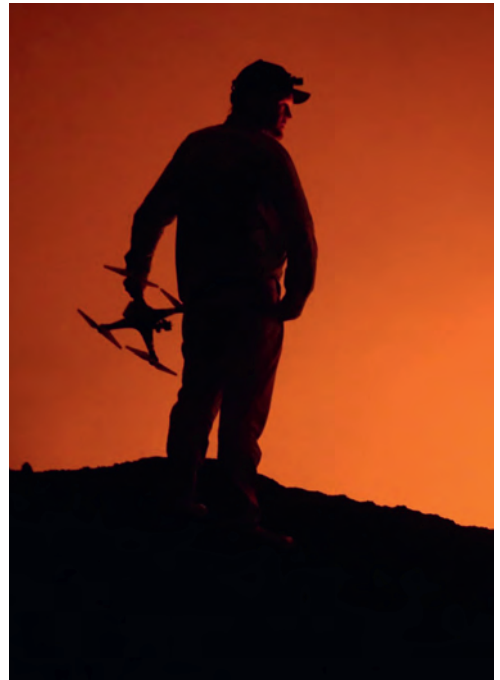
Simon was born in Melbourne, but spent 20 years in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, North England. He's a self-confessed white hat hacker, traveler and sailor, recently just sailing his old wooden boat from Canada to Australia with his friend. You can check his adventures on his YouTube channel "The Geordie, The Witch and the Wench".

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THE COST OF TIME LOST

DANIEL PETRE

Something I hear often when suggesting to people that they might want to consider starting their philanthropic journey now is that they want to wait until they have more money and then focus on giving some away.

Of course, in numeric terms being able to give away \$100,000 a year in 3 years' time as opposed to \$50,000 a year now kind of makes sense... sure, you could spend the time between now and "then" building your business and then return to the issue of finding a cause you care about and providing some financial assistance.

However, it is not quite that simple.

In the world I have lived in for 40 years (the business/start-up/tech world) generally speaking if a company that started in 2011 or 2012 had a product hit the market in 2013 or 2014, or a product feature slipped six months, there was no real material damage to the long-term viability of the product or the company. Revenue might take a little longer to build as might market share but there would not be any real damage to anyone taking everyone's favourite Australian company right now, Canva, does anyone think that Canva in 2022 would be much different if Canva had started life in 2010 or instead in 2011?

Of course, if it had started life in 2019 as opposed to 2010 then things might be different now but I doubt that a few months delay (or even 12 months delay) 10 years ago would have led to much of a different outcome today. This, lack of damage or cost to the company or business, is pretty universal in the business landscape. Of course, there are some examples where tight

timing matters but very rarely does a few months or even a year mean the difference between success and failure — in the business world.

In the charity sector time is not as kind or forgiving. Using an example of something The Petre Foundation is currently focused on, water bores in Uganda and Malawi. Simply put if we did not drill and commission 20 bores in Uganda last year then over the last year, we can say with 100% certainty and truth that more babies would have died from water-borne disease, more women would have died from bacterial infections (due to dirty water) and girls would have missed a lot of school (as girls are more often than not the ones who trudge to the river banks to get the dirty water).

There is a range of equally horrific outcomes that only came to light as we researched deeper into the impact of providing clean water in a village (as opposed to getting dirty water from a river two hours away). Because we provided bores to a village last year, we've been able to alleviate suffering for the people of 20 villages for a year. Had we waited a year later, people in these villages would have suffered unnecessarily. Time is not your friend when you are focused on alleviating suffering.

The same can be said for any organisation or activity where philanthropy/charity has a role.

Whether it is helping fund education for Indigenous kids, providing medical services to remote communities, providing for more counselling for people being subjected to domestic violence or even people undertaking research into diseases... If money does not flow



“They tried to bury us; they didn’t know we were seeds.”—MEXICAN PROVERB

then nothing changes until the money flows. It is as simple as that.

My response to the “we will get around to giving later” has three layers.

Firstly, it should not and does not need to be a binary decision. Sure, give more later but you can actually start giving now (think of this as your MVP of your giving journey) and you can alleviate at least some suffering right now.

Secondly, if you are allocating a small percentage of your wealth (be it in unlisted shares in your company or cash or even public company shares, or a portion of your income), say 5% — 15% and you are left with (worst case) 85%, then in reality there is little cost to you by allocating the funds/assets to charitable giving. You get to help alleviate suffering in an area you care about without risking your personal financial future.

Thirdly, if you truly want to wait a while until you turn any attention to allocating some money to philanthropy then you must accept that while you are not providing any help good, decent people will suffer.

Your delay in even allocating a little money means that someone somewhere will suffer today, and their suffering will continue until you turn your mind to giving.

Quite simply, “If you have resources and/or time that is in excess to what you need to live whatever life you want and you decide not to allocate a decent chunk of those resources to alleviating the suffering of others then you have to accept the inescapable truth that today someone, through no fault of their own, is suffering because you decided not to do anything.” I am not trying to be dramatic but rather point out the obvious. Time brings with it a very different set of costs when you compare the business world (near zero costs) versus the charitable sector (real and substantial costs).

So the answer to this complex issue of time and

suffering... Start your giving journey sooner rather than later. Just do something now and in doing so help someone now.

Daniel had a successful career in the technology industry as a VP at Microsoft and founder of three successful venture capital firms (AirTree Ventures being the most recent). He has also, through The Petre Foundation, donated significant funds to a range of causes over the last 25 years. Daniel is now Founder of StartGiving a company whose mission is to try to inspire successful tech founders to start their philanthropic journey now.

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Cape Byron State Conservation Area:

6639 8300

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Julian's Apartments

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www.juliansbyronbay.com

ARTS / CRAFTS / PHOTOGRAPHY

Eben McCrimmon

@ebenmccrimmon

Tao Jones Photography

0422 614 245

www.byronbayphotographer.com

Nelly le Comte

www.nellylecomtephotography.com.au

ATTRACTIONS/ACTIVITIES / TRAVEL /TOURS

Balloon Aloft / at The Farm

www.balloonaloftbyronbay.com – Page 3

Byron Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

Hinterland Way, Knockrow. 6687 8432

www.byronbaywildlifesanctuary.com.au – Page 49

Byron Visitors Centre: Behind the bus stop

6680 8558

www.visitbyronbay.com

Byron Writers Festival 2022

2/58 Centennial Cct.

www.byronwritersfestival.com – Page 43

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www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Cape Byron Marine Park

6620 9305

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Crystal Castle

Monet Dr Montecollum. 6684 3111

www.crystalcastle.com.au – Page 68

Explore Byron Bay: Guided Aboriginal Tours:

info@explorebyronbay.com

www.explorebyronbay.com

FASHION & CLOTHING

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6685 5143 www.cookie.com.au – Page 11

Byron Farmers' Market

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www.byronbaymuesli.com.au – Page 21

Cape Byron Distillery

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Forest

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4 Jonson St. 6680 9183
www.loftbyronbay.com.au – Page 13

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insta: nobonesbyronbay – Page 6

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www.roadhousebyronbay – Page 13

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www.stoneandwood.com.au – Page 67

Terra Catering

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The Bread Social

11 Ewingsdale Road at The Farm. 6684 7940
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The Coop Rotisserie

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www.thecoop.net.au – Page 25

The Hut

www.thehutbyronbay.com.au – Page 13

The Italian

2 Bay St adjoining Beach Hotel. 6680 7055
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Three Blue Ducks

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Bay Gems

Beach end Jonson St. 6685 7437
insta: byronbaygems – Page 33

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Eden at Byron Garden Centre

140 Bangalow Rd. 6685 6874
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The Book Room

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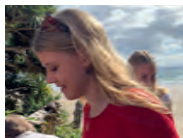
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Rusty's Byron Guide magazine

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www.byron-bay-guide.com.au

SERVICES / EDUCATION

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www.byroncentre.com.au

Byron Community College

6684 3374 www.byroncollege.org.au

Labor: Justine Elliot

107 Minjungbal Dv. Tweed Heads Sth.

07 5523 4371. justine.elliottmp@aph.gov.au

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Northern Rivers Community Foundation

0499 862 886. info@nrcf.org.au

www.nrcf.org.au

Southern Cross University

6620 3666

www.scu.edu.au – Page 62

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