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Meet Our Contributors



Caroline Baum is a journalist, author and the ambassador for the Older Womens' Network (OWN) in NSW. She lives in the Northern Illawarra.



Ben Wollen is the director of Wollen Architecture, an architecture studio with a focus on sustainable design. "Only build what you need to" is one of his driving mantras. When he's not working, Ben's enjoying the natural wonders of the Illawarra escarpment with his wife and kids.



Dr Victoria Beyer graduated from the University of Sydney's Graduate Medical Program in 2012. She has a Diploma of Child Health and a Family Planning Certificate in sexual and reproductive health. Her areas of interest include paediatrics, women's health and antenatal care. Victoria is a GP at Bulli Medical Practice.



Duncan Leadbitter is a director of fisheries and natural resource consulting company, Fish Matter, which advises industry, government and NGOs on the sustainable use of fish. Most of Duncan's work is in based in Asia. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian Centre for Ocean Resources and Security at UOW. A keen scuba diver, snorkeller, spearfisherman and photographer, Duncan lives in Stanwell Park.



Brian Kelly first stepped into the *Illawarra Mercury* office as the new kid from Thirroul nearly 40 years ago and is still managing (just) to hold on tight to a career he is grateful has dragged him to the UK (10 years), then Perth and Melbourne before a return to the district in 2008. He deems it a pleasure to get back into grassroots stories, dipping a literal toe in the waters of sea pools and a metaphorical one into local theatre or playing bass in a rock band when possible.



Janice Creenaune is a retired English teacher. A wife and mother of three, she sees the life of a retiree as an evolution, something to be cherished, enjoyed. Janice is a volunteer for PKD Australia and her interests include travel, Letters-to-the Editor SMH, letterpress printing and film study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: The publishers acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their cultural and spiritual connection to this land. Their stories are written in the land and hold great significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, from the mountains to the sea.

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DEADLINE 20 March. Contributions welcome.

COVER Cedar Newman, Annabel Wouters and Luke Bowen are performing in the Music and Tea at the Gallery series. Photo: Anna Warr

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Are you feeling mortgage stress?

With the ever increasing mortgage interest rates coupled with the rising cost of living expenses, some home owners may be understandably finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Having been in the real estate industry for over 20 years I have seen the market change many times. I have witnessed the distressing 17.5%+ interest rates of the early 1990s and the devastating effect.

40% of mortgage holders are currently on a fixed rate, most of which will expire this year. This means that their interest rate could increase from around 2% to around 6%. This equals mortgage stress.

My message is, don't wait for things to get better because it will be some time before that happens.

There is help out there, including:

- Talk to your bank NOW. Don't tell them you are struggling, just ask for a better deal on your interest rate. If they don't help, talk to other banks or a reputable broker
- Check other energy providers to see if you can get a better deal
- Go through your budget to see where you could save money
- Look at the pros and cons of leasing out your property and move in with family, or lease a smaller property
- The National Debt Helpline offers free, confidential and independent support. The number is 1800 007 007.

If I can help in any way, I am only a phone call away. Of course, our conversation will remain confidential.

Good luck and warm regards,



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The battle for Heathcote

By Brian Kelly



From left to right: Lee Evans, Maryanne Stuart and Cooper Riach. Photos supplied

Member for Heathcote Lee Evans says his biggest success in a dozen years has been that voters trust him to deliver as he prepares to face potentially hostile boundary changes in the March 25 state election.

Heathcote has shaped as one of Labor's best hopes to unseat a Liberal member thanks to a redrawing of boundaries which takes away Liberal-leaning areas in the north such as Menai and Bangor and adds left-leaning suburbs Coledale, Austinmer, Thirroul and Bulli in the south.

Evans, elected in 2011, admits that while there are "strong similarities" in the people he represents, there are different issues in different areas.

"My electorate is really two electorates – the northern Illawarra and the Shire-based suburbs," he said. "People want to be heard and I have a proven track record for listening and fighting for my community's needs."

The changes have transformed the seat's margin of 5 per cent Liberal-favoured to 2.1 per cent Labor-favoured, according to the tallyroom.com.au website, founded by electoral analyst Ben Raue. Another index estimates the seat has become notionally Labor by a 1.7 per cent margin.

Evans feels cost of living, fiscally responsible government and health are the three issues concerning voters most.

"The people of Heathcote have trusted me to deliver for them for 12 years, and it's a trust I continually seek to deserve," he said. "I feel confident they will vote for the candidate they feel will deliver on the important issues."

Evans pointed to the Heathcote Rd upgrade,

Stanwell Park Public School's new hall, the Great Southern Walk project, securing a \$1.6 million grant to revitalise Helensburgh and the \$600 million Waterfall rail stabling yard among benefits he has helped the area accrue.

If ALP candidate Maryanne Stuart appears familiar, it's because she has contested against Evans twice before, and while being unsuccessful, achieved pro-ALP swings above the state average.

As for Evans' winning record against her and the boundary shift, Stuart is dismissive.

"I am not looking [at] past results or previous records – I am focusing on the conversations I am having," she said. "When I was nominated to run, I vowed to be an advocate for my community and that is what I am doing."

"The only poll that matters is election day. Our hospitals are underfunded, we have a teacher shortage and the cost of living is increasing because of privatisation. NSW Labor will end privatisation."

Stuart sees cost of living, transport and health as the three major Heathcote-specific issues.

"Under the Liberals, our transport system has become unreliable, infrequent and overcrowded, forcing more people onto our already congested roads," she said. "Our health system is in crisis. Labor will enforce minimum safe staffing levels to ensure patients get treatment when they need it."

"We will expand hours of the Bulli Urgent Care Centre to operate seven days a week instead of the current five days."

At 22, Greens candidate Cooper Riach hopes to present a fresh approach underpinned by the party's grassroots foundation and environmental focus. His party gained 9 per cent of primary votes

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in 2019 overall, but that figure was as high as 33 per cent in the Austinmer area.

“The people of Heathcote are telling me it’s refreshing to see an alternative to the same stale old politicians,” Riach said. “Climate and housing crises demonstrate the Coalition has comprehensively failed this electorate. Labor can’t be trusted to make the transformational kind of changes we need.

“The sitting member is part of a tired and visionless government clearly in its dying weeks. People are hungry for change.”

Riach said the boundary redraw added pressure to live up to expectations: “I don’t want to let our small communities down. Ultimately the redraw does give me a better chance ... or at least prove the Greens have strong backing in eco-conscious communities such as Thirroul and Bundeena.”

Professor Greg Melleuish, a Wollongong University lecturer with expertise in political theory, believes Evans will find it “very difficult” to hold the seat, citing the slide in support since winning Heathcote in the 2011 landslide with 62.9 per cent (two-party preferred).

“This declined to 57.6 per cent in 2015 and 54.96 per cent in 2019,” he said. “He has failed to consolidate his position as incumbent.

“He will be vulnerable in 2023 when one would expect an even greater shift to Labor for two reasons. One is that the Coalition government is 12 years old and in need of reinventing itself, which I do not think has happened.

“The addition of Bulli, Austinmer and Thirroul will strengthen both the Green and Labor vote. Even though these are affluent areas, they do not vote Liberal.”



Heathcote MP Lee Evans has made several visits to the southern section of his electorate, including for the announcement on 31 January that the NSW Government, the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Wollongong City Council have reached an agreement to relocate Austinmer Rural Fire Brigade to a permanent new home at Sea Foam Avenue, Thirroul. Photo supplied

Major issues for voters will relate to cost of living, Prof Melleuish says. “There may be a bidding war over what government will do to ameliorate effects of this.”

Further south, shadow health minister Ryan Park, who has spent his whole parliamentary career (since 2011) in opposition, will be defending the seat of Keira against Kit Docker (Greens).

Wollongong councillor Cath Blakey will represent the Greens in a contest for the seat of Wollongong, held by Paul Scully (Labor) for seven years. In Kiama, former journalist and union director Kaitlin McInerney (ALP) seeks to unseat Gareth Ward, who will stand as an independent.

Liberal candidates for Keira, Kiama and Wollongong had not been named at time of press.

The 2023 NSW State Election is on Saturday, 25 March. Voting will take place at selected public schools, surf clubs, churches and community centres. Find your nearest venue at elections.nsw.gov.au 📍



Labor candidate for Heathcote, Maryanne Stuart was joined by the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Federal Minister for the Environment, to launch her campaign at the Stanwell Park CWA Hall on 4 February. Photo supplied

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Turkish-Australian
singer Ayşe
Gökür Shanal.
Photos supplied



Worlds Connect in Wollongong

On March 11 the city's town hall will host one of four Steel City Strings concerts featuring Turkish-Australian singer Ayşe Gökür Shanal. Caroline Baum reports

On the morning that the *Illawarra Flame* talks to soprano Ayşe Gökür Shanal – the soloist in the upcoming Worlds Connect concert program with Steel City Strings – she has just managed to make contact with her sister in Ankara.

The mixture of relief and sadness in her voice are obvious. There are more family members to locate who have not been reached yet. “Some of them are sleeping in their cars. There is no power in most places affected, so no one can charge their mobile phones,” Gökür explains.

Her nieces and nephews have volunteered with the earthquake rescue and recovery mission, but the scale of the disaster in Turkey and Syria is hard to comprehend.

“The real struggle will be for the 10 million displaced people in the long term. The novelty will wear off when the news cycle moves on,” she sighs.

For now, the Turkish-Australian singer feels the best she can do is turn all her planned events into fundraisers.

Gökür's parents migrated to Australia in 1970. Although she now lives in Blacktown, she grew up in Wollongong and studied at UOW, so she still has strong local connections: “I run into people I know all the time,” she says.

She retains strong ties to her cultural heritage. It features prominently in the repertoire of the Steel City Strings concerts, but with a tweak in response to the tragic circumstances: “I am singing infectious, lively folk songs from the region that has been affected, and I can't do that now without adding a lament.

“The hardest task for a singer is to stay in control of one's emotions”

After two years of losing dozens of performances due to Covid, Gökür is thrilled to be able to perform again.

“It was a challenging time, especially raising two children on the cusp of adolescence during some of the strictest lockdowns in Sydney. I did a certain amount of stuff online, just to keep my hand in, but I felt like my wings had been cut off and it was hard to find the inspiration to practise.”

She did other things instead, from starting a veggie garden to focussing on legal work. Gökür is also a lawyer, a graduate of the University of Western Sydney. Her parallel career allows her to combine her love of music with her commitment to social justice issues.

“For me, the two go together. I get asked to perform as part of campaigns on issues that I feel passionate about. One of those is water rights. I've been out on Gomeroi Country at the request of the local Indigenous communities to help with their anti-CSG campaign to protect the artesian basin.”

It's unusual to find a classically trained opera singer who embraces activism on refugee rights, Indigenous and environmental issues as publicly as Gökür, giving voice, quite literally, to the issues closest to her heart.

The ‘Worlds Connect’ concerts will be held in Robertson (March 5); Shellharbour (11th); Wollongong (7.30pm, 11th); and Nowra (12th). Visit steelcitystrings.com.au ✨

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Retired lifesaver teaches refugees to swim

By Iris Huizinga

When former Wombarra-Scarborough lifesaver Peter Rafferty volunteered as a driving instructor for refugees in Wollongong, he discovered most of his students couldn't swim. So he decided to do something about it.

Peter, who has worked with asylum seekers for most of his engineering career, had been a swimming teacher. He obtained his teaching licence again and set about helping his students learn about the ocean.

"They live down here [in the Illawarra]. So it's pretty important that they know how to swim or know at least how to save themselves before they get into the pool or the water."

One of the first things Peter teaches his students is how to stay afloat because he wants to give them the confidence to know they are not going to

drown if they get out of their depth.

Peter is very aware how different the experience is for anyone who has not grown up with exposure to open water and so he teaches refugees about swimming between the flags, and being aware of drop-offs, shore dumps and rips.

Knowing what refugees face, he has made his lessons free, low-key and flexible.

"They don't have to sign up. They can just turn up. They can come when they feel like it."

He proudly tells about one of his students this year: "She can now swim about 15 metres. When she started, she couldn't swim any freestyle."

He teaches at the ocean pool at Woonona.

[Need to learn to swim?](#)

[Text or call Peter on 0424 199 299](#) 📞

Paddle-out for Bret Walker



Tributes flowed for Bret Walker (pictured), a 'beautiful soul' and 'a man of the sea' on Sunday, February 19 when hundreds of people attended a memorial paddle-out at Stanwell Park. Photo: Duncan Leadbitter 📷



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As a GP he is interested in all aspects of health including mental health, child health, antenatal care and sports & musculoskeletal medicine. In addition to his usual weekdays, Daniel is often available on Saturdays and Public Holidays.



Dr Ahmed AlSultan has recently joined Equilibrium Healthcare and in addition to his usual work as a GP he has a special interest in skin cancer. He trained in New Zealand and has gained advanced qualifications and experience in skin cancer surgery. Ahmed has appointments available for both skin checks and general health concerns for all ages and genders.



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The day the car floated away

The Illawarra Flame reports

Amid the many scenes of devastating flooding last month, one incident went viral.

When the downpour hit Stanwell Park on Thursday, February 9, its southern Stanwell Creek overflowed and washed along Beach Road, collecting debris, rubbish bins ... and a vehicle.

Smartphone footage of a little blue car being washed along the road and into the ocean aired on national and overseas news bulletins.

That vehicle was an automatic Suzuki Swift and belonged to Sharon Van Damme of Lower Coast Road. Sharon is a driving instructor and runs Dalton Driving School. She was in Illawong when the flash storm occurred and a friend, Paul Blanksby of the local Men's Shed, contacted her.

"He texted me and he said, 'Sharon, I hope this isn't your car, go check Stanwell Park Community Forum [a Facebook group]'. And so I did.

"And, to my horror, it was my car.

"I had some spare time – I was waiting to do another lesson – and I was just like, 'Oh my God'. And then the rain hit there."

Sharon said her yard sustained extensive damage in the storm, but her house was "okay".

"My driveway got washed away. The car was in the driveway when it got washed away.

"So I lost my bins, I lost my driveway, I lost my letterbox. Everything, the whole front yard basically."

Sharon said years of slippage – dirt, bush debris and sand – from the escarpment has clogged up pipes underneath a nearby causeway and banked up behind it, so the creek is prone to flooding.

"Our main problem is we're near the causeway.

"I've lived there since 1977, so I've seen some floods in my time, but that [the February 9 storm] was just insane."

Sharon's Suzuki was washed into the ocean and ended up on a rock platform at the southern end of Stanwell Park Beach.

Wollongong City Council has removed the car.

"Removal was carried out in two phases – during the low tides in the morning and evening on Saturday, 11 February," a spokesperson said.

"The car was dismantled and carted away in sections due to the challenge of reaching this part of the rock shelf. This also minimises damage to the rock shelf and cliff face.

"Ahead of the car's removal, oil and fuel was syphoned from the vehicle, to minimise the risk that these liquids would spill in the sensitive marine environment.

"The cost of the car's removal will be covered by insurance and not Wollongong City Council." 🌟

The storm in numbers

300mm – The volume of rain dumped on NSW South Coast towns on the night of February 8, before the freak February 9 storm.

374mm – Rainfall at Greenwell Point from 9am February 8 to 7am February 9.

130mm – At Foxground.

114mm – At Kiama.

96mm – The volume of rain Bellambi recorded in one hour on February 9.

More than 600 – Calls for assistance to the State Emergency Service.

31 – Flood rescues conducted by the SES across the Illawarra and Greater Sydney regions on February 9.

1 – Suzuki Swift washed away.

In the millions – cost of the clean-up, said Wollongong City Council's general manager, Greg Doyle. Read more on our website in 'Mop-up into the millions!' 🌟



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Desires are exposed, secrets unravel

Thirroul writer Susan McCreery shares the story behind her novella

All the Unloved is set in an apartment block in '90s Bondi. I began writing it first as a novel about three years ago, in February, which also happens to be the time when I make several trips to Bondi on a Sunday to compete in the ocean swim series.

Ocean swimming brings me joy and I regularly train with a group in our coastal waters, especially round Thirroul, Sandon Point and Bulli.

Instead of parking by Bondi Beach, I usually find a spot in the back streets and walk. I love walking past the old apartments and houses, the gardens, the school (which transforms into the Bondi Markets on Sundays), and then you have the breathtaking sight of the brilliant blue ocean.

It was after one of these Bondi days that I began *All the Unloved*, with no particular plan. I started with a brief description of the ocean and the skate park (the novella features an 11-year-old girl who's a skater), and then zoomed in to sisters June and Salvia seated on a bench. Then to an art deco apartment block. Soon the other characters began to appear.

At the time I thought I was writing a novel. My first novel was with my agent, so I needed to work on something new while I was waiting. But by the time I'd reached 65,000 words I realised it wasn't going the way I wanted and I made the decision to cut, to transform it into a novella.

All the Unloved is the story of what happens when brilliant young author Rebecca moves in to the building. Wounds and desires are exposed and

secrets unravel. The 11-year-old, struggling with her mother's coldness, finds her heart blooming under Rebecca's attention; the girl's stepfather is overcome with lust; a lonely and fragile violinist falls desperately in love; a queer couple are forced to confront their future; a flame is reignited when two people meet again after decades. We have mother love, lusty love, unrequited love, queer love and old love.

It's the story of what happens when you believe – or hope – that you are loved when you have felt unloved for so long.

All the Unloved is published by Spineless Wonders. Hayley Scrivenor will launch my novella at the Thirroul Railway Institute Hall on 26 March at 2pm, all welcome. I will also be speaking at the Newcastle Writers Festival (31 March-2 April) and Collins Booksellers Thirroul at 6pm on 28 April.



Visit www.susanmccreery.com.au and follow @SusanMcCreery2 on Twitter 🌟

April thinkers at the Writers Centre

By South Coast Writers Centre director Sarah Nicholson

All jokes aside, Coledale Community Centre has a full slate of activities on offer on Saturday, April 1st.

Have you always wanted to write a commercially popular novel? Author Lisa Heidke leads a one-day workshop at Coledale Community Hall with the insider know-how you need to get it done. Participants will learn how to create memorable and compelling three-dimensional characters and how to write exciting dialogue and scenes to advance their storyline.

This workshop will study scene construction, narrative description, and ways to bring your natural writing voice to life. We will explore the various types of point of view with which you can tell a story – along with their advantages and disadvantages. Participants will also learn how to write a synopsis from which they can develop their

creative fiction further. This is a hands-on practical workshop with creative writing exercises and plenty of time for discussion and getting your questions answered.

April's Film Club pick is *The Mission*, an epic historical drama set in a Jesuit mission in the heart of the jungle in 18th-century South America. Directed by Roland Joffé, this 1986 film has an all-star cast featuring Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons and Liam Neeson. The stunning cinematography and powerful score create a hauntingly beautiful backdrop for this tale of redemption, sacrifice and the struggle for justice.

Join host Graham Thornburn to watch and discuss this thought-provoking classic.

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Time to dance in the dark

Janice Creenaune meets local teacher Shay O'Day, a life-long resident of the Northern Illawarra who finds enormous fulfilment in sharing the joy of dancing in the dark

Shay O'Day bubbles with enthusiasm for her own love of dancing in the dark and would like to share the experience with all willing to dance like no one is watching at No Lights No Lycra (NLNL) events in Thirroul and Helensburgh.

Shay first discovered the No Lights No Lycra phenomenon about a decade ago at a Thirroul pop-up, run by NLNL Wollongong.

"The first No Lights No Lycra began in Fitzroy, Melbourne, but now there are over 75 locations across the world, predominantly in Australia but also the USA, UK and rest of the world," Shay says.

Establishing venues in Thirroul and Helensburgh gave community members a wonderful outlet for their energy.

"It is a chance to turn the lights off with no judgement and to simply dance without care.

cheer at the end of songs and allow themselves to be totally immersed in the darkness and in the music. It is very dark at first, but you can quickly see just the silhouettes of those nearby.

"It is a really safe environment and a great balance between privacy and safety with enough space for everyone."

Generally dancers secure an online booking but No Lights No Lycra Thirroul and Helensburgh still offers cash and card payments at the door.

Apart from the general organisation, one of Shay O'Day's most pleasurable pursuits is choosing the playlist. "I get to play DJ! We have everything from swing, pop, punk, dance floor classics, world music... the list goes on and it is different every single week.

"NLNL Ambassadors work together and share playlists, which is also a lot of fun. We all have costs such as hall hire, music licensing, a fee to the wider body of No Lights No Lycra and insurance.

"It is therefore necessary that a minimal ticket cost of \$10 an adult, \$8 concession or a six-class pass for \$50 cover these costs. Even then, we often have enough to donate to worthy causes at appropriate times, such as during Pride Month or indigenous education issues."

No Lights No Lycra is primarily about community. Since 2009 more than 500,000 dancers world-wide have joined in and a 2019 study by the University of Sydney found that 95% of participants felt NLNL improved their physical health, and 97% said NLNL improved their mental health. The top wellbeing benefits reported were inclusivity, community trust and lack of fear of judgement.

Shay's enthusiasm for NLNL is truly generous and completely infectious.

Try it for yourself – NLNL is in Thirroul on Thursdays at 7.30pm at the Railway Institute Hall and in Helensburgh on Tuesdays at 7.30pm at Helensburgh Scout Hall.

More info on Facebook at No Lights No Lycra Thirroul or No Lights No Lycra Helensburgh or nlntlthirroul@gmail.com. Bookings at www.trybooking.com (search via postcode).

Janice Creenaune is a volunteer for PKD (Polycystic Kidney Disease) Foundation Australia. Email janicecreenaune@gmail.com ✨



No Lights No Lycra runs in Thirroul and Helensburgh. Photo supplied

"We crank up the tunes and just move however we feel for the hour. We are all there just to dance and enjoy the music.

"The Thirroul community (and its surrounds) is diverse and our dancers are equally so in age, shape, size, background and way of life.

"We are mums, dads, students, teachers, nurses, public servants, lawyers, artists and poets.

"Parents sometimes come with their children, teenagers and older people, from all genders and all walks of life."

Shay says there is a core group of regulars, but some just come whenever they feel like it.

"There is no real commitment in attendance and we can have 20-40 people in the Railway Hall in Thirroul. People come for the music, they clap and

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Shack attack

By architect Ben Wollen

Some years back, I attended an open day for the shack community in the Royal National Park. For those of you who don't know what shacks I'm talking about, I've just given you a great next weekend walking adventure. For those of you who do know what I'm talking about, it's time to book in the open day tour! The first time I saw these shacks, I thought they were deserted. I was doing the walk from Bundeena to Otford and can you imagine my curiosity on walking over a ridge and suddenly finding a village of these tiny shacks littered along a verdant valley culminating with a beautiful beach lagoon! I had to rub my eyes! What were these little homes that seemed to be lost in time and place and where were all the Lilliputians that lived in them?

It wasn't until I moved into the Illawarra and started many more bushwalking explorations that I finally found out the story of these remarkable little dwellings. Many moons before I was a young fella, the area around Garie Beach was private land used for cattle grazing. During the late 19th century and early 20th, the area was used by local miners for fishing and camping. When the miners would go on strike, some would head down the hill and pitch tents, living off the land until the strike was over. When the Depression hit, they returned, but started to build more permanent structures. Thus the shack communities of Little Garie, Era, Bulgo and Burning Palms were born. To be honest, there's a lot more history to it – I recommend reading *Shack Life* by Dr Ingeborg van Teeseling.

What I love about these shacks is the resourcefulness of their built fabric and their simple living designs. These days the shacks benefit from mod cons, such as solar panels and composting toilets, but you can still see the roots of their initial builders with the very utilitarian approach they had to take. Most of them are one or two rooms pitched under a simple gable roof.



Building materials include corrugated iron, tree trunk posts and rafters, recycled timber windows and, unfortunately, their fair share of asbestos cladding. Generally, there's one side that holds the fireplace that doubles as a kitchen with a stone/brick chimney to flue the smoke. Many of them still have the old wood stove ovens and until recently gas refrigerators.

Floors are usually concrete or tile where originally they would have been dirt. Most have no insulation and so the structural framing becomes shelves for books, games and bric-a-brac. Externally there is usually a rainwater tank connected to the gutters, a standalone toilet, a patio for outdoor dining/entertaining and on the odd occasion a retaining wall made of empty beer bottles – some with markings as early as 1942. By the looks of the size of some of the retaining walls, there has been plenty of entertaining in the past!

Many of the shacks have been decorated with flotsam and jetsam that has floated up on the beach. Fishing buoys, driftwood and shells are favourites. Sadly, a lot have been lost to storms and fires, but many are in excellent condition, maintained by generations of families making their summer holidays there. A way of life and of simple living lost in time and place. Evidence that the most important things in life are spending time with family and friends, not mortgages and stock markets. They aren't architecture with a capital 'A', but they speak volumes of the early occupiers' resourcefulness and resilience. The current owners cannot sell, rent or profit from the shacks and National Parks have in the past attempted to get them removed. I agree with the Shack community that they hold important heritage status and should be retained. I only wish I had access to one!

Open Day is held once a year at the end of April. Visit www.rnpsacks.info/events 🌸



Shacks in the Royal National Park. Photos: Ben Wollen

Home Building Mistakes to Avoid



We've heard the horror stories people share about their building experience, but it doesn't have to be this way. In a series of articles, the team at Grand Pacific Homes discuss pitfalls to

avoid when building new or renovating an existing home:

Know Your Budget

People are shocked with a cost estimate that is well over their budget – leading to disappointment and frustration. Beware of the following:

Size: The larger the house, the more it costs to build. Spend a bit less on the size to have more

funds available for the exterior finishes and interior design of the home.

Design: Ensure that everything on the plan is what you want. Modern designs often specify commercial construction, but residential building methods can achieve the same aesthetic for less.

Custom: Standard sizes will keep the budget within reason, such as standard doors, garage doors and vanities. Only go custom on the feature elements in your home.

Budget: Split your budget into three portions:

- Tender – build cost including the builder's standard inclusions
- Selections – upgrades of certain materials and finishes to reflect your aesthetic
- Contingency – amount to cover any unforeseen circumstances



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Beetling About

With Dr Chris Reid

Today, after the storm, a large flock of needle-tailed swifts zoomed about overhead. Needletails are famous as the original thunderstorm chasers. And as typical swifts they fly huge distances and sleep on the wing, not landing except to nest.

Why are they chasing summer storms?

Thunderstorms generally build up from high temperature applied to a background of high humidity. Warm air rises and as it rises it condenses to form clouds. But the warm air also carries flying insects, many of which are too flimsy to escape from the updraught. This is the reason the swifts are darting around – they are feeding on flying insects caught by thermals. And it's also why the strandline on the beach may be covered in insects when a hot north-westerly is blowing – they've been blown out to sea.

Thinking about this raises two interesting issues. I've talked about colourful insects being poisonous and therefore avoided by visual predators. But if you are flying at 120km an hour, which needletails do, you aren't likely to be too fussy about breakfast – at that speed the insect will be in your stomach before you've even thought about it.

Sometimes that might not be too bad – aphids are nice and juicy – but sometimes it might be something poisonous, like a small ladybird. Long ago, in Ireland, my school had nesting house martins (a bird that feeds like a swift) and they made conspicuous messes on window ledges under their nests. One day I scraped some of the bird poo up and examined it under a microscope – and was

surprised to find it full of bits of colourful ladybirds. So beggars can't be choosers – if you feed on flying insects, you take what you get. The corollary is that these birds must have tough stomachs, or iron guts, as we say about a family who never get food poisoning.

Another issue is dispersal. There was once an enormous battle between biologists over the origins of species and indeed the origins of whole faunas. The prevailing wisdom was that everything evolved in and dispersed from centres of origin, and amazingly Europe just happened to be the main centre of origin. So the first mammals, platypus and echidnas, walked all the way from Europe to Australia, then newer, more 'efficient' mammals evolved in Europe, which replaced the boring old mammals but couldn't reach Australia because the tide was in, and so on.

The discovery of continental drift blew that up and soon another school of thought developed – species originate through the splitting of populations (combined with genetic drift).

One of the leading dispersalists was obsessed with the dispersal of insects to remote Pacific Islands. So to prove his point he flew at 7000 metres above the open ocean towing a net – and found the same sorts of insects that our swifts were no doubt feeding on.

As is typical of biology, this was not an 'either/or' problem, and scientists are now polite to each other on this subject.

White throated needletail.
Photo: Roland Speck,
Wikicommons 🌟



Tree of the Month

By Kieran Tapsell, of Banksia Bushcare

Ficus henneana (Deciduous fig)

The deciduous fig is the least common in the Wollongong area. It is a variety of the *Ficus superba*. It can be found in the rainforests behind Coalcliff and Scarborough. It grows naturally from Milton to North Queensland and the Northern

Territory. As the common name suggests, it loses its leaves in the winter. In Spring, it most spectacular with the new leaf growth. It is usually 15-20 metres tall but can reach 40 metres with a massive crown. It prefers low altitudes and fertile soils. One has been planted in the Reserve and is growing well. As deer seem to like to eat fig tree leaves, oddly enough, including the common Sandpaper Fig, we have had to cage it.

Banksia Bushcare News

The rainy weather has been good for the trees, but also for the growth of weeds. We have the usual culprits, Lantana, Senna, Ochna and Asparagus Fern, and to a lesser extent Madeira and Moth Vine, but we have also seen some new invaders, notably White passionflower (*Passiflora subpeltata*), which is starting to come up everywhere. Fortunately, it is relatively easy to pull out when it is young. 🌟

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Eat and be eaten

By Amanda De George

I've been taking Backyard Zoology very literally recently. I've been pretty much housebound the last month or two and so my hiking boots have been replaced with thongs and slippers and my adventures consist of a quick look around the yard and an amble around the street. I'm no longer packing for a few hours or the unexpected, but rather wandering out, coffee in one hand, leaving the other free to turn over leaves. And, you know what? It's been a really lovely reminder of all the life that continues to tick over, even when we're not paying attention.

We've had a couple of large Eastern Water Dragons move into the backyard. That in itself is a bit of a surprise. In previous years, they've hung around the front yard, the dogs' regular forays out the back keeping them on the other side of the fence. Not only do we have two of these reptiles, but they're both males. It's a small yard for a territorial animal, but they are managing, the younger one spending a lot of time sunning itself, legs stretched out in a tree, while the other has commandeered our old barbecue pit.

Turns out, neither of them can resist the lure of the Metallic Shield Bugs, which have also made our yard their home (Dr Chris Reid wrote about these

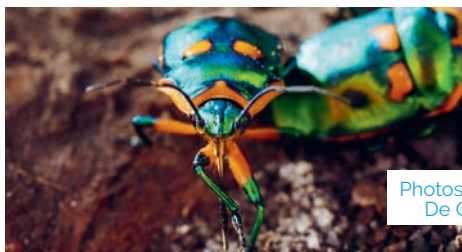


bugs in the February issue). The bugs have turned up in pretty big numbers, which they seem to most summers, to feed on the tree roots that twist up and out of the yard.

I've spent more time than I care to admit, watching these vibrant green jewels buzzing around the yard, bouncing off of the clothes hanging on the line, crawling across the ground, and finally all seemingly settling on the same tree root. How do they choose? And then how do they convey the message that 'This is the one, guys, today we feast on this root'? However they do it, they extend their proboscis and pierce the root, mostly lined up in a heads-down, bum-up kind of way.

And then the lizards sidle up. If both males are in the same area, a series of frenetic head bobs will take place, a puffed-up throat and a leg wave or two, a lizard warning if you will. But their focus remains on the free feed. The bugs, while they don't move, are safe. The lizards watch and wait, the young one turning its head at an angle, its eyes searching for any movement at all. And the first bug that moves, that decides to get into a better position to feed? It's snatched up, crunched by sharp, reptile teeth.

It's an eat-and-be-eaten world, out there. 🌟



Photos: Amanda De George



Landcare Cleans Up

By Marilyn House

Sunday, March 5 is Clean Up Australia Day. Helensburgh & District Landcare has been participating for more than 25 years.

Each year we provide an opportunity for local residents to clean up an area of their own choice, e.g. local park, street or footpath. Landcare members also clean up selected areas.

Register at the Old Mine Surgery, 78 Parkes Street, between 10.30am and 1.30pm. We will provide you with a bag to collect rubbish, which you return to us. You need to wear covered-in

shoes, long sleeves and a hat. For more information: email merilyn@helensburghlandcare.org.au or ring 0414 819 742.

Helensburgh & District Landcare members were delighted to receive a Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Grant to assist with our work at Helensburgh Station Reserve. The money will be used to employ a bush-regeneration team to work on coral trees, Madeira vine, and other environmental weeds. The focus of the work will be in Tunnel Road on the corner where it crosses the creek. We have been concerned about safety here as the vegetation blocks visibility for pedestrians and drivers when approaching this corner. Work has started at the site and will continue for months. 🌟



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If you see someone in trouble
in a rip, what would you do?
Photo: Rob Brander



Dr Rip's Science of the Surf

Don't rush in, writes Coalcliff's Prof Rob Brander

You probably heard about some of the terrible beach drownings this summer involving fathers trying to save their child, usually caught in a rip current. These 'bystander' drownings involve any member of the public, be they family, friend or stranger, who attempts to rescue someone in distress. While many of these rescues are successful, too often it is the bystander rescuer who ends up drowning.

An average of five people drown each year in Australian coastal waters trying to rescue others. So far we've reached that total in NSW alone and there's a lot of the year left.

What would you do in that situation? These drownings are tragic, but have the potential to be avoided with some simple advice.

If you see someone in trouble, even if it's your child, don't rush in. Fight the urge to run to the water and swim as fast as you can. You're already panicking and likely exhausted when you reach your child, if you even get there in the first place. It's a recipe for disaster.

Instead, when you notice someone in trouble, take 10 seconds or so to THINK. Get someone to get a lifeguard or lifesaver if they are further away on the beach, get the attention of a surfer (if there are any around) and get someone to call 000 (if you can get reception). But you must seek help.

Then look for something nearby that floats.



A boogie board, esky or a ball will do. If you can't swim, don't go in, but throw as many of these things into the rip current (if they are caught in a rip) as possible as there's a chance they'll reach the person in trouble and give them something to hold onto.

But if you are going to go in yourself, bring that flotation device with you as it will give both you and the person you are trying to rescue something to hold onto. Research backs this up – 97% of the 67 bystander rescuer fatalities between 2004 and 2019 did not bring a flotation device with them.

There's other things to think about. Never go in fully clothed. If you have bathers on, great, if not, strip down to your underwear as it's not a time for modesty.

Always try and remain calm. Don't sprint when running or swimming and be careful when you reach the person as they will see you as something to grab onto.

Finally, it's important to realise that the person in trouble is probably not panicking as much as you think they are and, in the case of rip currents, there's a good chance the rip flow will circulate them back into shallow water anyway.

But whatever you do, don't just rush in.

Have a question?

Email rbrander@unsw.edu.au ✨

Penguins to march into Symbio

The littlest member of the species is coming to Helensburgh

Symbio Wildlife Park could welcome the pitter-patter of little happy feet as soon as Spring 2023.

“We are hoping for 10 to 12 Little Penguins, a good colony size,” said Symbio’s managing director, Matt Radnidge, whose dream is that the new visitor attraction will also host the biggest captive-breeding program outside Taronga Zoo.

In December, the Helensburgh zoo received a \$150,000 grant from the NSW Government’s Tourism Product Development Fund to develop an eco-friendly Little Penguin Experience, known as ‘Penguin Shores’.

Symbio will match the grant, and more. Matt expects the total build will cost about \$400,000.

“Aquatic displays are always a bit more intricate, because water is so complex,” he said.

About as tall as a school ruler, standing at 30-40cm, the Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) is the world’s smallest penguin. It’s also known as the fairy penguin or little blue penguin as it is the only species with blue feathers.

Little Penguins occur only in Australia and New Zealand. In NSW, some populations are endangered.

“If you look at our mission to educate, inspire, conserve, it ticks all the boxes,” Matt said.

“It’s our first ocean species, so we can get into educating on a totally new ecosystem.

“Inspire – they are one of the most inquisitive, cool, amazing little critters to watch. It’s almost like a water version of a meerkat, you know, where people are just drawn to them.

“And conservation ... there’s a coordinated breeding program that we will be a part of. We want to set up great facilities, great water, great nesting opportunities. We hope to breed and then repopulate wherever is needed in the program.”

Their food will come from Western Australia, source of the freshest packed fish. “Pretty much they exclusively eat pilchards,” Matt said.

The design for their home is the result of extensive research and aims to give the Little Penguins – which can cover up to 50km a day in the wild – some long, deep swim runs.

“It’s good to see them have length of swim and also depth of swim,” Matt said.

With two viewing areas planned, visitors will be able to enjoy the action both above and below the water. Penguin Shores will be built where Symbio’s emus currently live and the big birds will relocate to near the kangaroo lawns.

Penguin Shores is Symbio’s most ambitious project in 2023, but it’s not the only one in the works. The next exciting new visitor attraction to open will be a huge aviary for tropical birds, including colourful Australian parrots.



The Symbio team has been hard at work designing the perfect home for penguins.
Photos supplied

Keep up to date at symbiozoo.com.au 🌟

Artists of the Illawarra

Speed painter Sarah Rowan helped to raise funds for April's art trail, writes Edith McNally



Kai Rennie sang while Sarah Rowan painted. Photos supplied

Northern Illawarra Art Trail (NIAT) artists are preparing for their second Open Studio weekend on April 22-23. The team has expanded and it will be a super-exciting weekend. It's just before Mother's Day so where better to grab an original bunch of painted flowers or painting for your Mum?

We recently boosted the original Wollongong City Council Cultural Grant via a fundraiser at Stanwell Park Surf Club.

The atmosphere was vibrant, filled with fun and joy over drinks, simple wholesome food and exciting local art, as well as great entertainment. Kai Rennie sang up a storm while Sarah Rowan contributed a top speed painting performance.

Kai, a 16-year-old student at Bulli High School, is studying music for his HSC and is already a skilled and seasoned performer. Our artists were very appreciative of his generosity and goodwill in creating the perfect atmosphere for Sarah to paint and the audience to engage.

Sarah, Australia's top woman speed painter, has been creating unique works of art for more than two decades. She is a highly sought-after

performance artist having entertained crowds at more than 400 live events.

From Parliament House to the Opera House, she has made her mark as a speed painter at corporate events, weddings, festivals, fundraisers and schools. She aspires to raise more than a million dollars for charities. Her painting was auctioned on the night and, while it didn't reach her previous high point of \$50,000 for a single painting, we were delighted by her generosity and that of all bidders and supporters of NIAT on the night.

Sarah demonstrated her contagious message of "embracing your true colours and living a life of curiosity" and we are truly delighted to have her in our community.

Connect with Sarah Rowan at artistsarahrowan.com, on Facebook and Instagram @artistsarahrowan and Twitter @sarahrowanart

For more information about the April art trail, please visit www.niarttrail.com

To be featured, write to Edith at mcnallyedith@gmail.com ✨

Thirroul Seaside and Arts Festival set for 2-4 June 2023

The Thirroul Austinmer Lions Club and art team volunteers are busy planning the fabulous local Seaside and Arts Festival again.

This weekend-long celebration of the arts and seaside activities will reflect our community spirit.

The new festival website (under construction) will have all details, and on-line entry forms for participating artists and stallholders. Follow the festival on Facebook and Instagram. ✨



Seaside festival in Thirroul by Christine Hill

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Meet a councillor

Journalist Brian Kelly interviews Richard Martin, a Labor councillor for Ward 1, which covers the northern suburbs of Wollongong



Ward 1's Richard Martin.
Photo: Wollongong
City Council

Richard Martin was a Gold Coast schoolboy when he came home one afternoon in November 1975 to find his mother in tears.

"I asked her why she was crying, and she said 'they sacked Gough Whitlam,'" he says, recalling the beginnings of his political engagement, one which never went through the crucible of university activism, like so many with such a passion.

Martin, an Illawarra resident of 11 years and a city councillor for just over one year, left the education system in grade 10. "My background is the school of hard knocks – I left school and my mother was devastated," he said. "I started working for a bank, where a regular customer asked me to come and work at Yamaha Music Australia."

Working with another firm, Martin left Australia in 2000 to pursue career opportunities in the UK and US before returning to Queensland to care for his mother, who had cancer, and later finding his way south. He splits his time between council work, two days a week working for Keira MP Ryan Park and managing a company that looks after authors in the mind/body/spirit field.

Having admired the work of fellow Laborites such as Jenelle Rimmer and Janice Kershaw, he was happy to find himself elected in December 2021 from second on the party's ticket.

"I really think that, as councillors, we have to listen to the community, and that's what I've been trying to do in this first year," he said. "We mightn't be able to solve everything, but we have to listen to their concerns."

"There are certain things we don't have power over, and that is concerning for residents."

He hopes that a potential change of power in Macquarie St on March 25 might allow approaches to the next local government minister to give councils back some of the autonomy they have lost in areas such as adjudicating development applications.

Meantime, issues such as the traffic that overwhelms Thirroul and other northern suburbs draw Martin's focus. "In November 2019, the state government said 'we're going to do some surveys, talk to residents' ... well, we're now in 2023 and they still haven't addressed the traffic issues."

"I'm asking council to write to the state government and the minister to ask what the hell is going on – this is their road, this is their issue and we've got to address it."

The success of the protest movement in stopping the mega-development of Thirroul Plaza last year indicated to Martin the future of such attempts in the area.

"It's going to have to be smaller – not as many apartments," Martin said. "I don't think anyone disagrees with having shops and an upgrade to Coles but it has to be a balance for the area. Everyone agrees something must be done to that site."

Campaigning in Helensburgh, Martin learned that residents felt "unloved and uncared for ... they felt like they were the 'lost sister' up in the hills and nothing was happening" regarding council attention.

"Cameron Walters and I are going to the forums, we're hearing that kerbing and guttering is a major issue up there – some residents want it, some don't because they want that feel of a country town."

"Footpaths is a big concern, we're fixing up Walker St ... it has taken a while to get the right site and mix for the library/community centre, but touch wood, we'll have something fantastic in a couple of years."

"We're also working with a few residents to set up a Friends of Helensburgh Cemetery group to help with its upkeep."

A massive AFL fan, Martin keeps up to date with Collingwood, with more regular visits to see GWS Giants in action, and he is broadening his interests into the doings of the Dragons (rugby league) and Hawks (basketball). 🍀

It's Endometriosis Awareness Month

By Dr Victoria Beyer of Bulli Medical Practice

Endometriosis is a chronic condition that affects at least 1 in 10 Australian women, girls and people who are gender diverse. The condition usually starts in adolescence and diagnosis is often delayed by many years. Endometriosis occurs when endometrial tissue, which normally lines the uterus, is found in abnormal sites around the pelvis and other parts of the body. Every time menstruation occurs, these endometrial tissue deposits also bleed, causing a chronic inflammatory reaction and scar tissue formation.

Symptoms: People can have endometriosis without experiencing symptoms, but the most common symptoms include: painful menstrual cramps which may worsen over time; chronic pelvic and back pain; pain during or after sex; digestive problems including constipation, bloating or nausea; difficulty falling pregnant.

Diagnosis: If you are concerned about menstrual problems or endometriosis, your GP should be the first port of call. They may conduct a physical examination and recommend investigations



including blood tests, a cervical screening test or an ultrasound to rule out other conditions and check for signs of endometriosis such as ovarian cysts.

If your GP thinks you have endometriosis, you may be referred to a gynaecologist to have a laparoscopy. This is a keyhole surgery during which endometriosis can be accurately diagnosed.

Treatment: There is no cure for endometriosis but there are different treatment options including:

Medical – pain medication, hormone treatments such as the contraceptive pill, IUD or implants.

Surgery – during a laparoscopy, endometriosis deposits and scar tissue can be removed via excision (cutting it out) or ablation (burning it off).

Allied health treatments – physiotherapy, psychology, alternative medicine.

Discuss the different treatment options with your doctor. You may need to try a few before finding what works for you.

Endometriosis is a common and debilitating condition, and the earlier it is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat. Severe period pain is not normal.

More info: www.endometriosisaustralia.org 🌸

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Welcome to Memory Lane Cafe

The Illawarra Flame reports on a bond-building initiative at Thirroul Community Centre

There's tea and coffee at Thirroul's Memory Lane Cafe but the event is about much more than a cuppa – it's a social lifeline.

"Dementia Australia has recognised that a lot of services provided to people living with dementia and their care partners are provided separately," said Barbra Williams, general manager service operations at Dementia Australia.

"So the Memory Lane Cafe model was introduced as a way of supporting the relationship between those two people and helping them stay connected with their local community and potentially helping them to make friends who are living with similar circumstances."

The Memory Lane Cafe has been held every six weeks at Thirroul Community Centre since it launched there in mid-2022. The program has run in other states for a few years, Barbra said, but thanks to a recent boost in government funding, Dementia Australia has been able to open cafes in NSW. "It's now a national program," she said.

"The cafes are a really good way to connect with others, but it's also a great way to connect with Dementia Australia's staff and to find out more about what services or supports they might be able to receive to help them continue to live well, and help them keep living at home in the community."

Demand for the service is bound to grow.

"In 2023, there are currently approximately 487,500 Australians living with dementia," Barbra said.

"And without a medical breakthrough, this number is expected to increase to 1.1 million by 2058. It's the leading cause of death for female

Australians. And it's the second leading cause of death for Australians overall."

There are eight Memory Lane Cafes in NSW, each catering for up to 20 pairs, and each one can be a different experience as participants plan their own entertainment.

"For people that are new to the area, it's also a great way to meet other locals."

Thanks to the warmth of the facilitators, Allison Crase-Markarian and Imogen Hansen, who travel around the state hosting the cafes, it's not long before newcomers are chatting like old friends. People are even connecting outside the cafe.

"One of the [Thirroul] cafes was actually held on the birthday of one of the participants," Barbra said. "That person was planning to go to a beach to have drinks and nibbles. And she ended up inviting everybody pretty much who went to the cafe that day to come and join her."

Barbra encourages readers to give the national dementia helpline a call. "They can just – anonymously if they wish to – talk to someone and find out if the cafes would be right for them and, if not, we may have other services that are more suitable to the person's individual needs."

Call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 or visit www.dementia.org.au. The Memory Walk, Dementia Australia's annual fundraiser, will be at Lang Park on Sunday, 12 March from 8am. Join in or volunteer at www.memorywalk.com.au

Thirroul's next Memory Lane Cafe will be on Thursday, March 30, 11am-1pm 🌟



Memory Lane Cafe hosts Allison and Imogen. Barbra Williams, general manager service operations at Dementia Australia. Photos supplied

Northern Illawarra
Neighbour Aid Inc.

NINA

www.nina.org.au



Did you know that NINA does more than just transport?

We provide vital social support to many clients. To get an insight into the importance of this service to both clients and volunteers we had a chat with our volunteer Louise Field.

Please tell us how you came to be volunteering with NINA

In 2008 I was diagnosed with an illness and I used the services of NINA for hospital appointments as I wasn't able to drive myself at that time. In 2010 I became a volunteer with NINA because I was so appreciative of the service they offered me. In the beginning I would deliver Meals on Wheels and assist at Café Club, and now I provide transport to clients to attend medical appointments, visit family or do shopping.

Tell us about how you support Muriel and the relationship you've formed

Through volunteering with NINA I have made good friends with Muriel Smith aka Nanna Moo. We've become very good friends and what starts out as a 45-minute shopping trip turns into a 2-hour social event as everyone in town knows Mooy and wants a chat! Muriel has difficulty with her sight so I help with vegetable shopping at Binnors as well as her banking at the post office and quite often we pick up bits from the Reject Shop.

I then help her with her shopping at Coles. So, she's become like a second mother to me I suppose as my mother passed away two years ago.

I love to hear Muriel's stories about the history of Helensburgh, and she keeps me updated about her grandchildren, I feel like I know the whole family! I also have a close relationship with another NINA client, Judith Collins. We quite often make phone calls to each other. I appreciate the friendship that I have formed with both Nanna Moo and Judith over the years. We feel comfortable to ring and just have a chat.

Would you recommend providing social support to other potential volunteers?

Yes! You come to know the client and become comfortable with them. Doing this volunteering makes me feel an essential part of the community. It's a great feeling to know you are helping someone to make their life more comfortable and enabling them to not have to rely on family to do everything for them.

**Monday–Friday (8.30am–4.30pm) | telephone 02 4294 1900
18 Walker Street, Helensburgh**

Growing Flame Tree Coop

By Susan Luscombe

In October 2007 a group of people gathered with the idea of starting a local food co-operative. In May 2009 a foundation meeting established Flame Tree Community Food Co-operative and in 2010 a shop was established in Thirroul, behind a dress shop. In 2012, the shop extended into the street frontage and in February 2018, after a successful crowd-funding campaign, Flame Tree moved to its current premises in Lawrence Hargrave Drive.

Thirroul resident, musicologist and cultural historian Amanda Harris was one of the inaugural directors. She's been an active Flame Tree volunteer ever since, now as a part of the finance team.

From the standing room only first meeting there was a lengthy process of research, meetings, and planning, driven by a core group of committed volunteers. Luckily there were other co-ops to learn from, including Alfalfa House, Blue Mountains and Manly, all with common values of putting people, the planet and quality nourishing food before profit.

Flame Tree was conceived as volunteer-run, from serving customers to all the behind the scenes roles. Amanda says that, in the early days,



the shop almost never had to shut due to the hard work of a core group of volunteers keeping the doors open.

Amanda says: "Flame Tree has been so important to me over the last 15 years in fostering a community of people who want to see sustainable access to local food, who want to support local networks of food growing and find ways to

avoid the cycle of disposable packaging going to landfill."

The Illawarra is lucky to have this community store that provides an alternative to the large supermarkets, providing local growers and producers a place to sell to customers. Flame Tree urgently needs more customers, more members (though you don't need to be a member to shop at Flame Tree) and more volunteers to share the load.

For more information, contact Flame Tree at flametreeshop@gmail.com or just pop into the store. Everyone is welcome.

Above: Thirroul's Amanda Harris was one of the inaugural directors

Visit flametree.coop ✨

Lions plan events

By Fran Peppernell

As we step into the new year we are looking forward to providing some enjoyable events for the community. Upcoming events will be the Easter Bunny Scramble, Anzac Day Service at Stanwell Tops and, of course, our Country Fair.

We will also be supporting the Lions' focus areas of Health, Humanitarian, Emergency Response, the Environment, Research and Innovation.

It is good to know that when you buy a sausage at a Lions BBQ, a Lions Christmas Cake or mints, it continues to help. When a natural disaster strikes, like the current terrible earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the Lions through its foundations are able to provide grants and help support the immediate needs and recovery stages of disaster relief operations.

If you'd like to be involved, please come along to a meeting held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at Helensburgh Hotel at 6.30pm. Or contact us on info@helensburghlions.org.au ✨

Scouts to hold surf club fundraiser

By Vickie Crawley

The Scouts were busy preparing for the District Camp held every year at Mount Keira where they interact with other groups from the Illawarra. Our leaders hosted the activity Water Volleyball, but many other activities took place like archery, a scavenger hunt, games and bush walks.

This term so far, seven kids from Joey's and Cubs are going up to Cubs and Scouts. The new kids were introduced to Scouts with a MasterChef night, which made them use their imaginations.

On the last Friday of March, the 31st, the 1st Helensburgh Scout Group is holding a fundraiser at Stanwell Park Surf Club, from 5.30-9.30pm.

Food on sale will include pulled pork rolls, sausage sandwiches, burgers, plus there will be vegetarian options and gluten-free bread. The surf club will have the bar open. Money raised will be split between the group and the Scouts heading off to the New Zealand Jamboree in December. ✨

Celebrate Australian Cider Day

Saturday, March 11 will be a cracker day on the farm, writes Jo Fahey



Come along to help us celebrate Australian Cider in Dardes Cider's 10th year!

We have put together a gigantic day at the farm. We are celebrating big, yet staying chilled!

It will be a ticketed event, 10am-4pm. Food trucks and coffee will be on site!

Included in your ticket is:

- apple picking
- mini golf
- laser tag
- lawn games
- trivia
- cider juice milling & pressing demonstrations
- live music by: Sam Allen, Taya Larsen, Joe Mungovan Band

Additional activity fundraiser 'Add On':

- Cider Sensory Classes (18yrs+ activity)

Add on a cider sensory class and funds raised from this activity will go to local charity Need a Feed's programs. This will be a practical, 'hands on' tasting journey to boost your cider sensory skills, guided by a cider maker! Taste a range of cider styles and cider apples. Learn about cider apples and the dynamic flavours that come from them. Experience how they are different!

Onsite parking by gold coin donation with proceeds to Dardes Forest Rural Fire Brigade.

Australian Cider Day

When: 10am-4pm, Saturday, 11 March 2023

Where: Glenbernie Orchard, Dardes Forest

Tickets: www.dardes.com.au

Be Quick – Early Bird Rates till 3 March! 🌟



**FOR TICKETS
& INFO**
dardes.com.au

Glenbernie Orchard,
259 Dardes Forest
Road, Dardes Forest



Comedy call-out

By Bethan Farmer



SPAT saw 2022 off with a crash and a bang, with our outrageously successful Panto *Montana Smith and the Raiders of the Lost Land*. Nine sold-out performances! Many thanks to the cast and crew for their energy and enthusiasm, and congratulations to writers Kelly Maree Michael and Bernadette Lemesurier on this absolute gem of a show. Special mention goes to Danielle Ives for her exquisite production design that had to be seen to be believed!

Our January school holiday theatre workshops

were also a huge success, thank you to Kelly Maree, V and Sage for giving our young would-be actors and writers an unforgettable experience.

After all that excitement we took an extended break over the holidays, but now we're back, refreshed and ready for a new season.

First up, a call for actors. SPAT is planning to put on a comedy play in May 2023, and we are on the look-out for talent. Never acted before? Don't be afraid! Our shows are for everyone, all ages, shapes and sizes are welcome. Old hands and new faces, come along to the CWA and show us what you can do. Auditions will be held during the first two weeks of March – check out our website for details.

Also coming up this year – SPAT Singers is turning 40! Hard to believe that some members have been there from the very beginning. A very special celebratory show will be held in July.

Later this year, belatedly because of Covid, we will be putting on our RISE Festival. Two years ago we put a call out for aspiring writers to submit one-act plays that SPAT would produce as an evening of readings. Watch this space for news.

Lastly, we are looking for expressions of interest for improv classes for adults.

Email us at spartstheatre@gmail.com ✨

Try the View Club

By publicity officer Barbara Kitson

Firstly, I would like to give a big heartfelt thank you to everyone who put their name forward for an office position at our February AGM. Without members like you, we could not make a difference; congratulations to all and thank you.

Last meeting Nerida proposed we take a trip to the Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay and do a tour of the historic hospital with our own Lee Dunn and then call in at a lunch venue (not known yet and date to be confirmed). We don't have a program officer, but I'll have a go at organising it, maybe someone would like to help.

We are looking for new members, as is every other club in our town. We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 11am at the Centennial Hotel. Meetings aren't drawn out and are quite pleasant to be a part of – lots of laughing and no back-biting. If you would like to have a sticky beak, just come along to the pub, we get a take-away coffee from the cafe opposite and have that during our meeting. Most of us have lunch at the pub after the meeting, but that's optional.

We are very nice people so if you have a couple of hours free on the 3rd Tuesday at 11am, drop in and join our meeting, no pressure to join. ✨

Seniors travel dates

By Helen Slade, tour organiser

Helensburgh Seniors Travel Group's first meeting this year was our AGM, held on Monday, February 6. Our 2022 committee was re-elected, and we welcomed an extra committee member and six new club members. We had more than 70 members show up for the meeting with the majority staying on to enjoy a pub lunch.

Thursday, March 23 – Captain Cook Sydney Harbour Lunch Cruise: Includes a Top Deck three-course lunch cruise with 360-degree views of the harbour. We will be departing from King Street Wharf, Darling Harbour. Cost \$100pp – Bus departs Helensburgh at 9.30am

Thursday, May 25 – Ebenezer Historic Church & Windsor RSL: We will be having Devonshire morning tea, a talk about the history and a wander around the property before heading off to the Windsor RSL for lunch. Cost \$60pp – Bus departs at 8.15am

Forthcoming Meetings: All held at the Helensburgh Hotel, starting at 11.30am on Mondays, March 6, April 3 and May 8.

For all enquiries, contact Helen on hstg98@outlook.com or 0427 043 774. ✨

New Staff Picks shelf

By the team at Collins Booksellers Thirroul

Need reading inspiration? Take a look at our new Staff Picks shelves at the front of the bookstore! At the back, see our Kids for Kids reviews by avid young readers.

In March we're hosting four events.

- **Wed March 1:** Tricia Schantz and Rusty Miller with their book *Neverland: American and Australian Surfers in Byron Bay 1960s & 1970s*. We're also launching new local zine *Baseless Surf Theory*. Music from *Dirty Suits (Lounge Version)*.

- **Fri 10th:** Local authors Bronwyn Carlson and Terri Farrelly will be discussing *Monumental Disruptions*.

- **Sat 11th:** Rachael Mogan McIntosh is launches her very entertaining travelogue *Pardon My French*.

- **Wednesday March 29:** Dr Saul Griffith will discuss his contribution to *Quarterly Essay 89: On Electrification and Community Renewal*, a must-read for anyone interested in *Electrify 2515*.

Look out for the new YA novel by local author Helena Fox, out in early April! We're very excited about this one. 🍀

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Presenting your home for sale

Here are my Top 5 Tips.

1. **Spring clean:** Do a thorough clean from the inside out, including walls, windows, skirting boards and every nook and cranny.
2. **De-clutter:** Your buyer needs to imagine living in the property. Removing clutter visibly increases the room size and better showcases the space.
3. **Faultless:** Buyers notice everything. Repair anything that doesn't work, including doors, windows, light bulbs and taps.
4. **Create atmosphere:** Sound, scent and temperature are key aspects that are often overlooked when preparing your home.
5. **Neutral environment:** Decoration tastes are highly personal and I recommend taking a safe, neutral approach to styling.



Scan To Speak to Ian



New blocks for the kids

By Paul Blanksby, of Helensburg Men's Shed

1998 was an excellent year. It was the year that Gilbert and Patricia De Vincenzo changed their lives and their young family's direction and bought Kids Korner Preschool on Laurina Avenue in the 'Burgh. Gilbert had worked as a Telstra engineer for many years and was looking for a new chapter.

And since Gilbert and Patricia's daughters, Lisa and Yvette, were involved in Primary and Early Childhood teaching, the match with Kids Korner was understandable. And this year their granddaughter, Estelle, also Primary and Early

Childhood trained, completed her first year of full-time work with the preschool.

The families of this delightful little school are very involved with their kid's education and learning. The school is a Superhero for the HeartKids Foundation, joining the fight against congenital heart disease.

But there was one little fly in the ointment: the Kids Korner block set was as old as the school itself! The blocks were worn and tired, with a few suspicious teeth marks...

So, Rosie of the Morning Brew and her five-year-old daughter Amelia got together with the kindly parents, selling Bite Size 'FUN'raising Cookies, delicious with a cuppa. The funds raised supported Supertee, an Australian company that makes medical garments for sick children.

Rosie's been involved in our community for more than seven years, her little coffee van dispensing delicious beverages and food. When a need arises, Rosie can be counted on to help.

One of the first commissions of the Burgh Men's Shed in 2017 was to build a six-seater play car, which is used daily in the playroom at Kids Korner and that the kids love very much – it even has two steering wheels. So, the Preschool and Rosie asked us to create a new set of play blocks for the school.

Ian Jackson, a founding member of the Shed, and a few blokes designed and made lots of new blocks, a few extra-curvy ones for the kids to enjoy, and a new box to keep them tidy.

It was a pleasure to see the pride and joy that the De Vincenzo family, Rosie and the Men's Shed blokes took in laying the building blocks for our children's futures – a lovely gift to the kids. 🌟

Smiles from the start

By Courtney Smith, Classroom Teacher Helensburg Public School

We would like to welcome all of our children and families to Kindergarten in 2023. Students have had a successful and smooth start to begin their school journey. It's wonderful to begin the day with smiling faces that are happy to be at school!

Kindergarten students are learning new routines and enjoying class activities.

Students are spending time with their Year 6 Buddy at lunch and recess. Year 6 students are enjoying the responsibility of being a good role model.

We have many fun, exciting and challenging activities planned for the students to look forward to this year.

Kindergarten teachers look forward to watching and celebrating the children's growth and achievements as the year progresses. 🌟



Call to save historic site

By Caitlin Sloan

Helensburgh and District Historical Society is calling for action to preserve the Helensburgh Police Station and Courthouse on the corner of Parkes Street and Waratah Street.

The land has been the subject of a decade-long ownership dispute between Crown Lands, NSW State Police, and the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council. The Land Council successfully appealed to NSW Land and Environment Court, taking proprietorship of the lot's police residence in the northern parcel and the paddock in the south.

With only the centre parcel retained and used by NSW State Police, the heritage-listed premises is now vacant and exhibiting external weathering.

While discussions continue between the parties regarding the facilitation and transfer of the land, Helensburgh and District Historical Society treasurer of Jenny Donohoe says the site appears neglected and at risk of further deterioration.

"The big question is: Why do we classify buildings 'Heritage' and then let them go to rack and ruin?"

"This is the second oldest brick building in Helensburgh... [and] if it was privately owned, they'd look after it like they have with the other buildings that are heritage.

"[The] authorities are bound by red tape, and that's what we're stuck with.

"It's very disappointing."

Erected in 1902, the building contained a courtroom, police residential quarters, two cells, an exercise yard, and a single horse stable and forage room that has since been replaced by a double garage for police vehicles. It is believed to be one of a few courthouses that have their original lock-ups.

Operational until the early 1980s, the courthouse is recognised as a significant civic site, teeming with stories of old Helensburgh. Jenny says there's a missed opportunity for the building to become a community space.

"We'd like to be able to have some usage of it as far as community activities; a cultural centre, an information centre, something that the community can build on for the Helensburgh district," she said.

Historic order implications and staffing changes at NSW State Police Property Unit and Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council have delayed land transfers and discussions about constructing a new police station. Member for Heathcote Lee Evans explained in his response to Jenny's public letter (published in the *Flame* in January 2023).



In the meantime, Jenny says the premises have been without necessary maintenance and fears there is little opportunity left to conserve it.

"[Lee's] quite frank about telling me what the lay of the land is, and I've felt that for some time because he's done his best to keep something going on it, to find out what's happened, but now we've got to the situation where he's as frustrated as me [and] we can't do anything," Jenny said.

"At this stage, you've got to spend a lot of energy to get results, you have to be a squeaky wheel and keep going, [and] I've run out of puff.

"When a local member says you can't do any more, why should I be wasting my breath?" 🌸



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02 4208 0403



Musical journeys

By Felicity Woodhill, the Wombarra founder of the Music and Tea concert series featuring emerging artists at Wollongong Art Gallery

From March 20 to 26, Harmony Week is an annual celebration of diversity. We believe music has an important role to play, contributing to harmony in a multicultural community.

Music and Tea at the Gallery participants have included a variety of ancestry, including Chinese, Estonian, Greek, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Japanese, Norwegian and Anglo-Celtic, and the diversity continues to grow.

The music performed is drawn from many cultures; our audiences come from a diversity of backgrounds. The harmony of all cultures coming together is the foundation of the concerts.

For a short space of time once a month young artists perform for a music-loving audience, committed to nurturing our next generation of musicians. Live music is a participatory process for performer and audience alike and the concert's atmosphere is created through exchanges between the two.

The music performed will represent different emotions and moods. Sometimes it will be discordant and sometimes joyous; each participant has the space to connect individually, but also forms part of the collective experience; a coming together to share and enjoy music.

Cedar, 19, from Wombarra, is a Presidents Scholar at Manhattan School of Music, NY



Can you remember when music was not part of your life?

There was always piano music in our home as my brothers were learning; I began playing at a very young age. My aunt also played the violin, often practising Bach and Vivaldi; visiting her home always inspired me, forging a desire to learn. The violin is in my heritage; my Great Grandmother was a violinist and teacher, and I play her violin.

What is most challenging for you, and what is most rewarding?

A very challenging aspect of music is finding satisfaction when I know there are ways to improve. I have always loved the thrill of performing at Folk Festivals, the Wollongong Eisteddfod and with an orchestra. Part of the performance cycle is the build-up of adrenalin; nerves are always present no matter how prepared or experienced you are. Performing well and delivering excitement for an audience requires a delicate balance between perfection and freedom. Achieving this juxtaposition is demanding yet highly rewarding.

How has your experience helped you value initiatives such as Harmony Month?

Travelling for music has amplified my exposure and understanding of different cultures. Music grows through a fusion of cultures, and whilst this often leads to a celebration of diversity, racial and gender prejudices can still be found; an example was the rejection of African Americans as classical musicians, yet classical musicians absorbed jazz into their music. Nina Simone is a famous example; she turned to jazz after being refused entry to a music school. Music can polarise people, such as the intense patriotic music in war. However, music can and does connect people and help break down cultural differences. Harmony Month reminds us that we can't sit in our comfort zone; we must look for ways to reach out to others through art.

Luke, 19, from Bomaderry, studies Music and Medical Science at the University of New England



Unlike many exceptional young musicians, you have yet to gravitate to Sydney. Is there a reason?

I explored studying in Sydney, but I realised it was unnecessary, given the opportunities available in my region and the cost of travelling in terms of time and finances. Staying local allows me more time for music and family. I have the privilege of studying with Professor Robert Constable AM for piano and Dr Jane McKellar for musicology, both of whom reside nearby. I've also had the opportunity to participate in the Steel City Strings and Southern Highlands Symphony Orchestra and perform at various events, including the Wollongong and Shoalhaven Eisteddfods and concerts at St. Jude's, Bowral.

How much time do you commit to practice?

There was a time when I practised for six or more hours a day; not attending school made this possible. As a result, I progressed rapidly and developed an extensive repertoire. I am now studying for a double degree; my practice is around two hours per day. Yet I achieve a great deal. I have learnt that as a musician, I grow through my life experiences, not just practice.

What do you think makes a good recital program?

A good program engages the audience and should involve variety, cohesion, balance and personalisation. It should feature a variety of pieces that showcase the performer's range and versatility and could include differing styles, composers or pieces of varying lengths and difficulties. A good recital has a sense of cohesion and flow. Pieces should be chosen and arranged to create a narrative or emotional arc. Finally, striking a balance between well-loved pieces and lesser-known works while reflecting the performer's unique personality and artistic vision is important.

Annabel, 15, from Figtree, is at Wollongong High School of Performing Arts



Can you remember when music, particularly flute, was not part of your life?

Since the minute I was born, music has been a huge part of my life. With my mother, Suzanne Cowan, being a highly successful flute teacher, music surrounded me, and I became involved right from the beginning. When I was tall enough, I started flute – after begging to do it for years beforehand. Choosing the flute meant I had somebody to guide me on my musical journey because of this; I cannot remember a part of my life without music.

Music at your level is very difficult; what is most challenging for you, and what is most rewarding?

For me, the most challenging part of classical music is finding enough time to practise – especially when juggling it with school, family, and sleep. It is often a struggle to find the motivation to practice early in the morning before school or at night after a long day.

However, when it comes to performance, the most rewarding thing is seeing all my hard work pay off, which makes every struggle worth it.

You already teach, how does it contribute to your music?

Teaching improves my ear and ability to be picky when perfecting a piece of music. It opens my creativity and forces me to think outside of the box to help the student improve. I have learnt many valuable new skills through teaching, and I know there is still much to learn.

Any dreams about your future as a musician?

I plan to continue a career in music. As a professional musician I would love a full-time position in an orchestra, which could let me explore the world. A career as a musician is challenging, but I am willing to work to make it happen. ✨

Music and Tea at the Gallery 2023 Concerts

March 2, Sounds of Enchantment

Luke Bowen | piano with
Cedar Newman | violin

April 6, Wondrous Flute Melodies

Annabel Wouters | flute with
David Vance | piano

May 3, Meditations by Nightfall Paul
Nicolaou | harp & Robert Smith | violin

June 7, An Odyssey of Romance Jack
Theakston | cello with John Martin | piano

July 6, Jazz Trio Returns with More
Original Compositions Alec Watts
and friends

Aug 3, Take a Second Celebrating
Second Movements Emily Liston |
classical clarinet

Sept 7, Masterworks and Improvisation:
Classical & Jazz Michael de Huy | piano

Oct 5, Arias and Art Songs Ariana Ricci |
voice with Natalia Ricci | piano

Nov 2, Italian Journeys Beatrice Colombis
| violin with Mauro Colombis | piano

Dec 7, Birth and Rebirth & Premier of
New Works Paul Nicolaou | harp, Emily Su
| violin & James Monro | cello ✨



Cedar with her mum, Felicity Woodhill

Our musical past

By Local Studies librarian Jo Oliver



When we think of the Illawarra, music may not be the first thing which comes to mind. But the area has a strong musical history. Local Aboriginal groups have always used music and rhythm as part of their ceremonies and a new generation are learning this part of culture today from elders.

Local bands and choirs have been a community activity since the early days of European settlement. Many different cultures have brought their musical traditions to the area when they emigrated.

The Wollongong Conservatorium of Music celebrated 50 years in the area in 2022 and has provided lessons and performance opportunities for children and adults. Richard Tognetti, now Artistic Director of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Lead Violin, trained there as a teenager.

Local theatre groups such as Arcadians have staged musicals since 1964. Country music festivals were held in Helensburgh and the Illawarra Folk Festival at Bulli returned this year. Blues, jazz and rock festivals have been held in the area's halls and parks. There has even been opera in the pub.

Wollongong Library got on the bandwagon in the late 1950s and began a collection of LP records for borrowing. This progressed to tapes and now CDs in many different musical genres as well as DVDs of concerts and performances.

If you have any great images of music events in the area you'd be willing to share, contact the Local Studies Team at Wollongong Library at localhistory@wollongong.nsw.gov.au 🌟



From top: Arcadians production, *The Sound of Music*, 1990 (P27416); Filipino community members 1992 (P24818); Aboriginal performers at Wollongong University (P26100); Country music festival, Helensburgh 1981 (P24897). Photos from the collections of Wollongong City Libraries



High hopes for local pilot

The Illawarra Flame reports



From L to R: Electrify 2515's Davin Turner and his son, Dr Saul Griffiths and Kristen McDonald at Austinmer Beach. Photos: Jeremy Park

Thirroul has hosted Extinction Rebellion art in its park, Mother Earth Graffiti on its pool wall and packed talks by Rewiring Australia founder Dr Saul Griffith. On Friday, February 17, the village was once again the focus of climate change action.

NSW Treasurer and Minister for Energy Matt Kean, accompanied by Heathcote MP Lee Evans, came to town to unveil a new \$8 million program to pilot innovative ways to fully decarbonise homes in up to three communities in NSW.

Mr Kean said: "We know that the community here in Thirroul is very excited about the opportunity to participate."

Thirroul resident Catherine Renshaw shared her perspective on the announcement, saying any help from the government in electrifying family homes was "a no-brainer".

"We put solar panels on our roof, just back in September," she said. "And we've already noticed the difference in our electricity bills. They've gone down to about a third of what they were before."

"As a parent, it's really important that we can do our best and do our bit to support efforts to combat climate change."

Set to start in the second half of 2023, the government program will involve partnering with the private sector to test ways to upgrade to a zero-emissions home in three different communities: urban, regional and remote.

Mr Kean said that the cost of electrifying a community could be "around \$4 to 5 million".

"We think the program will cover the three communities that will seek to electrify."

"We're looking for partner organisations that can help ... to ensure that we can roll out technologies

like batteries, heat pumps and solar panels ... It's a voluntary program, so people can opt into it."

Energy expert Dr Saul Griffith, author of *The Big Switch*, welcomed the news and said local group Electrify 2515 would "absolutely" be applying.

"Our community is already applying for money through ARENA, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, to do the technology components of a community pilot," he said.

An Austinmer resident, Dr Griffith has supported the campaign to Electrify 2515 since it launched in August 2022. The group's initial goal was to get expressions of interest from 500 households. They met that in the first week, soon had double that number and enthusiasm for becoming Australia's first fully electrified community continues to grow.

"What Kristen has done, and her fellow volunteers at [Electrify] 2515, is extraordinary and shouldn't be underestimated," Dr Griffith said.

"With the groundswell, from bottom up, the involvement in Electrify 2515 is extraordinary."

"We're a group of volunteers that have come together and we wanted to show that electrification isn't just some abstract idea," Kristen McDonald said. "It's something that the community really supports and the community wants."

"We all know that the upfront cost of installing many of these items is really prohibitive for so many homes. And that's where governments can step in and help overcome those barriers."

"We support any kind of investment in a clean energy solution – we'd love it to be in ours, but we also really actually want it to be in every single community across Australia."

Dr Griffith said the Energy Minister had “done a good job” with the pilot program.

“But if we are really to tackle climate change the way we need, on the time-frame we need, we need much bigger commitments.”

Electrify 2515 counts electric vehicles as part of the home electrification process.

In Dr Griffith's estimation, to electrify a community of 1000 to 2000 people could currently cost \$20 million. “If Australia did a similarly ambitious program [to the US], that would be a \$50 billion, \$60 billion federal commitment to electrification.

“The good news for Australia, though, is we shouldn't be thinking about it as an expense. Over time we're going to save so much money, mostly because we'll be driving our cars using our solar.” ✨

All agree new program is 'exciting'

NSW Treasurer Matt Kean said it was “an exciting program that's going to help reduce emissions but also slash household bills”.

Heathcote MP Lee Evans said: “It's a very exciting day to have this announcement in my electorate.”

Thirroul local Catherine Renshaw said: “We're really excited about this opportunity to go hard on climate change and also work on efficiency as well in the household.”

Electrify 2515's Kristen McDonald said: “It's actually really exciting that there's a solution to both the climate crisis and also to our energy bills that is ready to go.”

Greg Doyle, general manager of Wollongong City Council, said: “We're just really excited to be collaborating with the community.”

Dr Saul Griffith went a step further. He said: “We're super excited.” ✨



Thirroul resident Catherine Renshaw, NSW Treasurer Matt Kean and Heathcote MP Lee Evans

Join solar bulk buy

By Kristen McDonald, of Electrify 2515

Did you catch ABC's *Australian Story*? The first episode of 2023 featured Austinmer's Dr Saul Griffith, as well as Electrify 2515 volunteers! Missed it? Watch on ABC iview.

This year we will be applying for the NSW Government's electrification pilot and our funding application to the federal government body ARENA is progressing.

Here's a brief update on that application:

We hope to hear more in April or so.

There are 3 possible outcomes:

Outcome 1: A substantial amount of funding to run the optimal pilot. This would allow us to offer subsidies for appliances (eg. air conditioners, cooktops etc), including some batteries and EVs, to a large number of homes and businesses including low-income homes. We'd also test new technologies like Home Energy Management Systems (HEMS).

Outcome 2: A smaller amount of funding. We would reconfigure our plan to either include a smaller amount of homes/businesses, smaller subsidies and/or less items. It is unlikely to include bigger ticket items such as EVs and batteries.

Outcome 3: No funding. Then we will organise group activities such as bulk buys of solar panels, heat pumps and/or EVs.

We are also working with:

- Council to encourage them to improve EV charging infrastructure and community rooftop solar (council is asking for public feedback on its draft EV infrastructure policy, please do so on their website);
- Rewiring Australia and businesses to develop education resources to guide homes on electrification journeys;
- Finance institutions to look at packages that help the uptake of electric items;
- Endeavour Energy to investigate pole-mounted batteries and localised tariffs to reduce energy costs in the area;
- Community, social and property groups to find the best ways to include renters, strata properties and low-income households, plus how to roll a similar project out in other communities.

Firstly, we're organising a solar bulk buy. Email electrify2515@gmail.com if you are interested in installing or expanding a solar system with a vetted local supplier.

More info: electrify2515.org ✨



What's On

Find more events at www.theillawarraflame.com.au



'Alone Australia' comes to SBS

The new reality TV show features 10 Australian survivalists, including Thirroul's own Duane Byrnes, 35, a Wildlife & Environmental Officer, proud First Nations man and father of two. *Alone Australia* is screening soon on SBS. Tune in to see what happens when contestants are dropped in wilds of Western Tasmania/lutruwita, isolated from the world and each other, stripped of modern possessions, contact and comforts, to self-document their experience. Go Duane!

Clean Up with Surfrider South Coast

Clean Up Australia Day is an annual event on the first Sunday in March. Surfrider South Coast is holding theirs the day more, 9am at Sharky Beach on Saturday, 4 March. Find more clean-ups at www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au

Illawarra Women's Day of Dance + Culture

Sun, 5 March, 12-3pm, at Edmund Rice College. Celebrate NSW Women's Week at an afternoon of connection through conversation, dance, food and culture. Tickets via Eventbrite, enquiries to 4283 8111, events@healthycities.org.au

March 22 debate: U3A versus Bulli High

The annual debate between U3A Northern Illawarra and students from Bulli High School will take place at 9.30am in the Excelsior Hall, Thirroul Community Centre and Library. The topic is 'That social media is detrimental to society' with the U3A team arguing the affirmative case. Once again we are fortunate to have Wollongong's Lord Mayor, Gordon Bradbery, as adjudicator. For further information contact Therese Jordan 0413 218 957.

Connect with your inner divine feminine

Heart and Soul Care is hosting a Women's Trauma

Healing Retreat at Govinda Valley in Otford, from 24-26 March. Enquiries to Wendy Saunders on 0412 614 684 or wendyhscare@gmail.com

Helensburgh Library

Author talk Wed 22 March, 5.30pm. Graham Thwaite will speak about his book *Black Coal to Diamond*. A story about "Hillcrest", the Hargrave family, black coal and 60 years of aged care at Stanwell Park. Bookings essential.

Music evening with Chimera Wed 29 March, 5.30pm. A fun evening with musical duo Chimera performing an acoustic set with a variety of stringed instruments. Light refreshments provided.

Thirroul Library

Bookings essential via Eventbrite, visit www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/whats-on/events

Let's Try... Drumming workshop – Thu 6 March 6pm. Get your groove on at this hand-drumming class with classic West African drum, the Djembe. Beginners encouraged. Over 18s only. Refreshments served after workshop.

Cloth Nappy workshop – Thu 9 March after Baby Beats. Did you know that disposable nappies can take over 400 years to start breaking down in landfill? Using cloth nappies is an environmentally friendly alternative. Belinda from Council's Green Team will be sharing tips. No booking required.

Sewing workshop – Thu 23 March 4pm. Join us for a pop-up sewing workshop to learn to upcycle second-hand fabrics and clothes to make your own tote bags. No experience necessary. For ages 14-24.

Study Skills Seminar – Tue 28 March 5pm. For students in years 10-12.

Worlds Connect

Celebrate our diverse community in NSW Multicultural Month via the shared language of music. With Turkish-Australian singer Ayse Gökür Shanal. Performances at Robertson School of Arts (2pm, March 5); Shellharbour Civic Centre (11am, March 11); Wollongong Town Hall (7.30pm, March 11); Nowra School of Arts (2pm, March 12). Visit steelcitystrings.com.au

Beyond Coal Coast forum

The group's Sallie Moffat has called a Candidates' Climate Forum 4-6pm on Sunday, March 19 at Coledale Hall. Sallie said it would be, 'a chance to meet local climate heroes and build the groundswell for urgent action.'

Visit www.beyondcoalcoast.com. 🌟



Save date for fete

By Meryn Murray

Holy Cross Helensburgh's School Fete returns on Saturday, 18 March, 11am-3pm. Entry is FREE and all are welcome to the family-friendly festivities! The Holy Cross Family Fun Day will be jam-packed with rides, side show games, market stalls, food and entertainment.

Here's what event goers can look forward to:
Amusement Rides & Attractions – Enjoy

spinning cups and saucers, the giant slide, storm and bouncy castles. (Prepaid rides bands can be ordered from the school office.)

Art Gallery & Photo Competition – Brought to you by our very own amazing little artists and budding photographers!

Bustling Market Stalls – Peruse a range of local business offerings and lovingly handmade wares including candles, organic produce, chilli sauces, fashion and more!

Fantastic food – The food stalls will be serving up an array of mouth-watering cuisine including BBQ favourites, sausage sandwiches, halloumi and pulled pork rolls, freshly made fairy floss, snow cones, cupcakes and sweet treats, gelato, coffee and more!

Side Show Extravaganzas – All our famed attractions return, including, Side Show Alley, Putt for Dough, Choc Toss, Lucky Dip, The LAB, Lolly Tree and Face Painting.

Shoppers' Delights – Plants, books and an array of second-hand goodies will also be on sale.

The Holy Cross Family Fun Day is an opportunity for the students, teachers and parents to showcase the wonderful school and the vibrant community in which we live. We hope everyone can join us on the 18th March, 11am to 3pm, and help us celebrate. ✨

'It's OK not to be OK'

MCCI is raising mental health awareness among multicultural youth, writes Cristina Sacco



For the young people who attended the two-day mental health first aid course over the school holidays, it was both a confronting and challenging learning process. It was an opportunity to recognise warning signs and learn how to talk with people in need.

'It's OK not to be OK' was one of the core messages at the course, which was delivered by Red Point Psychology & Coaching in Port Kembla and part of the Healthy Communities program funded by the NSW Government and delivered by MCCI during the school holidays in January. It was so successful that another free course for people aged 16 and over was scheduled for mid-February.

"I want to be able to help myself, my friends and

my family to get through the rough patches that they might face, and just to have the skills to understand them fully," said Brooke (pictured), who attended the session.

"Providing young people with the skills to recognise common mental health challenges, and on how to best support their peers and themselves when facing these, empowers them to better respond in a crisis. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness and to encourage conversations on mental health with their families, friends and the broader community," said MCCI Youth and Community Manager Allyson Pazos.

"This course gives people an opportunity to develop a voice and start a conversation around mental health which breaks down the uncertainty, discrimination and stigma of mental illness," says Carer Counsellor and Educator for Red Point Psychology and Coaching Jane Hammer.

Contact MCCI for more information about the courses and other youth activities.
 Visit www.mcci.org.au ✨

Your Letters

Dear Editor,

When Labor took office at the federal election, a pressure valve was released, and the steam came out of our collective climate anxiety. State governments appear to be getting on with the job, so voters generally trust that the environmental and energy crisis is in hand. In December, the Climate Council applauded the NSW government for increasing its net zero targets.

But promises from politicians are one thing and actions another. Since endorsing the Paris Agreement in 2016, the NSW government has approved 26 new coal and gas mines with a staggering total emissions output that equates to adding 33 years to NSW current emissions profile. Say what? These approvals make a mockery of their targets. Meanwhile, coal and gas corporations are swimming in profits from NSW resources while our taxes mop up the impacts of their pollution.

NSW Justices Association Wollongong Branch provides free JP services at Community Desks at Thirroul, Corrimal, Wollongong and Dapto libraries.

All services given by JPs are free of charge. They cannot give legal advice and there are certain forms and documents that they are unable to sign or witness, but they can assist you in finding where these can be dealt with.

For more info contact Ray Vaughan on 0419 293 524. ✨



After the February 9 storm, it's going to be a very long time before anyone can cross the Hacking River at Otford.
Photo: Marlo Dowell

Is Labor committing to stronger targets and better policies? A muffled response with something about koalas. For the first time in forever, our votes really matter to the state candidates, thanks to the new boundaries. So here in 2515 we have a one-off chance to be heard above the din of the fossil fuel lobby and demand rigorous policies for a safe climate and a clean economy.

Find out more about how to vote for a safe climate in Heathcote at the March 25 NSW state election at www.beyondcoalcoast.com

– Sallie Moffatt, Coledale

Regarding Rex "Buckets" Jackson, MLA

Despite his misdemeanours in his later life, Rex Jackson did some great things for our area when he was a Member of State Parliament. Rex was an orphan child, becoming a ward of the State. He later won a State Amateur Boxing title, and became a Cabinet Maker. He joined the local Labor Party, and got preselected for the seat of Heathcote during the 1950s. He later became the Minister for Youth & Community Services, and I think he was the best minister in that Portfolio, we have had since World War II. I think his greatest achievement was saving Garrawarra Hospital and its surrounds, turning it into a State-run Aged Care Centre. This has had huge benefits, both in servicing our aged population, and employment.

He fell into disgrace when Minister for Corrective Services, due to his gambling addiction. He still made great Cuckoo Clocks though.

– Jim Powell, Local Resident & Historian

Editor's note: Jim shared a story from the Historical Society's archives. It's on our website, titled 'How Rex Jackson is remembered in Helensburgh' ✨

NF1 Meeting Report

Thanks to Warwick Erwin,
convenor of Neighbour Hood Forum 1

New Helensburgh Community Centre and Library

No update from Council provided but it appears there is some issues over the naming of Rex Jackson Oval with Council claiming the ovals are named Helensburgh Park.

Items to Councillors for 23/24 Budget

Helensburgh Community Centre and Library is top of the list with a high-level crossing (bridge) of the Hacking River at Otford climbing the list after the total washing away of the causeway on 9 February, the day after the NF1 meeting.

Residents have been asking for a higher level crossing for many years. Other items submitted

'Imagine if we had a good public transport system'

The CEO of RDA Illawarra dreams of a 30-minute commute, the Illawarra Flame reports

Along with health and housing, public transport is shaping up as a key election issue, with Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra saying the system needs an overhaul and compares poorly with the Newcastle region.

This follows last month's *Tale of Two Steel Cities* report by architect Ben Wollen, comparing Newcastle's revitalised centre with Wollongong's CBD, which, he wrote, "leaves a lot to be desired".

Our region's public transport service rates only 0.29 access points (bus/train/ferry stops) per 1000 residents – seven times fewer than the Newcastle/Macquarie region, according to RDA Illawarra.

RDA Illawarra CEO Debra Murphy said, "That's a huge difference that I don't think really should be acceptable to us."

The region's peak advisory body is calling on political parties to prioritise buses and trains and enable the 30-minute commute.

"With just \$10 million in funding from the NSW Government we can deliver more public transport services to the Illawarra region," Debra said.

"Because of outdated route planning and poor interconnectivity of rail, bus and community transport, more than 88% of commuter trips are completed in private vehicles.

"There's a lot of congestion on the road as well. And that's just getting worse."

The commute from Shellharbour to Wollongong and the drive through the northern suburbs are prime examples, Debra said.

Thirroul frequently finds itself bumper to bumper, with local residents jokingly referring to



the "Lawrence Hargrave Carpark". Last month, Helensburgh parents worried about safety took to Change.org to call for a direct bus to Bulli High School. Petition starter Danielle Beazley also cited the long train and bus commute: "In the afternoon it takes 1 hour and 20 minutes from when the bell rings at Bulli until my son walks in the door."

Debra said public transport is a great enabler of economic activity. "Imagine if we had a good public transport system, particularly for those people that are having cost-of-living pressures ... they could get rid of one of their cars, it could save quite a lot of money."

More trains and buses would also take cars off the road and help the environment, she said. ✨

include the completion of projects started but never finished by Council, such as the footpath reconstruction of the east footpath of Walker St from Coles to Witty Rd with restoration of the stone curb. The project started with business informed of disruptions but the just stopped despite being fully budgeted for.

The missing footpath from High St to Fletcher St along the eastern side of Junction St (beside Primary School oval) was promised by Council in the project to complete a footpath from Parkes St to the Primary School along Junction St but Council never completed the project and that section beside the over just did not happen. This now causes the only path for any wheelchair users travelling from the closest disabled parking at the Old Mine Surgery to the Primary School to have to travel up the roadway in traffic.

During discussions on items to submit to Councillors for the budget, it was raised about the

inconsistency in Council's development approvals in some developments not having curb and gutter when others in the same blocks have required curb and gutters and Council has enforced this.

Streets without Curb and Gutter

NF1 is preparing a list of Streets without Curb and Gutter to submit to Council asking for a schedule for future installation.

Other items of general business included pedestrian ramps in Walker St not to standard, Historical Society looking for the signs for Rex Jackson Ovals, request for street sweepers to return to 2508 and lack of Council to keep promises made to residents about Helensburgh Cemetery.

NF1 next meets on Wednesday, 8 March at Otford Community Hall – travel via Stanwell Tops as there is no causeway. ✨

NIRAG/NF3 Report

Thanks to secretary Ross Dearden for this report from the February 1 meeting

Northern Illawarra Resident Action Group (NIRAG) meetings are held at Bulli Community Hall commencing at 7pm on the first Wednesday of February, May, August and November.

NIRAG's president is John Croker; secretary is Ross Dearden. Contact NIRAG by email: NIRAG@bigpond.com

We are very appreciative that Jo Page, Director Infrastructure and Works at Wollongong City Council, and Cr Richard Martin attended the February meeting. (Cr Cameron Walters who attends regularly was an apology.) Their attendance improves communication with Council and Councillors; all benefit directly from the information exchange. It is an opportunity for real community consultation and feedback.

Some of the key issues discussed at the February 1 meeting included:

Sandon Pt Vegetation Plan of Management

Members are concerned that maintenance is needed in those areas designated 1m vegetation zones to control regrowth on the Sandon Point headland. The meeting has been advised that "Council is not resourced or planning such work, unlikely to meet the requirements of the AHIP". This is not a new concern and NIRAG wrote to Council by letter dated 15/3/2013. Jo Page, Director Infrastructure and Works, agreed to list this concern for future works meetings.

Pioneer Dr to Woonona Beach Cycleway reconstruction

Following representations by NIRAG and meetings with residents, we are awaiting new information from Council's Project Delivery team on cost alternatives. Alternative designs to be discussed with Councillors favouring low-key actions in the same location.

Lower Escarpment Walking trail

NIRAG / NF3 members voted unanimously to support renewed efforts to legalise a right of way for runners and walkers through approximately 6km of trail connecting the Bulli section of the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area to the Mt Kiera section, which is controlled by 'Wollongong Resources Pty Ltd' as the 'Russell Vale Colliery land'.

Sign posting officially prohibits public access and thoroughfare through colliery lands, yet we have been advised that more than 700 trail runners and walkers use it every month. Public access to Broker's Nose Lookout is also requested.

It is anticipated that Council would be able to overcome the company's concerns about Public Liability risk.

Sandon Point carpark

The carpark entrance has been line-marked (following a serious bike accident last June), however, additional consistent signage is requested here and all along the coastal cycleway accesses, to improve safety. Signage to ensure vehicles Give Way to pedestrians and cycles on the shared way is recommended.

Sandon Point Cycleway and Point St

A site meeting was held with Jo Page at Sandon Point on Friday, 16th December to discuss and follow up various outstanding local issues.

Complying Development Certificates

Section 134 (5) of the NSW EP&A Regulation requires Private Certifiers in many LGAs to notify neighbours prior to issuing Complying Development Certificates. Private Certifiers in Wollongong LGA are currently not required to give notice to neighbours. Cr Martin advised that this was raised at WCC briefing Monday, January 30 and Council is requested to advise how to add Wollongong to the list in the Regulation and take action to achieve this change.

Developments in Thirroul

A halt to High Risk Development in Thirroul and the northern villages was proposed and supported. In view of the need for access for emergency services along Lawrence Hargrave Drive, the meeting agreed to oppose major development of high-risk facilities, such as hospitals, schools and housing development for seniors/people with disability as these facilities require multiple responses by multiple agencies. Council was requested to support community concerns and to advise how this can be achieved.

Notices:

1. Neighbourhood Forum 3 needs a Convenor; NIRAG is acting as the interim WCC community contact.
2. The next NIRAG/NF3 quarterly meeting, will be on Wednesday May 3, 2023, at 7pm in the Bulli Community Centre Hall.

NIRAG meeting minutes will be posted on the *Flame's* website. Look out for an article titled 'NIRAG/NF3's February Report' 🌟

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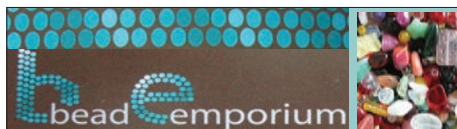
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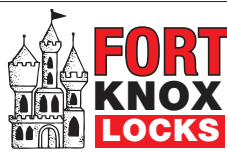
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Hello Fish

With Duncan Leadbitter

Recently the Department of Primary Industries (fisheries) released its annual report on the operation of its beach netting program for sharks, which runs from Newcastle to Wollongong.

The department has to report publicly since the culling program for sharks was formally listed in 2003 as a process that threatens animals listed as endangered/threatened. These include species of turtles, mammals (such as whales) and some sharks, like the grey nurse.

The culling is undertaken via gillnets set on 51 beaches over the swimming season. The nets do not provide a barrier to sharks visiting the beach, but are designed to reduce shark populations to levels that some scientists believe do not pose a hazard to swimmers. Over many decades, the program has significantly reduced shark numbers in the Newcastle to Wollongong region.

As has been the case for many years, the most recent report documents that the numbers of potentially hazardous sharks (bull, white, tiger) caught is very small – being 12, 28 and 11 respectively. Of these 3, 6 and 3 were recorded from the Illawarra (Wattamolla, Garie, Coledale, Austinmer, Thirroul, North and South Wollongong).

The nets take a far wider number and variety of non-target species, including sharks not deemed hazardous (such smooth hammerheads and grey nurses) plus turtles, species of rays and the very occasional marine mammal. For the Illawarra, the most common species in this category is the southern Eagle Ray. Not all of the animals caught die. Some, including sharks, are released alive.

Compared to the number of sharks 'out there' the number taken in this program is very small. The estimated population size of adult great white sharks in eastern Australia is 750 with a total estimated population of about 5500 (i.e. including juveniles). Bull and tiger shark numbers are unknown. We know these animals move up and down the coast (a lot) and we know from the listening stations (such as the one at Stanwell Park) that they visit our beaches (or, at least, 500m off them) relatively frequently. We know shark 'attacks' are far less frequent than drownings. The culling program does collect information but whether that helps bather safety or is just of scientific interest is always debated.

There is no easy answer to the sharks on beaches question. Some worry about being bitten, some don't. Removing sharks has ecological consequences that some people think are unacceptable but others are OK with. 🌟



First pointscore at Scarborough

By Ian Pepper, of the Scarborough Boardriders

Our season went off with a bang for 2023 with a hot summer's day and fun 2-3 foot waves at our favourite beach, Scarborough, on January 29.

Plenty of waves to go around for all grades including the mighty Micros.

Will Clark got down to business in the A Grade, laying down some heavy hacks to dominate the final. DP picked up good sized sets to place 2nd. Rod and Harrison broke the fins free but it wasn't enough to get the job done.

In the Open Women's, reigning champ Kasey Hargreaves stamped her influence early with some tidy carves on the set waves earning her first win in '23. Shyla Short was bashing the lip on her backhand and picked up second while we welcome the return of Skye Burgess, always a threat, finishing 3rd.

We had a bit of a lightning scare, which shut down the comp for a while, but once the coast was clear we were good to go after consulting with the lifeguards. And we had Christian on the Wollongong Council JetSki for part of the day also ensuring additional safety all round. Thanks to all involved.

The following weekend we were off to Newcastle for the finals of the Australian Boardriders Battle. We had a fairytale start, a dream come true, but it wasn't to last. The first day saw three of our four surfers finish 1st in their heats in our strongest result ever at this event. This included a 9.33 for Nic Squiers, which held up as the highest score of the comp until the finals. Sunday was a different story as we advanced directly to the quarter finals.

We slipped to 3rd right at the death. The high scores simply weren't high enough. It was still an outstanding effort so thanks to our surfers, support crew and club members who travelled up for the event or watched online. 🌟

Kids loving the jumps

By Iris Huizinga

HORCC president
Wayne Teal



New, exciting track upgrades, a “clubhouse” and wonderful gardens: the Helensburgh Off Road Cycle Club (HORCC) has been busy. The club is also a recipient of the NSW government’s Local Sports Grant Program, along with nine other community sports groups in Heathcote.

On this particular sunny Saturday afternoon, cycling enthusiasts have come together to enjoy, for the first time, the black painted container that is now officially HORCC’s clubhouse.

Club member Steve Neal says: “The last couple of weeks we’ve been building the base here and yesterday we dragged it into place with an excavator, helped by Jenko’s Excavations. So, we got a clubhouse, so to speak.”

Next to the container clubhouse is a garden with a plaque in memory of former club member Rob Wright, who died in 2021.

“So the container is here. We can have a beer with him every time we come up here.”

Christina Robinson, who tends the garden, shows me the engraving of a new plaque recognising the gardening work performed by Helensburgh Land Care and Northern Illawarra Neighbour Aid (NINA).

HORCC holds fitness challenges on the first and third Saturday of the month, except school holidays. Photos: Anthony Warry



"The oldest volunteer [to help in the garden] was almost 90, the youngest 18 months," says Christina.

The cycling enthusiasts at HORCC really have been busy. Club president Wayne Teal explains: "In some parts down the bottom, the track has been reconfigured, some new berms have gone in. There will be a big wall ride going in shortly with a timber frame. So you go on an angle around the corner, really fast."

Wayne adds that the day of our visit is HORCC's mountain bike social session, the fitness challenge.

"We've changed the concept to make it more user-friendly and to encourage more women, more kids and more non-riders, so to speak, to come and have a go. First and third Saturday of the month, except school holidays.

"It's \$5 entry and we just have a great day. Just ride. It's a staggered start, but it's not a race. It's a race for yourself and anybody can rock up. They've got to be a member of AusCycling (adult \$9 per month) to be insured, have a helmet and a bicycle. Anyone who wants to ride is most welcome.

"We're a great bunch of people and it's one of the best clubs I've been involved with as a member."

In 2023, six clubs take part in the interclub

series. "It's a good excuse for everyone to come in and have a race, have a barbecue and talk about mountain riding. On all other days, if it is not wet, the tracks are open dawn till dusk. The club organises social rides and night rides and a lot of members look after the park.

"We put a call out for a working bee and this morning we had 15 people. They started at eight o'clock. They come in and give a couple of hours here and there, weeding, raking, mowing.

"One guy had his baby on the front while he's raking the track down. Stevie, Chunky and Matt are our track guys. Christina and John do the garden."

Club volunteers put in big jumps last year and those have been a great hit.

"The kids love them. They don't come up this end anymore, they all go down the big jumps. They love the jumps. It's fantastic."

Besides all the mentioned improvements, there will also be a sign at the top of the town that says "Helensburgh Mountain Bike Park".

For more info, visit horcc.com.au and auscycling.org.au/membership 🌟



Port Kembla Tidal Chart

March 2023

TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M
1 0433 1.44 1152 0.61 WE 1745 1.02 2249 0.74		10 0445 0.44 1054 1.57 FR 1709 0.37 2322 1.51		19 0035 0.52 0705 1.81 SU 1353 0.21 1955 1.39		28 0141 1.54 0847 0.59 TU 1435 1.06 1945 0.77	
2 0538 1.46 1250 0.55 TH 1848 1.08 2355 0.71		11 0527 0.46 1131 1.48 SA 1739 0.42 2359 1.53		20 0133 0.42 0758 1.87 MO 1438 0.15 2040 1.49		29 0235 1.47 0958 0.62 WE 1556 1.03 ● 2052 0.82	
3 0634 1.51 1334 0.49 FR 1932 1.15		12 0614 0.49 1213 1.38 SU 1811 0.48		21 0228 0.33 0848 1.88 TU 1520 0.15 2124 1.58		30 0342 1.43 1107 0.61 TH 1719 1.07 2215 0.82	
4 0049 0.65 0721 1.56 SA 1412 0.44 2009 1.21		13 0039 1.54 0706 0.53 MO 1300 1.27 1849 0.56		22 0319 0.29 0936 1.82 WE 1600 0.18 ● 2207 1.64		31 0454 1.43 1205 0.57 FR 1818 1.13 2329 0.77	
5 0134 0.59 0801 1.62 SU 1445 0.39 2042 1.27		14 0127 1.54 0810 0.56 TU 1400 1.17 1938 0.63		23 0411 0.28 1023 1.72 TH 1637 0.26 2249 1.68			
6 0214 0.53 0838 1.65 MO 1515 0.35 2113 1.32		15 0225 1.53 0929 0.56 WE 1519 1.10 ● 2045 0.69		24 0501 0.31 1109 1.57 FR 1713 0.36 2330 1.68			
7 0251 0.49 0912 1.67 TU 1544 0.33 ○ 2144 1.37		16 0338 1.55 1053 0.50 TH 1652 1.10 2210 0.69		25 0553 0.37 1155 1.41 SA 1747 0.47			
8 0328 0.46 0945 1.66 WE 1612 0.33 2215 1.42		17 0456 1.61 1204 0.41 FR 1808 1.18 2329 0.63		26 0012 1.66 0646 0.45 SU 1243 1.26 1820 0.59			
9 0405 0.44 1019 1.63 TH 1640 0.34 2247 1.47		18 0605 1.71 1303 0.30 SA 1906 1.28		27 0054 1.60 0744 0.53 MO 1333 1.14 1857 0.69			

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Golf *news*

Tradies Social Golf

Barry Thompson reports

Boomerang bounced back from the previous week's deluge to provide a pleasant venue for our Par event. Early tee-off allowed the 19 players to beat the heat and it was a great day for golf.

I won with a +2 (one of my rare appearances on the podium), followed by Jammu Fagerstrom (+1) and Ivan McMillan (+1). Iain Birss rounded out the prize list – provided by Helensburgh Butchery, Gallardo's Pizzeria and Helensburgh Driving Range – by taking the Bucket of Balls voucher.

Kynan presented his third card and now awaits the pleasure of Paul (Morahan the Merciless) for his handicap. Good luck, Kynan. With President Terry away annoying the residents of the south coast, Paul officiated at the presentation and thanks were extended to Mick Carroll for his work in organising the Jamberoo event. Thanks also to Jack Hardacker and John Towns for organising our BBQs.

Mick collected entries in the Match Play competition, and we can expect early emails advising us of our opposition.

Our next outing is at Boomerang on Saturday, 18th March. This is a Stableford event and we tee-off at 7am. Please arrive early to assist our starters. See you there!

Helensburgh Sunday Social Golf Club

Robert 'Indy' Jones reports

12 months ago we were looking for a boat rather than a cart and three months of struggling to see when or where we would play. So, it is with much pleasure we share the exploits of the HSSGC tour event on February 12th at Hurstville Golf Club.

Not looking at all out of form was Brett in 1st place with 39 points, followed by Mark O'Conner on 36 and Rob Carter on 35. On course, prizes were equally shared across the field with all of the nominated holes giving up their treasure. To cap off proceedings I note the consolation prize went to Mark Hardick, the score not to be revealed.

Next events are to be held at Hurstville, March 5th at 8am and April 2nd at 8am.

Updates to members via email and contact Tony on 0418 863 100 for membership information. Please continue to support our sponsors – Christian's Premium Meats and Helensburgh Golf Range – and join us to enjoy a game of golf, the outdoors and good company.

Indy signing off. An interesting thing about golf is that no matter how badly you play, it's always possible to get worse. 🌟

PRIDE BOARDS




On February 7, Surf Life Saving Australia launched the Pride Board – a term coined by lifesavers at Bellambi Surf Life Saving Club nearly two years ago. Now, more than 130 boards have been sent to surf clubs across the country and one to the UK. Full story on our website, titled 'Bellambi Patrol Behind New Pride Boards'.

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