THE DISTRICT
Bulletin
May 2016
67% PLANTATION GROWN 33%
COUNTRY LIVING in Queanbeyan and Palerang

SPECIAL REPORT: Roogate starts p7

Facelift for historic Queanbeyan bungalow 3
Sutton and Yass Valley face growth 4
NDIS making connections 6
Amalgamation decision mid May? 6
Living well, the good egg 11
New column, Your Money 12
Editorial – taking the train and other topical matters 12
Star search, arts 15
What's on 16

For all the children and Mums and Dads

... with thanks to those who care and act

Possums: Australia and Allsorts via Facebook

Gonski funding
prepares primary schoolers for a complex world

Maria Taylor visits Bungendore Primary to find out more

IT'S NOT a difficult concept. Fund schools based on equity and needs.

As Bungendore Primary's warm and energetic Principal Narelle Lloyd reminds us, the Gonski review panel agreed that inequity amongst schools had crept up over the years. "Gonski funding allows all students to come up to minimum standards," she says.

She also notes that the review panel was by no means a bunch of bleeding heart lefties. Far from it, the Liberal Party was liberally represented. Conceptually it's a bi-partisan effort and the NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli, from a rural electorate, is 100 percent behind the concept.

The previous Labor government's six year funding package was developed to address inequity and equalise opportunity for students across all Australian schools. Four years are secured.

But the present Coalition, since Tony Abbott promised a 'unity ticket' on Gonski funding in the lead-up to his election (only to break this promise among others), had dropped the last two funding years. With the May budget, this position has shifted somewhat but does not match Labor's campaign pledge to fund the full six years (See box at the end of this story, p2).

Bungendore – as would Braidwood or Sutton – has the schooling challenges of a small country town that copes without city enrichment opportunities within easy reach. Queanbeyan is not so different but Canberra is closer.

Narelle ticks off the equity checklist that informs a school's need for Gonski money. "Parents give us private information which is collated to present the full picture."

Items such as parents' socio-economic status, schooling and simple things like home reading, ethnic background (that may mean English is not a first language), a child's disability if relevant, remoteness of

Bungendore Primary students are getting more all-round help thanks to modern technology. From front: Evie, Sally, Charlotte, George – with Principal Narelle Lloyd and teacher Robynne Prosser at back.

>> p2

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Your Say...

Trying to catch the member for Eden-Monaro for a Gonski chat

by Bryce Wilson, President Jerrabomberra P & C (Delegate, Federation of NSW P&Cs)

From left: Anna Brown, Bryce Wilson and Bronwyn Lochrin outside Peter Hendy's office in Queanbeyan.

A GROUP of P&C and teacher representatives presented recent Reachtel Polling data to Peter Hendy's office in Queanbeyan at lunchtime on Friday 22 April. It should make for some sobering reading for him.

On the upside, the results are 51:49 (two party preferred) to the Liberal Party. However, there are some strong messages contained in the polling that Hendy can't ignore. Sixty percent of all voters in the poll supported the Gonski funding and 8.4 percent of Liberal voters are prepared to switch their vote if Gonski funding is not included in the Budget.

The poll was commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation in the electorate of Eden-Monaro. It revealed voters care deeply about education and they want Malcolm Turnbull to fund the final two years of the needs-based school funding model now universally called Gonski after the report that first recommended it.

The poll shows voters across all voting 'intentions' overwhelmingly support the continuation of the Gonski funding program in the May budget and beyond.

This is likely due to the results we are starting to see on the ground around our region as a result of the gradual implementation of this funding. School community members are seeing first hand that targeted investment in reading skills, in science resources, and in student wellbeing are starting to lift their child's or school's performance.

Local parents and teachers will continue to rally and press home this message to Mr Hendy. Local parents support giving Australia's kids a fair go and they're expecting the Coalition to lock in this fair go and to fund the last two years of Gonski

And the take home for Mr Hendy from this poll is that the Coalition-held seat of Eden-Monaro could be lost if the Turnbull Government fails to do just this. Sobering indeed. ■

GONSKI FUNDING *from p1*

the school, an Indigenous background – these are the triggers that may indicate some students need extra help with the curriculum. Very bright students may need extension help.

In Bungendore Primary, Narelle has found that kids needing additional help mostly need it with literacy and numeracy, and the yardstick of success with additional funding can be improvement of those. The so-called L-3 literacy program is a structure for younger students: language, learning and literacy. "We've seen big improvements in writing," said Narelle.

There are many outcomes harder to quantify on a test score when the right things are happening: confidence, articulateness, motivation. The feeling on the Bungendore playground and between students and teachers appears pretty confident to a visitor.

The Gonski funding has also helped to overcome the drawbacks of relative remoteness – providing support for after school activities such as music and dance studios; excursions such as this year's travel by the schools' recorder players to the Sydney Opera house; or getting students to a broader array of sporting events. The goal is to open a world beyond the school playground, the village oval and the video games.

Part of that knowledge enrichment is

Bungendore Primary Principal Narelle Lloyd with school captain George Linnegar.

coming with technology bought with Gonski money. "It's a team teaching exercise and improving skills of teachers and students. Many students have had iPads since they were in a stroller so schools have to keep up," noted Narelle with a laugh. Mathletics is used here to build up maths skills. There's also a spelling program called Spellodrome. No more old-fashioned spelling bees.

Mathletics, says Narelle, builds up visual and problem-solving skills as well as the ability to apply concepts. History, geography, science – new programs are coming in for all these.

Despite "a mountain of evidence" that the Gonski funding has been working, the lukewarm approach of the current federal government has got Narelle and fellow educators asking: "do we really value education as a nation"?

Seeking some answers, she said she and other area principals sought an interview with the federal member for Eden- Monaro Peter Hendy about a month ago. After receiving a form reply, they are still waiting. ■

NEWS FLASH

Budget update: The federal Coalition has announced it will partially make up the Abbott Cabinet funding shortfall that affects the Gonski reforms taking place in schools, but is imposing conditions on the states and territories at the same time.

A $1.2 billion increase will cover the 2018 to 2020 final Gonski years as well as an extra year. This signifies a 3.6 percent annual increase formula, compared with the 2.5 percent cost of inflation formula previously used under Abbott.

In contrast, the Labor Opposition has committed to full funding of the final Gonski years as originally planned, to the tune of $4.5 billion.

Political pundits are foreshadowing a major election fight over education as a result. ■

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A passion for heritage

by Christine M Knight

The California bungalow renovated by Anne-Maree and Phil Hastings in Queanbeyan. Heritage materials take time and patience to source and are not always available locally. But it's a bonding adventure to embark on say the Hastings.

THE WINNERS of the 2016 Queanbeyan Heritage Awards, Phil and Ann-Maree Hastings, purchased their heritage-listed house, located near the city's park, in 2009.

At the time of purchase, the Hastings planned not only to restore the house to its original glory but to renovate it by extending on its existing floor plan. The project proved to be an adventure and a labour of love.

The Hastings' house is historically significant as it is a prime example of the California bungalow, an inexpensive cottage style popular in the decade following World War I.

In 2016, there are only a few remaining authentic examples of California bungalows in the area. For the most part, the architectural styles surrounding the Hastings' property reflect influences on Australian home building in the region over the decades leading up to and including the 1960s.

Built in 1928 by Frank Mawson, a carpenter from Cooma, the Hastings' residence underwent several alterations from 1963 to 2009. Those alterations reflected fashions in construction at the time but were not true to the heritage features of the house.

When the Hastings purchased the property, their California bungalow had small rooms with dark panelled walls and contrasting dark, horizontal wooden trim running around the rooms from which pictures could be hung.

Looking at the 'before' restoration photographs, I was impressed by the Hastings' ability to imagine how they would restore the house to its former glory and their ability to see beyond the house's significant limitations at the time of their purchase. It was definitely a project that required imagination, patience, an interest in research, awareness that they were working with a living canvas, and the spirit of sculptors.

Their experience runs counter to my impression that renovation ventures are money pit projects, involving frustration and conflict. Phil and Ann-Maree found the project cemented their already close relationship.

The Hastings discovered that when differences did arise between them and contractors, they had occurred because 'things had been lost in translation'. Phil's advice to readers considering renovation projects is "don't assume the contractor has the visual knowledge that you and your architect have or that contractors have the prerequisite experience for installing heritage features".

So how did the house change?

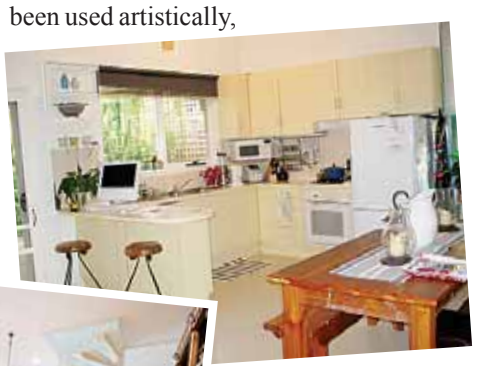
The Hastings fully renovated the roof. An unsightly dormer window structure, out of character with the original heritage features of the house, was reconstructed so it was historically accurate. The original red cedar shingles located under the roof gable areas of the house were replaced with new western red cedar shingles.

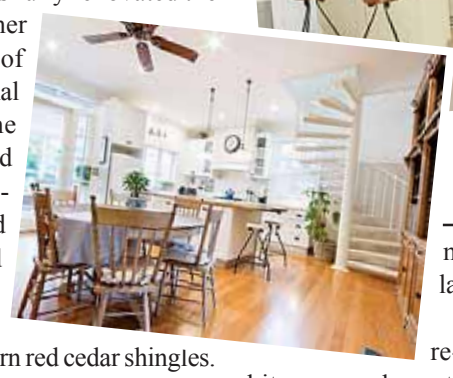
The kitchen and dining area required significant refurbishment. Recycled hardwood flooring was introduced over the original floor – a mixture of concrete and floorboards. A custom, period-styled kitchen was installed.

Natural lighting was improved in the kitchen and dining area. Floor to ceiling French doors were introduced and a restored leadlight window was inserted above the new fireclay sink and adjacent stone bench tops. A battened ceiling was introduced over the original horsehair plaster ceiling. As an aside, horsehair plaster is notoriously difficult to paint; modern products just peel off.

A new bedroom and verandah were constructed at the rear of the existing house requiring the conversion of an existing smaller bedroom into a period style bathroom, associated laundry and corridor space.

The interior colour palettes used in the project are true to the 1928 use of tones popular in that period. Shades of beige have been used artistically, making rooms seem large and light.





Kitchen before (above) and after renovation.

Photos: Adam McGrath of Hcreations

The driveway was re-surfaced with recycled bitumen and most of the existing garden design, including cobblestone paths at the front of the house and stone retaining walls and steps at the rear of the home, were retained and restored.

My favourite spaces are the kitchen and rear verandah.

The Hastings discovered that their home renovation project was a form of relaxation, a channel for their creative expression, and a passion ignited. ■

Queanbeyan heritage awards

Queanbeyan City Council runs a very successful heritage awards program to recognise work undertaken by the owners of heritage properties and to promote heritage in a positive manner. The awards are given in recognition of the effort required to maintain, restore and preserve the city's heritage. This is the nineteenth year of the awards, held in April annually.

In addition to the winning property on The Crescent, other 2016 winners were the owners of 11 Surveyor St for use of materials and garden improvements and, for promotion/contribution to heritage, Marilyn Folger, a major contributor to the Queanbeyan Museum. ■

Bywong, Wamboin facebook page erupts with sympathy

at cruel shooting of a "beautiful, gentle soul" (possibly once rescued and released) Eastern Grey Kangaroo

ON THE ANZAC long weekend, Sherri from Wamboin posted on the Bywong Wamboin facebook hub:

'We' have a problem. Yesterday, Wildcare rescued a male kangaroo, found on the side of Macs Reef Road, between the Denley and Birriwa turn-offs. You can see what the problem is from the photograph. It has a crossbow bolt or broken-off arrowhead sticking out of its lower back. And looking at the level of infection it has been there for some time. It beggars belief that we have someone in our community with a lethal weapon who thinks it is OK to take pot shots at our wildlife in this way.

"Those property owners in and around this area of Macs Reef Road area may wish to ask some questions. If you have any information about this incident then please contact the police 6298 0555 [ask for Bungendore station enquiry into this incident] and also inform the National Parks and Wildlife Service on 6299 7166."

After a desperate day and night effort to first find an available vet on a long weekend and then have him operated on (done by West Queanbeyan veterinary surgery), the kangaroo unfortunately died the following morning. Wildcare volunteers Sherri and Peter were told by the vet the animal was very emaciated and there was only a slim chance of recovery after a barbed arrow was removed from where it embedded in his spine. (See picture and inset of arrowhead.)

The outrage and support on the community facebook page was lengthy and unanimous. For example:

Alice – OMG that is just plain crazy, what kind of person could possibly think that is in some way ok?

Kyleigh – Sadly this has happened quite a few times that I am aware of. I don't care what you think about 'roos, I don't care how much of 'your grass' they eat and I don't care whether you are inconvenienced if they damage your car or fences. These are living creatures who feel pain. This type of behaviour is totally unacceptable. NO animal deserves to be treated like this. Makes my blood boil.

Becca – This is terrible. I'm so sad that this poor roo suffered in pain for so long and then lost his life all because some bastard wanted something to do. I hope they find the person, shoot them with an arrow, leave it in them, let it get infected, then wait a month and kill them! This is just so disgusting. RIP you beautiful boy. ANIMALS FEEL PAIN THE SAME AS HUMANS TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT!!!!

Penny – thank you so much for caring for the poor roo. If only one thing positive comes from this, it is that so many other people feel the same revulsion as you do. Also, that more people are aware that they can do something if they come across someone with these weapons (eg while jogging or on their property). It's no longer just "mucking around" or re-enacting a scene from *Game of Thrones*. It is a serious offence.

Pauline – Surely it illegal to use a high powered weapon such as this in our community and used against our wildlife [it is illegal]. One day a child, a mother, or a grandfather will be shot like this. Hopefully someone in our close knit community will reveal who this person is!

[She also posted] A kangaroo was caught via a Snare trap (near Bywong Town) last year. A horrendously slow death if Wildcare hadn't intervened. Wildcare wrote a strong letter to the bloke concerned. RSPCA didn't want to know. The police were called in to verify the crime. It has never happened again.

Jason – (who also loves his neighbourhood Wedgetail Eagles and says people in his neighbourhood also abuse wombats with bows and arrows then tells this story) Five years ago I accidentally hit a roo, mother killed joey rescued. She was rehabilitated and I picked her up and returned her to her mob 8km from my place. But she still returns to my place every year, to the house yard with the kelpies. When she comes they lick her and she somehow licks them back. I have no idea how she knows where we reside, but she comes back year after year. It's strange how our world revolves!

Editor's comment: Does the state-sanctioned wholesale killing of wildlife, as if they are widgets, give people like this perpetrator ideas?

POLICE LOOKING INTO ANIMAL CRUELTY CASE OF SHOT 'ROO

"I'D LOVE TO lock up the person who did that," said Sergeant Tim Saunders of Bungendore Police. "It's terrible."

He's hoping someone from the Bywong/Wamboin community will offer information that points to the perpetrator, as the most likely way to track them down. Anyone with information is invited to contact Saunders at the Bungendore station 6238 1244 or via Queanbeyan 6298 0555.

Since Wildcare and Possumwood Sanctuaries have had to rescue a female kangaroo and a wombat in the past month shot with guns and left for dead, Saunders was asked whether this type of activity is on the increase.

He affirmed there have been more reports in recent months and said the police will always investigate reports from people in the neighbourhood of shooting, so people should report, not least on human or other animal safety concerns. ■

Sutton, Gundaroo and the Yass Valley consider growth spurts as rural living continues popularity

*Sutton village has been considering a Yass Valley shire master-planning exercise. Community association president **Richard Marson** reports on the bigger picture.*

A REPORT ON 'Canberra leaking over the Border' in the *Canberra Times* a couple of years ago noted that the population of the Capital Region surrounding the ACT has recently been growing at a faster rate than the ACT itself (SGS Economics and Planning, 2014).

With cheaper land, larger block sizes and country-style living, Palerang and Yass Valley in particular have shown very strong growth in small farms, lifestyle blocks and towns such as Yass, Murrumbateman, Gundaroo, Bungendore and Sutton. Sutton is the smallest of these settlements and the closest to the northern border of the ACT, with the village itself having a population of about 250 people and the surrounding statistical district about 5,000.

According to the SGS report, at least one in every ten Canberra workers lives outside the ACT, and because the ACT's population is concentrated in the north and east of the Territory, the local government areas to the north and east tend to have the most Canberra workers.

But there is a conundrum: while Canberrans might move to the region to enjoy the ambience and charm of a rural village lifestyle, if the new residents continue to do most of their shopping and recreation in Canberra, these settlements can suffer. How are such communities to continue nurturing their unique sense of social and communal cohesion, as well as a sense of identity, belonging and place?

Feedback from Sutton residents indicate a strong preference for the types of life-style offerings synonymous with rural settlements; eg the perception of quiet, slow living and space with open landscape vistas. Many younger families have chosen to live outside of Canberra itself, potentially signalling that the rural-residential lifestyle is their preferred environment for raising children.

More recent Canberra media articles highlighting the growth pressures facing regional towns and villages have included commentary on tensions between 'pro' and 'anti' development within the communities. [Ed note: The tensions relate to farmland subdivisions on the council drawing board as well as a long-standing village extension subdivision plan around Sutton. Water and sewer issues have in the past stopped further development in both Sutton and Gundaroo. There has been no publicly-announced resolution of those challenges].

At a lively workshop hosted by the Sutton and District Community Association in the Sutton Hall, about 60 residents gathered to discuss future village growth and the master planning process. Sutton residents and interested others from as far afield as Mulligans Flat, Wamboin and Bungendore enthusiastically did a brainstorming session, covering several sheets of butcher's paper with ideas of what they value about living in Sutton.

There were many interesting comments and suggestions. People's ideas were captured under seven categories: Economy; Population; Environment; Liveability; Infrastructure; 'Don't Want'; and Other. At the broadest level, everybody agreed that the maintenance of village character was paramount, that no development should include block sizes less than 2,000 square metres – and we all can't wait until The Baker opens for business in the next month or so.

By the time the final, half-day workshop is held later this month, the community will be able to make comment on the draft form of the Sutton Masterplan before it is finalised and made available by Council for formal consultation. ■

Photo: Elita Barrett via Facebook

NEWSFLASH: Sutton will soon have a bakery café operated by Nick Smith who runs the popular bakery at the Fyshwick Markets. Nick said he's already installing the bicycle racks. Stay tuned.

NSW and ACT new campaign to reduce country road toll

YASS VALLEY Council will coordinate a new Country Roads Safety Campaign, supported also by the NRMA, said Director Kate Lundy.

The aim of the campaign is to encourage Southern NSW and ACT jurisdictions to work with each other towards reducing accidents on country roads in our region.

Although only one third of NSW residents live in rural areas, over two thirds of all road fatalities in the state occur on country roads, representing a fatality rate per 100,00 population four times that of metropolitan residents.

In the Palerang area it is significant that 33% of all road crashes involve ACT licensed drivers. ■

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As the Autumn leaves start to fall we find ourselves rugging up to escape the Winter's cold. However, the winter period is often overlooked as a perfect opportunity to market property at a time when there are fewer competing homes. A home with solar passive qualities, a broad northerly orientation or with excellent insulation and heating will stand out, particularly at this time of year.

If you are considering a move in the current market there are a few things to keep in mind:

Brighten up the exterior. It is important to make a good first impression. You can freshen up your home by placing winter flowers to breathe life into the garden. Raking leaves, mowing the lawn, and pruning bushes that may contain dead flowers will all help your home look more vibrant.

Colours to add warmth. Colours and textures can be used strategically throughout your home to maximise a sense of comfort. Think woollen throws, thick blankets and cushions on lounges and beds. Consider fabrics with orange, red and purple overtones.

Clean windows. As winter days can be overcast, having clean windows allows the natural light to stream into the home making it feel bright and welcoming.

Lighting. In a similar vein to the above, you can use lighting in your home to brighten up any dark corners. Lamps and candles can be used as mood lighting to create that cosy feeling.

Heating. A crackling fire appeals to all senses and invokes an emotional response; a glass of wine and a good book? Remember to have heating systems serviced to ensure a lasting impression is created.

For more tips and benefits of a winter sale strategy contact us today to discuss your plans further.

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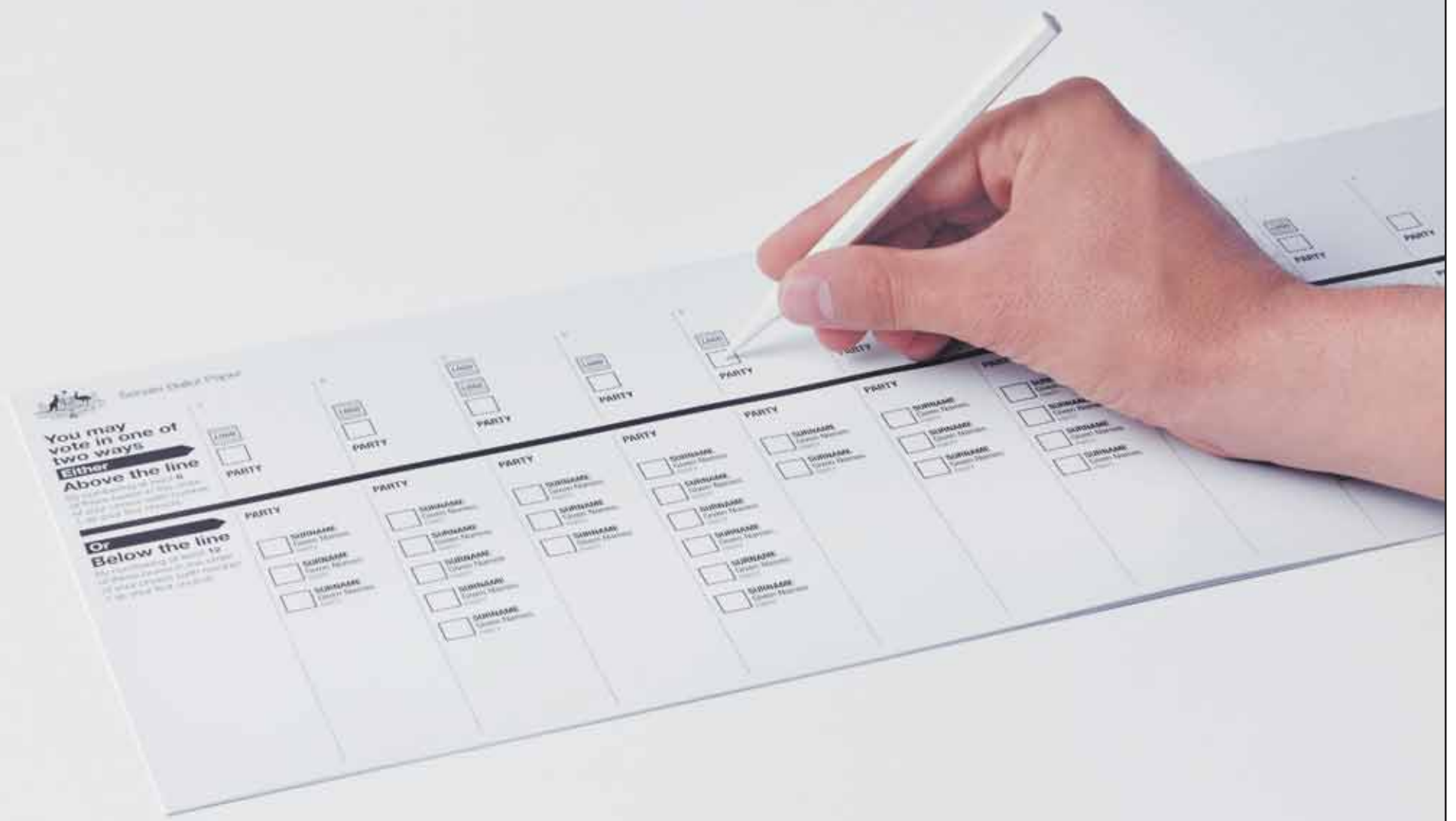

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If you choose to vote below the line, you must number at least 12 boxes, from 1 to 12, for individual candidates in the order of your choice.

Voting for the House of Representatives has not changed. On the green ballot paper, you must number every box, starting with the number '1' for your first choice, '2' for your second choice and so on until you have numbered every box.

'How to vote' instructions will be clearly displayed on your ballot paper. Don't worry if you make a mistake — just ask for another ballot paper.

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Authorised by the Electoral Commissioner, 50 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra ACT.

Young local lands his (first) dream job

creates positive influence across the business

REMEMBER the thrill of receiving your first ever pay packet? For all of us, landing your first job is one of life's major milestones. It's also a crucial step on the path to independence.

But for people with disability finding a job can be fraught with obstacles.

One of the most significant of these can be being overlooked before you've been given the chance to prove yourself. That all too familiar 'foot in the door' can be an opportunity denied to many people with disabilities when assumptions are made before they even make it to the interview stage.

Not so for Queanbeyan local John Catling. John has an intellectual disability and has just landed the permanent part time role of 'general factory hand' at Ryleho, a timber door and window manufacturer in town.

John's employer is Tony Barilaro who owns Ryleho, a family-owned business that has operated in the Queanbeyan community for the past 30 years.

John met Tony last July after Tony was approached by local disability service provider Northcott to see if he would be interested in taking on one of their clients for work experience. This was after John had displayed a passion for woodwork while attending Northcott's Life Skills program.

***L to R:** Siemie Steffens (Northcott Life Skills and Transition to Work Coordinator), John Catlink (staff), in back ground Dave Harverson (staff), Tony Barilaro (managing director Ryleho).*

It's been a highly successful match ever since

Northcott Life Skills and Transition to Work Coordinator Siemie Steffens says that "since John has been working at Ryleho his confidence has sky rocketed. He makes frequent eye contact now, talks a lot more, shows independence, turns up on time and greets people in the work place. This is a significant change in his behaviour and it is an absolute joy to see".

Tony says of John: "he's a very pleasant, gentle guy and he's meticulous in the way he works". Reports from John's supervisor are that his willingness to work and overall attitude is so good that he's having a positive impact across the business.

Siemie Steffens says that one of the key benefits for employers hiring someone with a disability is their willingness to work, low sick rates and high productivity.

Northcott is looking for new partnerships with businesses and Siemie's message to employers is to "give [people with disability] a go. Don't assume, experience it for yourself and embrace the opportunity".

Tony says the experience of employing John has been extremely positive both for him and his staff at Ryleho; "with the right training, the right guidance and the right ongoing support you can achieve a great outcome. I would recommend this program to any organisation."

NDIS rollout

If you or a family member have a disability and would like support to achieve your goals, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) could help you get there. The NDIS will be rolled out across NSW from 1 July. Northcott has been operating under the NDIS in numerous trial sites in both NSW and the ACT since July 2013. For more information, please call us on 1800 818 286.

— Story provided by Northcott

Queanbeyan plan to better include disabled people

Queanbeyan City Council just held its final consultation session in developing a Disability Inclusion Access Plan for the city.

The idea of the plan is to engage with the disability community to bring about solutions for better inclusion in, and access to the services, information, employment and infrastructure they require within their daily lives.

For more information contact Debbie Gillman on 6285 6551 or debbie.gillman@qcc.nsw.gov.au

Placating the National Party and NSW Farmers:

Land clearing looms for NSW after disastrous run in Queensland

Tree-planting efforts, to lower greenhouse gas emissions, wiped out *by Jennie Goldie*

IN 2013, under the Campbell Newman government, Queensland relaxed its land clearing laws. Over the next year, 300,000 hectares of native woodlands were cleared in the state, releasing 36 million tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere, more than six percent of Australia's entire emissions.

Meanwhile, the newly elected Abbott government introduced its Direct Action Plan that has since paid farmers $670 million to *not* cut down trees. Tree-clearing in Queensland in the past three years, however, has virtually wiped out all emissions savings made under Direct Action.

Fortunately, in March, the Queensland Government introduced legislation to reverse Newman's lax tree-clearing laws, though the bill has been sent to committee. Despite the delay, it is a welcome move and may set an example to other states that are intent on relaxing their own laws, not least in NSW.

Here, the Baird government is proposing to repeal the *Native Vegetation Act*, *Threatened Species Act* and parts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* and introduce a new *Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

Photo: Roelant Lawerman via Facebook

Environmental groups say koala populations collapsed in Queensland by 50% during the three years of land clearing encouraged by the Newman government.

The legislation to be repealed has long been opposed by farming groups and the National Party, tragically highlighted by the case of compliance officer Glen Turner in 2014. He was shot dead on a dirt road near Moree while responding to reports of illegal land clearing.

Drafting the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* has been done in consultation with NSW Farmers but not environmentalists who walked out of discussions in February. They warn that the surge in land clearing that occurred in Queensland after 2013 will happen in NSW.

Because land clearing gives rise to significant emissions, any weakening of land clearing laws will threaten Australia's chances of meeting even its modest targets for emission reduction promised in Paris last year.

These targets are not enough to help the world keep global warming to less than 2°C, or ideally, 1.5°C, above pre-industrial levels. Indeed, if all countries adopted the same targets as Australia, the world would warm by 3–4°C which would see the complete demise of the Great Barrier Reef.

On Earth Day, April 22, in New York, Environment Minister Greg Hunt signed the Paris Agreement on behalf of Australia. Significantly, despite attending meetings of the 'high ambitions coalition' in Paris, Australia was excluded this time. Clearly, the group deemed our ambitions too low. For many reasons, not least for the sake of the Reef, let us hope Australia lifts its ambition. ■

The ICE 'epidemic' real and perceived

Drug and alcohol services come back into focus

LANGUAGE is a powerful force isn't it? The skill to inform, while simultaneously scaring our pants off, is a skill usually reserved for politicians and their spin doctors.

Recent reports concerning the use of Crystal Methamphetamine (Ice) in our community are alarming, and when described by experts as 'epidemic', they certainly make us sit up and take notice.

AROUND QTown

with ***Graham Franklin-Browne***

Do we really have an epidemic of ice-users and increasing drug abuse in Queanbeyan and region?

Well, using a dictionary definition of something that appears 'global', 'universal', or 'ubiquitous', probably not. However it also depends on which street or alleyway you may be standing in, and whether or not someone you love is a victim of drugs, or a crime associated with them.

A recent study commissioned by volunteers of the Queanbeyan Community Drug Action Team (CDAT), included a set of NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics revealing that the rate of drug offences in the Queanbeyan region was actually 621.8 per population of 100,000 – considerably less than the NSW average of 770.2.

Alcohol seen as the greater problem

Despite this, a number of public perception surveys conducted last year by the local CDAT team suggest that the Queanbeyan community believes that we have a problem, most especially with alcohol.

The most common words to leap out of the statistical 'word cloud' methodology used by the CDAT team, clearly point to violence (public and domestic), lack of funding for resources, and lack of awareness, as key areas of community concern.

The CDAT study, which included 203 community, and 50 business surveys, and a stakeholder round table event, identified that the biggest problems for the Queanbeyan area were:

- Limited knowledge about drug and alcohol services; >> p14

Queanbeyan council votes to investigate media leaks, puts financial plan on public exhibition

by Graham Franklin-Brown

QUEANBEYAN councillors voted at their April meeting to ask for an investigation into alleged leaks from council sources of "confidential information" to local media.

Ahead of discussion and voting on Queanbeyan's Long Term Financial Plan, Mayor Tim Overall moved that leakage of council-commissioned financial audit information to members of the local press be referred to the NSW Office of Local Government for investigation.

"The public release of material or information disclosed at a councillor workshop contravenes Council's Code of Meeting Practice and by inference, may then constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct," stated the mayoral minute.

A particular audit report, undertaken by local government expert Professor Percy Allen, raised questions about council's financial performance in regard to setting aside funds for future infrastructure maintenance (asset renewal) and discussed various options for rate increases and service cuts.

The report in question had however been the subject of a late March public presentation organised by council, featuring Professor Allen. April stories in local Fairfax media including the *Queanbeyan Age* and the *Canberra Times* as well as the *District Bulletin* were offered as evidence of an alleged code of conduct breach. A budget working paper was also referenced.

As reported by the *Bulletin* in April in the context of proposed amalgamation of Queanbeyan with Palerang, the audit analysed that Palerang standing alone was marginally financially sustainable but was looking at a very high future infrastructure backlog.

(Looking at both councils' positions under current financial policies) a merger with Queanbeyan looked increasingly unsustainable financially over 10 years. A NSW government rate freeze for merged councils as proposed for four years would call for very large increases in fees and charges eventually to catch up (true throughout NSW).

One of the councillors who voted against the referral to the Office of Local Government, Councillor Brian Brown, said the motion to investigate media leaks was a "strawman", a distraction, and that a more wide-ranging investigation into the council's financial policy settings might explain how Queanbeyan ratepayers "got into this mess".

An "optimal scenario" in the Allen report was finally adopted by council as part of its Long Term Financial Plan.

The preferred approach offers a mix of rate, fee, and other revenue increases which council believes will enable Queanbeyan to achieve its benchmark outcomes over a ten-year period, with the least impact on ratepayers.

The Long Term Financial Plan will be on public exhibition for 28 days (basically May) and available on Council's website **www.qcc.nsw.gov.au**. It is open to submissions and comment before council's final endorsement. ■

Word has it that NSW announcement on council amalgamations will be made mid-May.

No "business case" for merger: Federal representative Dr Peter Hendy (economist) has come out against council amalgamations in Eden-Monaro.

SPECIAL REPORT:

Roogate

Author and Sydney University associate professor* David Brooks *tries to understand the almost inexplicable basis for the ACT government's annual reign of terror on communities of Eastern Grey Kangaroos in Canberra and nearby public land.

This is happening in a national context where commercial meat and hide 'harvesting' of millions of kangaroos and large-scale massacres by some landholders (particularly in Queensland at the moment), threaten to reduce the kangaroo to koala status – another iconic Australian, now listed as endangered – also once considered to be limitless and killed in the millions for the fur trade or due to human desire for its habitats.

SHOT UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, buried in mass graves in the forest. But this isn't Srebrenica in 1995, this isn't Poland in 1942. The shooters aren't rogue militants or members of the SS. They are sub-contractors paid by the government of the Australian Capital Territory, and the victims are not humans but a different species of animal. Many of them female, with, at foot or in the pouch, joeys who will be clubbed to death, decapitated, or otherwise summarily dispatched, if they are looked for at all.

This is part of a campaign of annual mass killing of kangaroos that has been going on in the ACT since 2009, almost 11,000 buried on reserves according to a recent account.[1] This figure doesn't include almost 14,000 killed by the Department of Defence on licence from the same government (dubbed that government's 'dirty secret'[2]) or the far larger number killed yearly by rural landholders under individual licences from the ACT government (11,455 in 2015 alone[3]).

Belconnen 2008.

Why this killing is happening is hard to determine. It is almost certainly not for the reason – that kangaroo 'over-grazing' is 'threatening biodiversity' and destroying one of the last areas of temperate grassland in Australia – put forward by the ACT government.

The principal reason stares us in the face – or would, if so many hadn't turned their back on it, as is usually the case when there is (I apologise for the animal metaphor) an elephant in the room. The rapid expansion of the National Capital in recent decades and the extensions of supporting infrastructure have had a devastating impact upon kangaroo habitat. *Humans* are the greatest threat to biodiversity; nothing destroys an area of natural temperate grassland like a new suburb. Kangaroos are quite simply being forced to pay the price for human priorities.

And for them, as scapegoats, the situation is in fact an awful, compounding abyss. If they migrate to avoid the new suburbs their numbers intensify in and increase the pressure on adjoining grasslands; if they move into the suburbs in search of grass when their adjoining grazing areas are exhausted, their encounters – and conflicts – with humans increase.

The expanding suburbs multiply the number of roads across kangaroo territory, making movement more dangerous, increasing the number of encounters with cars; kangaroos are shot because their numbers are deemed by some to be too great for their diminishing grazing areas, and the traumatic impact of these shootings (the slaughter of friends, family, destruction of social networks), plus the cars, the deprivation of native habitat, affect their character, lead to what some call 'aggressive' behaviours (read post-traumatic stress, PTSD) that erode the sympathy of the *human* community and make kangaroos even more vulnerable to human aggression.

Although unofficial and peri-official communications occasionally admit some of this,[4] the *official* position of the ACT government is, as I have stated, quite different. The kangaroos are eating down the biomass (just call it grass, since a kind of verbal obfuscation has marked the government's attempts to justify this campaign).

With the kangaroo population now drastically reduced in some of its KMUs ('Kangaroo Management Units': read parks, wildlife reserves, reclaimed and rezoned grazing properties, the airport, the Department of Defence's weapons training range), leaving a biomass (grass, weeds) that is rapidly growing, the ACT government has recently brought in cattle (cattle!, whose hooves, unlike the feet of the kangaroo, which have evolved to such conditions, do so much damage) and employ controlled burns to reduce the grass.

New management of sensitive ACT reserve grasslands: cattle grazing, burning. Photographed 2016.

The ACT government claims that, when the *kangaroos* reduce the biomass (as contrasted, let's say, to rapid urban expansion), it has a detrimental effect on some species of flora and fauna – the Grassland Earless Dragon, the Striped Legless Lizard, the Golden Sun Moth, the Perunga Grasshopper, the Button Wrinklewort – whose populations and species-viability are endangered.

But the ACT's Senior Ecologist, who would appear to have had a significant role in the genesis of this program of mass killing, and whose PhD thesis looked at the possibility of 'overgrazing' by Eastern Grey Kangaroos (a conflict of interest there?), has actually admitted in public that the ACT government's reference to endangered species is largely a PR exercise.[5] And of course it is, since the same government has already taken measures (eg fenced 'kangaroo exclusion zones') to ensure the species-safety of these endangered creatures (yet is prepared to expose them to the feet of cattle, and will do less to control the foxes and feral cats who prey upon some of them).

Leaving aside the facts that the means of determining optimum biomass are far from clear, and that the ACT government hasn't yet produced any real evidence that the killing of the kangaroos has had any positive effect upon the population of the aforementioned small reptiles and other endangered species, there is also, and one would think most importantly, the matter of how the number of kangaroos to be killed each year is arrived at in the first place.

The ACT's Senior Ecologist (again) is on public record as having admitted to a 2013 hearing of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) that he couldn't remember how he had arrived at some of these figures.[6]

Indeed a special report, commissioned by the ACT government and undertaken by an invasive-mammal specialist from New Zealand and a Victorian expert in pest species[7] (more conflict of interest here?) recommended in 2014 that the ACT government not only be more rigorous and transparent concerning their kangaroo-counting methods, but that it not use the term 'carrying capacity' when it came to the ideal number of kangaroos per hectare in the KMUs, since it had no real way of knowing what this capacity was.

The report recommended that the ACT government use instead the term 'target density', which if nothing else is a great deal more honest (its sad pun aside). But the ACT government is no more convincing now than it was before in terms of its kangaroo-counting methods – in fact appears to employ methods which its own consultants recommended it *not* employ – and still uses the term 'carrying capacity' rather than 'target density'.[8] 'Carrying capacity', after all, sounds a lot more like they know what they are doing.

According to the ACT government's account, they are struggling to contain an over-population of over-grazing kangaroos. According to other accounts[9] – those that point out that kangaroos breed slowly and have a high juvenile mortality (around 73%), that maximum wild population growth rates average approximately 10% in optimum conditions, with annual declines of up to 60% during

FOOTNOTES

1 *The Canberra Times* 6.vii.15

2 'Anger at Defence cull of 14,000 Kangaroos', *The Canberra Times*, 2.ix.13. See http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/anger-at-defence-cull-of-14000-kangaroos-20130901-2sz23.html

3 2015 licences were in fact issued for a cull quota of 20,722 (figures from ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna, 23 February 2016). The 2010 Kangaroo Management Plan gives an 'indicative' figure of 42,695 kangaroos culled under individual licence from 1997–2009 (inclusive), an average of 3,284 for those years. The 2015 figure is just under three and a half times this.

4 'Is it fair', wrote the minister until recently responsible Shane Rattenbury, 'that individual animals must pay the ultimate price for the effects of ever-encroaching human settlement?

'No it's not fair. But it's the right thing to do.' (letter to *The Canberra Times*, 21 May 2015)

5 See http://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/kangaroo-killing-canberra.php. The Senior Ecologist admitted this to the 2013 ACAT hearing (As well as in Attachment A of the dossier detailed in note 9).

6 See http://www.theage.com.au/it-pro/act-government-ecologist-defends-kangaroo-cull-figures-at-hearing-20140605-zrz34.html

7 See http://www.arcohab.org/#!point1/c1l85

8 See http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_re leases/tamsd/2015/ conservation-cull-to-take-place-in-act-grasslands-and-woodlands

and https://www.facebook.com/shanerattenburymla/posts/10152877517518181:0

9 Eg Ray Mjadwesch, on p19 of a dossier with evidence ('complaint and request for investigation') prepared by members of Regional

drought, and that cull rates even as 'low' as 15–20% therefore exceed population growth rates.

The ACT government's current cull-rates which are hard to determine, (change from one KMU to another) but appear to average 30–40% and have been as high as 80%, are driving the mobs in question toward extinction.

> **“ Cull rates appear to average 30—40 across 'management units' and have been as high as 80% on some reserves. [Destroying mob structure and effect on orphaned young are not mentioned by the ACT managers.]**

Or would, if we were dealing – as it would seem the ACT very much wants us to think we are dealing – with a stable kangaroo population in the first place. But it would seem we are not. There is, for example, the most interesting story of the Googong Eight Hundred.

At the 2009 ACAT hearing the aforementioned and, it would appear, somewhat conflicted Senior Ecologist argued that Eastern Grey Kangaroos (EGKs) were 'relatively sedentary and loyal to a particular area'. In the *2013* hearing of ACAT, however, he admitted that he had got this wrong. His earlier 'expert' account of Eastern Grey Kangaroos as 'relatively sedentary and loyal to a particular area' had been incorrect. He had not allowed for 'inward migration'.

THE GOOGONG 800

In explanation he told the story of a 'roo cull on the Googong Reserve undertaken by the ACT government in 2004, a cull about which, ironically, he seems to have been quite uneasy at the time, according to email traffic obtained under Freedom of Information. Before the cull there had been 800 kangaroos on the reserve. Five hundred were culled, to reduce that population to an environmentally sustainable figure of 300. This should have been an end to it. Soon after the cull had been completed, however, the population had returned to 800. The cull, in other words, had been quite useless.

All very well. It is good to admit one's errors. But the *2009* cull – and the numbers involved – had been approved on the basis of the Senior Ecologist's advice that EGKs were 'relatively sedentary and loyal to a particular area'. His 2013 admission – in effect that Eastern Grey Kangaroos killed in open system reserves may immediately be replaced by kangaroos from close by[10] – becomes in this light an admission that, unless the area involved is thoroughly fenced, *all* culling is useless until such time as the population of kangaroos in the surrounding area is itself dramatically reduced or gone.

Does this mean, as it would appear to, that most of the ACT culling has been a more-or-less useless endeavour? And why on earth, five years after the Googong fiasco, was the Senior Ecologist still speaking of sedentary populations? Was he so slow to realise? Was he repressing information? Was this, to bring the kindest words to it, just a terrible blunder?

The only alternative explanation – but how could this be? – is that KMUs in the ACT, under a smoke screen of environmental protection, biodiversity, etc., are being used as killing-zones to reduce, or eliminate over time, the wider kangaroo population of the area.

It's not, after all, as if there aren't very viable alternatives to the killing (and, Canberrans take note, potentially far less expensive ones). Although the concept is not without its own ethical problems (surely our fellow animals should be allowed to conduct their lives as fully as we wish to conduct our own), there is, for example, the possibility of population reduction through contraception, rather than slaughter.

> **“ In 2013 the ACT government spent $182 per head to kill kangaroos. (Multiply this cost by several thousand a year.)**

There is also (or would be, if we *were* dealing with a sedentary population) the very real possibility of relocation, a private trial of which suggested that it might be done for between $10 and $50 per head, a fraction of the price that the ACT government is currently paying to have them killed (in 2013, $182 per head).[11] Why this alternative, brought up continuously, has not been employed has been something of a mystery.[12] In the light of inward migration, however, the reason seems clear: one would simply be engaging in an endless and futile game of musical chairs.

To do them justice, and how can one demand justice without extending it, the ACT government does appear to have been trialling a contraception option. At least, they have been talking about it, unenthusiastically, for some time. One wonders if this too isn't a PR exercise. (Or if the real problem with it is that it would compromise the Experiment – of which more shortly.)

THE EIGHT PAPERS

To do them further justice – but I have my tongue in my cheek here, for this is in fact a travesty, an intellectual insult to the people of Canberra – they have put up on their website[13] summaries of eight scientific papers which they claim validate their cull. Opposition to the cull has several times in the media in the last eighteen months been dismissed by reference to this body of expert evidence.

Citing these papers thus, however, is tantamount to admitting that one hasn't read them (not that the ACT government makes that easy[14]). These papers are a study in themselves. While I don't dispute the competence of the researchers involved, the claims made for these papers by the ACT government are misleading in the extreme.

> ***“ an intellectual insult to the people of Canberra and region***

Given the use to which that government tries to put them, they become far more a case of conflict of interest, research cadre formation, and scientific/bureaucratic encryption than of independent, objective, state-of-the-science evaluation.

To give just a taste, three of these papers were written by a first-class honours student then PhD candidate previously employed and still, it seems, part funded by the ACT government.[15]

Of these three papers, directly contrary to the government's claims, two, at the time the ACT government first vaunted them (and still, at the time of the 2015 cull) had not only not yet been published (one, it seemed, had not yet even been peer reviewed), but had actually been co-authored by the aforementioned ACT Senior Ecologist. The third, short-titled *'Eaten out of House and Home'* and summarised as a kind of Infomercial on The Conversation site on 12 December 2014, is not nearly as watertight and conclusive as its proponent authors make it out to be.

Another, on the Grassland Earless Dragon (*T. pinguicolla*), seems actually to contradict the ACT government's position ('It is clear *T. pinguicolla* is in decline, but the causes of that decline are not readily identified'[16]). Still others support the ACT position largely or only by referring, in a curiously circular manner, to the ACT government's own Kangaroo Management Plan (KMP) for figures that the government in *its* turn claims that *the papers* provide.

All of these papers, too, are co-authored, as is often the way with scientific papers, but lest this be taken as

Why David Brooks wrote this essay

I have been hearing about the Canberra kangaroo cull for several years with mounting horror and have deplored it at various points in other things I've written. Last year I was one of fifty national and international signatories to an Open Letter to the people of Canberra, calling for an end to the cull.

At 6am on the morning of the letter's publication, dragged from my bed, I was 'interviewed' by an ABC Rural journalist, although rounded upon might be a better term. Amongst other things he claimed that the Eight Papers (see below) justified the cull finally and thoroughly, and cut me off before I could adequately respond.

I realised that the abuse and misrepresentation of these papers had not only to be carefully exposed, but that someone had to set it as clearly as they could within the wider story of this horrid fiasco. The Canberra kangaroos need every bit of help they can get.

Healthy kangaroo on Mt Painter in 2012 before most of the kangaroos on the reserve were shot in subsequent years.

June 2012.

Friends of Wildlife in Palerang and ACT for presentation to the ACT Commissioner for the Environment in 2013. https://warmandwildblog.wordpress.com/55-2/regional-friends-of-wildlife-submission-2013/

10 Ibid. (dossier). The truth, as is often the case, would seem to lie somewhere between. Research has demonstrated that EGKs *are* relatively 'sedentary', but over a territory of approximately ten square kilometres. Within any such territory, however, there will be many mobs, each with its own slightly differing territory. Any one $10k^2$ area will overlap with numerous others, so that boundaries cannot be fixed, and the migration toward better (ie recently vacated) grazing land (and so supply to the cullers) need not be impeded. Unfenced, a zone of consistent killing can therefore become a species drain for a much wider area.

11 See http://www.awrc.org.au/uploads/5/8/6/6/5866843/garlick_austen_ translocation2.pdf – item 5.6, and http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/annual-roo-cull-costs-182-a-head-20131115-2xmw9.html

12 Particularly mysterious is the fact that, when the Australian Navy attempted to relocate, rather than kill, the kangaroos slated for death

evidence of a wide experience-pool, it should be noted that, amongst these co-authors, the same names keep coming up again and again, locating the pool of expertise quite firmly in CSIRO (largely pest animal research), the University of Canberra's Institute of Applied Ecology, and the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society – all, it would appear, partly funded, in some manner (scholarships, research partnerships, etc.), by the ACT government.[17]

In effect – and I mean no insult to the scientists themselves, who can't be held responsible for the manner in which their work has been instrumentalised – these papers, used thus, are not much more than an interesting breed of infomercial.

Clearly there is, in the explanations most commonly put forward by the ACT government, little or no real justification for this systematic slaughter, and clearly there are viable and significantly less expensive alternatives. So why on earth *is* this killing still going on?

Although we can't entirely discount the possibility that there is just someone of some power in the ACT administration who hates kangaroos with a passion, I think this is actually a very large and very complicated question, a full and proper consideration of which is far from impossible yet would take so long in the reasoning and involve such detail in the writing up that, in the current discursive environment (the Age of Twitter), it would have little if any impact.

Many have wondered what the authority is for the ACT formula of shooting kangaroos down to one per hectare, now trending to half a kangaroo per hectare (from a natural, stable population of three to four per hectare). See the following quote from the Senior Ecologist's thesis referenced in footnote 18:
A park " 'damage mitigation' formula, which holds kangaroo density to about 1 ha-1, is predicted to increase herbage mass [grass height] considerably and to reduce the frequency of crashes in herbage mass, but these effects would be achieved at the cost of having to shoot large numbers of kangaroos"

– *Bulletin* editor

And meanwhile, of course, annually, in the months of May, June, July, the kangaroos have been shot. A dilemma for anyone trying to understand and explain this bizarre and deeply troubling situation, and one that the ACT government has been taking full and cynical advantage of. But I also think it's not too hard to set out, in agonising brevity, at least some areas such a consideration might look at.

AN EXPERIMENT?

First and simplest is what I've come to call the Experiment, although 'project' might be a better term: 'experiment' implies testing whether an hypothesis is true or correct; 'project' might be seen to involve – as the use of the Eight Papers suggests – promoting that hypothesis whether it is correct or not.

The brouhaha that has so far marked both the protest against the culling and the government's responses to that protest have served as a smoke-screen to what some see as the real 'scientific' reason for the cull, namely (the Eight Papers again), a many-fronted and coordinated attempt, by a group of applied ecologists and conservationists/land managers in the ACT, to prove a theory discussed in (but not the exclusive province of) the PhD dissertation of the aforementioned Senior Ecologist.[18] This theory suggests that the decline of temperate grassland in Eastern Australia – to the point, supposedly, where the largest surviving pockets are in the ACT – can be related to over-grazing by Eastern Grey Kangaroos.

(To be careful here, I do not say that the ACT government has lied about this, so much as *spun* it. It is presented that the kangaroos *are* the reason for the decline in temperate grassland, and that they have to be killed as a consequence, not that they may be a contributing cause, and that the killing is an experiment. This, presumably, would be too much for the public to wear.)

Leaving aside (but can we?) the fact that even this Senior Ecologist has argued de facto (including at the time of the Googong 800) that culling is *not* the solution, indeed that it's virtually useless in any area not surrounded by prison-like fences, the theory this experiment seeks to test can only be demonstrated by a carefully-controlled count (there are serious doubts that they have managed this) and reduction of Eastern Grey numbers within a large but very clearly defined and (supposedly) controllable area. For this, *bureaucratically*, the ACT would seem to be ideal: an administrative island, as it were (albeit without the actual fences that might make more sense of all this), with only the one very sympathetic authority to deal with, upon which researchers and administrators can closely cooperate.

> *"If the theory is wrong, many thousands of kangaroos will have died, often horribly, for nothing*

Even if one were to accept that there is something to this theory – ie of damage to extant temperate grassland – a huge number of kangaroos have been dying in its cause. And if, as many suggest, the theory is wrong, or at least very poorly conceived, then those kangaroos will have died, often horribly, for nothing. Indeed even if the theory is proven correct, there will still be a large party, of which I will be one, who will still think they died for nothing.

The Experiment, that is to say, may be a reason to try to control a kangaroo population within a determined area, but – setting aside the nonetheless significant suspicion that this is ultimately an *aesthetic* motivation (an important question for conservation: what period or state do we wish to 'manage' our ecosystems back to? pre-1788? [in this case it's certainly not that!] and why do we make the choices that we do?) – it is no reason for mass killing (forget 'mass' there: it is no reason for killing, period).

KILLING AS A DEFAULT MODE

Which leaves us with this bizarre but apparently unquestioned phenomenon of killing as a default mode. Why on earth is killing – such a violent action – seen as the preferred option? Is it just that it is *easiest*? The least expensive? Or is there, along with everything else involved here, a need in us to expend a violent energy?

The etymology of the word 'cull' has nothing to do with that of 'culture', though in Australia you could be forgiven for thinking otherwise. Here it can seem all too often that the idea of killing is almost synonymous with that of conservation and/or 'ecological' land management. This is perhaps not all that surprising when one considers how inappropriate farming and pastoral practices have rapidly destroyed so much of the friable soil surface, and thus created such intense competition for what fodder the land can still produce.

When you are determined to raise cattle and sheep in a land where their hooves will inevitably drastically reduce the productive capacity of the soil they walk upon, then *of course* the kangaroos will be seen as competitors that must be eliminated.

It doesn't take much thought to see how such a mindset, bred of misapplication, might become entrenched and, extending beyond *agri*culture to culture itself, lead to the culling of flying foxes, cockatoos, galahs, koalas, sharks, crocodiles, and whatever else irritates the human animal or embarrasses it by stirring its bad conscience.

And yet, although there seems to be an historic numb-mindedness when it comes to them, it is not – as we have seen – as if there aren't ready alternatives, or as if, in some areas, the mood isn't changing.

Indeed there appears to be a growing split in the 'conservation' movement itself in this regard, and such a growing heft of thought behind it that one might even speak of an impending paradigm shift in our ideas of conservation and ecology, entailing serious interrogation of our existing ideas of ecosystem, biodiversity, and the various binaries upon which we base our current practices, to say nothing of our determinations that some lives are worth many times more than others (native/exotic, beneficent/pest, feral/tame, wild/domesticated, endangered/'of-least-concern', livestock/pet, etc). But, again, this is too vast an issue to take further here. I raise it only to set the scene.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH COMPASSION?

According to hearsay – I freely admit that this is all it is – the beleaguered Senior Ecologist once warned a meeting of people discussing the kangaroo cull of the imminent arrival of 'compassionate conservation', as if this were a heresy

COLLATERAL DAMAGE of kangaroo cull, the survivors: This joey (left) is 7kg and permanently out of mother's pouch but still dependent on her for nutrition and guidance. (Right) A 3.5kg joey that would be in and out of mum's pouch. Orphaned, both are at risk of hypothermia, predation and renal failure from stress. Joeys are not considered fully independent until at least 14kg. Joeys that look like the smaller one but weigh less are pulled out of mother's pouch and bashed to death.

on *their* land, the ACT government denied them a permit! Why might this have been? Because it might have compromised their own argument that relocation was not an option?

13 See http://www.tams.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/715487/ACT-conservation-research-the-effect-of-kangaroo-grazing-and-biodiversity-Summary-of-recent-papers.pdf

14 The website neither presents the papers in their entirety nor provides links to them. It's up to the reader to locate them – not an easy task for some of the papers, and quite impossible for those not yet published! Most readers – to continue the circularity of this curious operation – will have to take the ACT government's word for what they contain.

15 The paper's author wrote: "The vast majority of my work has been with the ACT Conservation Research Unit" The Conversation: https://theconversation.com/profiles/brett-howland-135653.

16 Wendy Dimond *et al*, 'Back to the Brink: Population Decline of the Endangered Grassland Earless Dragon', *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 7.2 (2012): 141.

17 I will leave my readers to speculate upon the independence or otherwise of the peer assessors of these papers.

18 D Fletcher 2006, Population Dynamics of Eastern Grey Kangaroos in Temperate Grasslands Institute of Applied Ecology, University of

much to be feared. And yet compassionate conservation is nothing more than an attempt to find and advocate for ways of protecting wildlife and the ecosystem that do not involve killing.

What's to be feared about that?

Well, there is, in *this* instance, the Experiment, and to change methodology mid-stream might seriously compromise it. But that is just local. Behind the broader culture's resistance to a default-change from conservation killing to compassionate conservation there is, probably first and foremost, the issue of cost, or should we better say economic/political commitment.

Leaving aside that 'cheap' and 'expensive' are relative terms and only express our priorities (nothing is too expensive if we want it enough), killing is cheap (although, as records show, perhaps not as cheap in the ACT as one might be led to think). The alternatives, with less and less credibility, are made out to be too expensive, and require substantial investment of thought, a whole new mindset. Sooner invest vast amounts in overseas military campaigns, submarines or border protection.

For animals there is little political will. Killing, one's ethical qualms aside, is also easy and 'effective': all it requires is a gun; nothing is so final as a shot to the head.

And there is also, of course – again I use the metaphor embarrassedly – another elephant in the room. We are, as are almost all other human cultures, a culture that insists upon mass slaughter of non-human animals to provide for our dietary choices. We've become inured to this aspect of ourselves. This repression surely contributes to our lassitude when it comes to kill/cull-culture.

A BUREAUCRATIC JUGGERNAUT?

But of course there is more involved here than cultural bias. We must also consider that, in the ACT, a bureaucratic process has begun and, juggernaut-like, is very hard to stop.

On the one hand there is the logic of culling itself: presuming that there is some reasonably accurate means of determining it – and the ACT government seems to have tied itself in knots trying to do so – there will be a figure, a proportion, which, supposedly, can be culled without threatening the sustainability of a population – indeed it may even be that one of the purposes of the Experiment is to determine or confirm this figure. One must cull below this figure, to ensure sustainability, but of course, *having* culled below this figure, one must inevitably, as the population reproduces (and leaving local migration aside), have to cull again.

And on the other hand there in the matter of administrative structure and forward estimates. To put this most simply, but not unrealistically, we have a bureau set up to administer the killing, with people employed to do so, and a budget-line their unit is in danger of losing if it does not administer the culling, so the killing has to occur.

It may be even simpler than that. Perhaps, that is, one or two senior administrators and politicians – for there is an ACT government minister ultimately responsible here – have dug in their heels and are refusing to admit, perhaps even to *see*, that they have been wrong, for fear that their jobs and reputations might be at stake. As of course they should be, for these people now have a great deal of blood on their hands.[19]

Death by ego? Who knows? Ludicrous and bizarre as such a possibility might seem, the daily news surely teaches us never to discount it.

However one looks at it, the cynicism with which this campaign is being conducted is alarming, even to the most cynical. Why has no investigative journalist done a thorough exposé, bringing this situation to the wider Australian public and demanding justice for these creatures? (I was told, by a friend who helps produce one of our best-known national investigative documentary programs, that it would help if I had a whistle-blower. I don't suppose Chris Klootwijk, the seventy-year-old man arrested in mid-2015 in the ACT on charges of hindering public officials for blowing a whistle to try to scare kangaroos away from the shooters, would count.)

But of course 'they are only animals', and for animals there is no international war crimes tribunal, no court in the Hague in which to try human animals for crimes against non-human animals. And not even (not *especially*) a Native Title tribunal, to assert their rights to their own habitats.

Is there *any* chance that the bureaucrats who persist with this campaign in the face of all the evidence against it will ever be seen as criminals, ever be brought to justice – even (as is, sadly, about all we can hope for) the symbolic justice of a small fine and slap on the wrist for animal cruelty? We'll see. But don't hold your breath.

SHADOW OF A BIGGER PICTURE

Is there a bigger picture? Where such secrecy and mixed messages surround so strange, vicious and largely *in*explicable and *in*defensible a phenomenon, you might almost think there has to be. Could it be, for example, that, somewhere within it, and perhaps unbeknownst even to some of its participants, there is reflected a desire to establish the kangaroo as a new harvestable species, and the attempt to set in place a mythology – of overpopulation, over-grazing, damage to biodiversity, etc. – that will enable the Australian public the more readily to accept this industrialisation of this iconic species?

The meat industry is one of the largest in the country. It has substantial lobbying power, as is testified by the recent passage of biosecurity laws, labelling of animal rights advocates as terrorists, and media reports vilifying, with apparent impunity, those who do not eat the flesh of animals. And as far as the wider meat industry is concerned the development of the *kangaroo* industry is in every respect a win/win situation.

The meat industry, after all, has its own bigger picture. In a time of mounting environmental /market pressure, it finds itself in transition, keen to identify more sustainable and less environmentally destructive sources of product, and kangaroos are clearly in its sights, although in all likelihood it is shorter-term gains that are at issue here.

As the Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia (KIAA) argues it,[20] a widespread, systematic and continuous (read industrial) culling of kangaroos not only reduces what the current meat industry presents as a pest and a liability to the maximum production of sheep- and cattle-meat, but would also produce in itself commodities – hides, and meat for both human and pet consumption – for which there are hoped-for larger and larger international markets.

Kangaroo products at present go to more than fifty countries and are worth over a quarter of a billion dollars annually. With recent free trade agreements with China, Japan and the United States, and a Trans-Pacific Partnership in the offing, there is a clear hope that this market will expand dramatically. These agreements have been coming for some time. It would be foolish to think that the meat industry more generally, and the kangaroo industry in particular, have not been preparing for them.

But there are some thorns in the industry's side, as evidenced by the California Legislature's having only recently renewed a long-standing ban on the importation and sale of kangaroo products, and by the great lengths to which the KIAA (with substantial government assistance[21]) has gone to try to have that ban rescinded. California is only a small market, but its stance is pivotal. Its resistance creates resistance elsewhere.

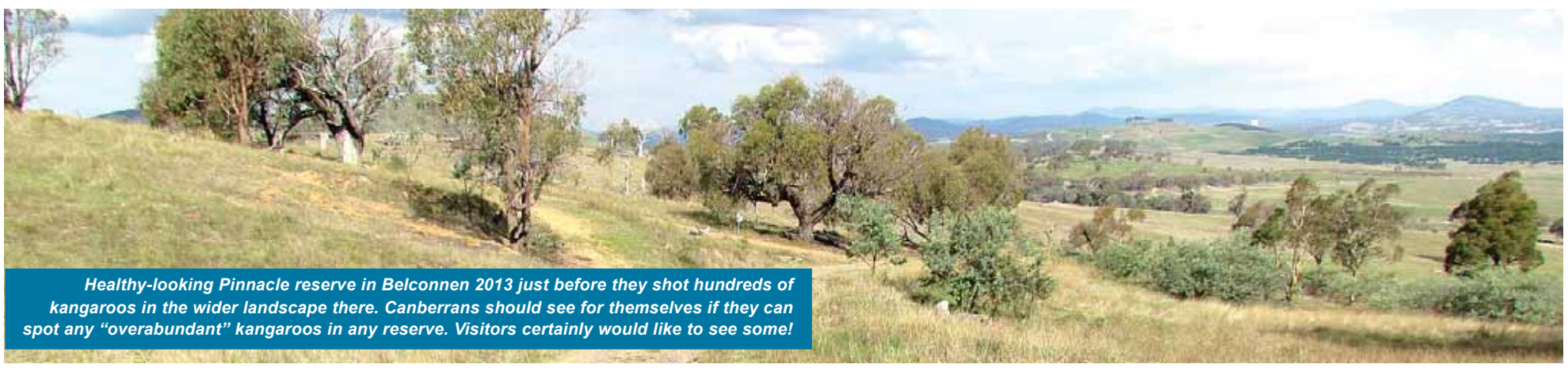
> *"Any experiment supporting the 'pest' and overpopulation claims of the kangaroo meat and skin industry is gold to them*

The California ban is based on renewed advice that the kangaroo populations involved are not at pest level but in fact under threat. Every study suggesting otherwise is therefore gold to the KIAA – platinum if it can at the same time demonstrate that, for environmental reasons, the kangaroo population in fact *must* be culled, and that the kangaroo industry would be doing the country not just an economic but an environmental favour.

If it turns out that the ACT experiment, after years of trying, is not actually able to provide this supporting data, then heaven forbid that that information get out.

But enough. It's May, 2016. There is every reason to think that, despite their protestations that they are actively seeking alternatives, the ACT government is already preparing to take the low road again, and that, unless this baseless, barbaric, ineffective and unimaginative process is not brought abruptly to a halt, night after night for the next three months in the reserves around Canberra, the kangaroos will be dying, for reasons not even their killers can explain.

David Brooks *is an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Sydney, where he taught Australian Literature from 1991–2013. Poet, author and essayist, he is co-editor of the journal* Southerly *and the 2015–16 Australia Council Fellow in Literature. He was born and raised in Canberra.*



Healthy-looking Pinnacle reserve in Belconnen 2013 just before they shot hundreds of kangaroos in the wider landscape there. Canberrans should see for themselves if they can spot any "overabundant" kangaroos in any reserve. Visitors certainly would like to see some!

Canberra www.canberra.edu.au/researchrepository/file/8376efb7-f1b7-1b76-74d8-14604c15865a/1/introductory_pages.pdf

19 A new minister has been appointed as this essay was prepared for press. Will anything change?

20 See http://www.kangaroo-industry.asn.au/media/ki_med_kit_gen.html

21 $143,000 to help fight the California ban; $800,000 more recently from the Department of Agriculture.

Go to **www.districtbulletin.com.au** for
A BOOK BANNING: HOW ACT OFFICIALS REACTED HYSTERICALLY TO REPORT SHOWING KANGAROOS ARE PART OF BIODIVERSITY
Also online: ***VERDICT in cull whistleblower case***

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New 'free range' standard leaves no room to flap wings

by Frankie Seymour

IN DEFIANCE of the national Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Domestic Poultry, state Consumer Affairs Ministers have now permitted egg producers to label their eggs 'free range', even when they are cramming 10,000 birds into a single hectare.

The national code of practice recommends no more than 1,500 hens per hectare in a free-range situation.

The decision abuses the trust of the many consumers who pay extra to buy free range eggs because they assume that these chickens, unlike battery hens, are kept in relatively humane conditions.

Large numbers of anything are hard to imagine, so let's bring this back to what 10,000 per hectare looks like on the ground. There are 10,000 square metres in a hectare, so the labelling standard that allows 10,000 hens per hectare allows one hen to every square metre. A square metre is only 100 centimetres long and wide.

A layer hen is usually about 50 centimetres long, and a little wider than she is long when her wings fully spread. This means a hen in one of these establishments cannot move more than her own body length in any direction before she collides with another hen. Every time she spreads her wings to flap, she is likely to tangle herself with another hen trying to do the same.

True, a stocking density of 10,000 per hectare is not as bad as the space limit still endured by most battery hens – three to four hens in a cage with each hen allotted the area of an A4 sheet of paper. But it is certainly not the image of happy hens wandering freely over green pastures that most consumers envisage when they hear the words 'free range'.

CHOICE has a compiled a very useful guide which can be found at: **https://www.choice.com.au/food-and-drink/meat-fish-and-eggs/eggs/articles/what-free-range-eggs-meet-the-model-code**. This guide can be used by consumers to avoid buying eggs that are labelled as 'free range' but which do not comply with the national Code or Practice – or with common sense.

National brands some of main offenders

Of particular interest to local consumers, according to *CHOICE*, chickens producing eggs for the national brands, Woolworths, Coles and Aldi, are among those crammed in at 10,000 per hectare. So are chickens producing eggs for Pace Farm Free Range Eggs, ManningValley Free Range Eggs and Family Value Free Range Eggs, also a brand called Eco Eggs. No information was provided for IGA home brand.

Buy local from companies doing a better job

Majura Valley (ACT), Tharwa ACT and a Gunning Bum Nuts operation all adhere to the model code and in fact have far lower stocking rates than the code's stated maximum of 1,500. So do Mulloon Creek and Long Paddock free range eggs produced in Palerang and also sold in the Queanbeyan-Bungendore-Palerang area.

65% of consumers are now choosing free range eggs

For example Mulloon stocks their hens at only 350 hens per hectare. This gives each hen (using all the space available to her) a run of nearly five metres in any direction before she meets another hen. Long Paddock are better again at only 185 hens per hectare – giving each hen seven metres in any direction. Majura Valley is in-between at 250 birds per hectare.

The new labelling laws do require egg producers to disclose the stocking density. We can only hope that the same consumers who are compassionate enough to choose free range eggs in the first place will also be discerning enough to check the labels, and reject those where the label admits to a stocking density of over 1,500 per hectare.

The good news from the CHOICE report is that 65 percent of consumers are now choosing free range eggs. Twenty years ago, the proportion was around six percent. Of course, no form of commercial egg production is cruelty-free. Male chicks, because they will not grow up to lay eggs, are normally killed – quite horribly. Layer hens that are essentially little more than teenagers (about 15 months old) are commonly sent off for slaughter because their rate of egg laying drops off after the first year.

[Ed: If you are interested in the practices of your local free-range egg producers, check with them yourself if there is any deviation from these 'norms'. In rural residential areas we are fortunate to be able to have our own egg layers or buy from neighbours who don't do mass production.]

Nevertheless, the fact that, in only 20 years, ten times as many consumers have come to care enough to buy what they think are free range eggs gives hope that eventually, by our own choice, we will eliminate all forms of cruelty from our diet. ■

Rotary sponsors **mental health forum** in May

THE ROTARY Club of Bungendore, in conjunction with local health professionals and support groups, is holding a Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum to promote awareness and provide advice on where to find help for people suffering mental health issues, and also where to find support for carers. The forum will also discuss lifelong good mental health and well-being initiatives.

Where and when: The forum will take place in the Multi Purpose Hall at the Bungendore Primary School on Wednesday 11 May; 6.30 pm start, light refreshments available.

Local health professionals will discuss a different aspect of mental health in our community. A speaker from NSW Health will discuss the hospital/community interface. Professional support organisations will be represented by a speaker from Beyond Blue. A presentation on wellbeing will focus on lifestyle and diet impacts on our health, both mental and physical.

On the night Information tables will be available from Alzheimer's Australia, Beyond Blue, Headspace, Carer Assist, Home in Queanbeyan, Picking up the Pieces, RSL, Soldier On and Lake George Men's Shed among others.

The Forum is being supported by Palerang Council, Australian Rotary Health and the Rotary Club of Bungendore. All welcome. ■

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About fact-free politics, taking the train and *Bulletin* supplements

WITH A FEDERAL election on the horizon and recent news that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull knocked back New Zealand's offer to take 150 of the beleaguered detainees on Manus Island, (our Manus policy now dubbed "the mess"), even long-time press gallery scribes are getting angry about the dangerous lack of humane or prudent policies on some major issues as we head to the voting booths.

We're talking about the ethical void in asylum-seeker action from both major political parties (where the Greens stand apart). There's also the headache of figuring out what the Coalition is saying about climate change and education.

Labor and particularly the Greens are offering solutions that matter for climate change action now. Both also agree on the need for ongoing needs-based funding for all schools, otherwise known as Gonski, named after the review panel headed by (conservative) David Gonski, that mapped out the funding model.

On all three counts, the Coalition has been waffling and diverting and now resurrecting Tony Abbott's hip-pocket fear campaigns (do we hear 'great big new tax' on climate change action?).

Long-time press gallery veteran Lenore Taylor writes in the *Guardian*: (*Asylum and climate change are back in the news and the response has been pathetic*, 30 April):

"Australian climate policy is at near crisis point because it can be solved only with a degree of bipartisanship, absent in the past seven years of brain-dead fact-free sense-paralysing conflict. Asylum policy is already at crisis point because the leading parties are in a bipartisan death lock that refuses to acknowledge the human and moral cost of achieving the stop-every-single-boat objective. [Eg the poor souls locked on Manus Island now for three years.]

"But instead of discussing how we got ourselves into these messes or how we might get out of them… politicians and some commentators leap straight over these details and discuss how the developments will 'play' in the political 'game' (of the coming elections)." Indeed.

Presently real climate action is coming from the local and regional level as we highlight on these pages. Also through individual action. For example, the Taylor household (finally) invested in some thermal mass heat storage behind the wood heater. This took the form of a very decorative stone wall made by local craftsmen Dave Argaet and Adam Easton.

Like others, I have learned to like the train to and from Sydney Central. It stops in Canberra, Queanbeyan and Bungendore, running three times a day. First class costs around $40 without concession, one way; the seats are wide and comfortable; there is food service and it takes about as long as a traffic-snarl-free car ride. Best of all one avoids that Sydney traffic. What's not to like?

In this issue, we are running another special report (centre pages) treated like a supplement. This is something we can now do. If you are an organisation or business (or self-publishing author) interested in this low-cost opportunity, or have another form of insert/supplement please talk to us. ■

Your money

(New column)
by Michael Holmes

AT THIS TIME of year there are two communications accountants often have with our clients.

Firstly we contact (sometimes hound) clients who are yet to complete their tax returns for the previous financial year. When you use an accountant most personal and business tax returns are due on 15 May of the following year rather than the regular 31 October deadline. If you don't lodge on time the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) can fine you up to $900 plus charge interest on any outstanding tax debt.

Historically if the ATO thought that you were likely getting a refund they wouldn't press too hard to get you to lodge on time, however we've noticed an attitude shift recently with many clients with overdue returns receiving demands from the ATO to get up to date. So if you haven't done your tax for last year yet, to avoid any fines from the ATO you should get your tax information to your accountant as soon as possible.

Another good reason to lodge on time is to help out your accountant. To get a clean bill of health from the ATO your accountant is supposed to lodge at least 85% of tax returns for clients on time. Typically we do 30% of our annual workload in the six weeks from April to mid-May so be nice to your accountant and get them your tax information as quickly as possible.

Secondly we get a lot of clients concerned about the federal budget. Although the budget will now have been released, at the time of writing it was still a week away. Speculation is often rife about proposed changes to taxation law.

Ideas that have been floated include changes to the GST – both changing the rate and the things excluded from it; changes to the level of superannuation contributions allowed; changes to how superannuation contributions or earnings are taxed; changes to negative gearing and changes to capital gains tax.

The Labor opposition has proposed to reduce the capital gains tax discount from 50% to 25%, post 30 June 2017; to limit new negative gearing to only brand new rental properties; to lower the income threshold where super contributions get taxed at 30% instead of 15% from $300,000 to $250,000 and to start taxing earnings above $75,000 in superannuation pension phase (currently tax is 0% on all earnings).

Most changes would require legislation to be passed in order to be implemented. So even if the government formally adopts a policy change it may end up never getting legislated.

In any event where the government does change things they will often 'grandfather' existing arrangements. That is existing investments are taxed under current rules and only new investments are taxed under changed rules. Obviously, Labor would need to get elected in order to implement any of their proposals.

Next month we'll report on any changes that were actually in the budget.

Michael Holmes is director of Michael Holmes Chartered Accountants and a self-managed superfund specialist.

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PALERANG COUNCIL

EXHIBITION OF DRAFT LOCALISED NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF POLICY

Council has prepared a draft policy to provide support to the Palerang community after localised natural disasters and significant storm events that are not subject to a natural disaster declaration by the State or Commonwealth governments.

The draft policy is on public exhibition at the Council's Administrative Offices, 10 Majara Street, Bungendore and 144 Wallace Street, Braidwood between normal business hours of 8.30am to 5.00pm weekdays, from Wednesday 4 May 2016 until Wednesday 18 May 2016.

Copies of the draft policy are available from the Council offices and can otherwise be viewed on Council's website: **www.palerang.nsw.gov.au**.

Any person may make a written submission to the Council on the draft plan until close of business on 18 May 2016.

Peter Bascomb, General Manager
10 Majara Street, (PO Box 348) BUNGENDORE NSW 2621
records@palerang.nsw.gov.au

Privacy: Submissions with the author's name and contact details will be provided to Councillors for consideration. However, names and contact information will be removed when the submissions are included in public documents such as Council Business Papers.

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Solutions under trial in WA

FORTY kilometres north of Perth, at Alkimos Beach Resort, a large residential battery storage trial is underway, supported by $3.3 million in funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). Using an installation of Lithium-ion batteries the facility will store power from more than 100 rooftop solar installations.

Perth company, Energy Made Clean, has installed the system in two shipping containers at the resort, and the project will provide data and insight into the 'relatively new' energy storage technology, and how best to integrate it into a traditional supply network.

ARENA CEO Ivor Frischknecht said: "Solar will work alongside battery storage to lower Alkimos Beach's demand for electricity from the grid. This model has the potential to offer residents cheaper electricity bills and reduce grid connection costs for future new developments."

Combining community-scale battery storage and rooftop solar presents a win-win for energy retailers, developers and consumers and can provide households with the benefits of storage without on-site installation and maintenance.

This is of particular interest to new developments. "There is a need to better understand how solar and community-scale storage can operate within traditional networks. For example, right now there are no tariffs that allow community energy storage to discharge onto electricity networks," said Frischknecht who congratulated Synergy, Lendlease and LandCorp on the timely Australian-first trial which costs $6.7 million all up and will run until 2020.

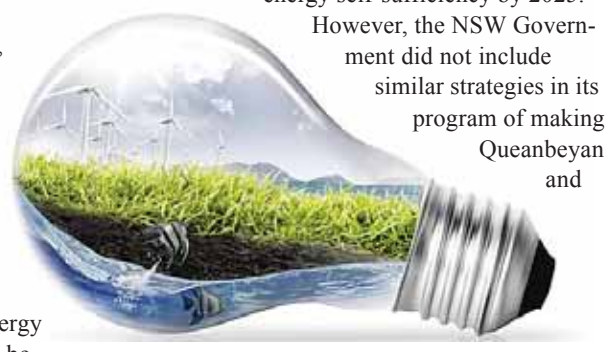
"If the approach becomes standard practice for new residential developments, this will increase the supply and use of renewable energy in Australia."

Source: ARENA website 25th April

Melbourne Renewable Energy Project

– large-scale project driven by large users. Lesson for local governments?

THE MELBOURNE City Council, in partner-ship with a consortium of neighbouring councils, Auspost, NAB, Melbourne universities, and Zoo Victoria, are calling for tenders to supply over 100 gigawatt hours of renewable energy for the City of Melbourne.



The Melbourne Renewable Energy Project is Victoria's first project to be driven by large-scale energy consumers, and arose from council's target to source 25 percent of the city's energy from renewables by 2018 – a target which will require 15 large wind turbines, or about 250,000 solar panels.

With the negotiation of a power-purchase agreement the Melbourne project will lift a number of barriers to large-scale renewable energy suppliers, ensuring that renewable energy projects which were otherwise ready to start, are completed.

Proponents of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project are confident that this approach will work around the country, encouraging other jurisdictions to combine with businesses and other agencies to secure desirable clean energy outcomes for their regions.

Locally, the ACT government has adopted a similar approach to secure its goal of clean energy self-sufficiency by 2025.

However, the NSW Government did not include similar strategies in its program of making Queanbeyan and Palerang councils 'Fit for the Future'.

A truly 'fit for the future' council would surely need to obtain its energy from renewable and sustainable sources.

CLOSER TO HOME, ACT

Energy Storage Pilot

AS PART of its goal to achieve 90% renewable energy status by 2020, the ACT Government is supporting 36 megawatts of energy storage to be rolled out across more than 5,000 Canberra homes and businesses between the years 2016 and 2020.

According to the government website: "The largest roll out of household batteries in the world (outside of Germany) has commenced, with the ACT Government awarding three grants of $200,000 to install subsidised battery storage in around 200 Canberra homes in 2016 through its Next Generation Renewables Energy Storage Pilot.

"ActewAGL Retail, ITP Renewables and SolarHub were announced as the successful winners on 22 April 2016, of a competitive grants process.

"The global battery storage market is predicted to be worth $400 billion by 2030 and the ACT is an ideal launching pad for both national and international businesses seeking to get a head start in this exciting emerging industry.

"Through the Next Generation Renewables Program the ACT Government has a vision for Canberra to become a globally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment."

ACT also announced a fourth reverse auction for 109MW of renewables to secure the targets of 90 per cent renewable energy and a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020. Under the auction, proponents will also be required to contribute funding that will subsequently be awarded through a concurrent competitive auction to install distributed storage in the ACT.

The Auction opened on 1 April 2016 and will close on 13 May 2016.

Source: ACT Environment and Planning http://www.environment.act.gov.au/energy/cleaner-energy/next-generation-renewables

— Graham Franklin-Brown

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PALERANG COUNCIL

PALERANG RURAL LANDS STUDY
EXHIBITON OF THE DRAFT RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

The Draft Palerang Rural Lands Strategy 2016–2036 and accompanying document, 'Rural Living in Palerang', a Discussion Paper to Guide the Palerang Council Rural Strategy, April 2016, are on exhibition from Wednesday 4 May to Wednesday 1 June 2016.

Both documents and others associated with the Rural Lands Study are available on the Palerang Council website or hard copies are available from Council's Braidwood and Bungendore offices.

Submissions should be in writing and sent to either:

- PO Box 348, Bungendore NSW 2621
- records@palerang.nsw.gov.au

If you would like to discuss the Rural Lands Study please contact Sue Robb, Strategic Planning Co-ordinator on 6298 8111.

Prime real estate for hollow nesting birds *by Alex James*

TWO SPECIES of hollow nesting birds are set to get much needed housing assistance thanks to a collaboration between the Bungendore Men's Shed and the Palerang Local Action Network for Sustainability (Future PLANS).

For the past five months the Bungendore Men's Shed have been building nest boxes suitable for two species of hollow nesting birds in our area – the Striated Pardalote and the White-throated Treecreeper.

Both of these birds are small but are quite exacting in their choices of accommodation. One likes an upright hollow and the other requires an elongated box with a narrow entrance.

"It takes around 100 years for nesting hollows to begin developing in most of the native tree species found in our landscape." says David McDonald form the Canberra Ornithologist Group.

"Medium-size hollows suitable for birds such as parrots take longer to form and those used by cockatoos, owls, possums, etc, even longer. By providing bird nesting boxes for these species, especially in previously cleared areas we could help them survive in our area."

According to David, "quite a lot of the species that nest in hollows are listed as vulnerable or endangered, largely because of the loss of breeding habitat, ie loss of nesting hollows".

So how can landholders and townies alike help our feathered friends nest in our backyards?

Look after native remnant vegetation, plant native trees and shrubs to attract birds to your backyard and to provide habitat into the future. Or build a nest box and place it in a suitable regrowth area or established tree close to your house where you can monitor it.

Get your bird box or box-building plans here

Future PLANS has nineteen bird boxes available for Land for Wildlife and Future PLANS members. If you would like a bird box your donation for a box will help us continue our work in the district. Not a member? Why not join us and join the bird nest box housing boom.

A full copy of bird nest box plans, web links and referenced notes by David McDonald are available at the Future PLANS website **www.futureplans.org.au** or by contacting the Land for Wildlife Coordinator at landforwildlife@futureplans.org.au and 0406 338 850.

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Wed & Thu 9am–8pm
Sat 8am–1pm
FOR ALL YOUR FAMILY HAIR CARE
Phone: 6238 0300

:: Community Notices ::

New funding round Veolia Mulwaree Trust

The Veolia Mulwaree Trust can assist community groups with its 2016 project grants or donation program. Now calling for applications in the second funding round for 2016, that opened on 18 April, and will close on Monday 23 May.

A further round to be held later this year. For more details refer to ad this page.

Majors Creek Festival 2016 applications now open

Calling musos, artists, bands, dancers...

Majors Creek Festival is looking for performers across a range of musical genres – folk/roots, Celtic, bluegrass, jazz, blues, Americana, singer song-writers, and more – who are willing to participate in a number of activities during the festival including concert performances, workshops, themed concerts, dances and children's events where possible.

We're also looking for professional dance acts to be part of our dance program for both display shows and to run dance classes.

'Majors' has always been known as one of the friendliest small festivals on the eastern seaboard and a place where people enjoy rubbing shoulders with their musical heroes around the village or in one of the concert venues. Participation in informal sessions and sing-alongs at the bar and at the Majors Creek Hotel are encouraged.

For information and to apply go to **www.majorscreekfestival.org**. Applications close 31 May 2016.

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea POLLY PUTS THE KETTLE ON, 2016

Morning Tea from 10am $10pp and/or $30pp includes 3-course Spit Roast Lunch. Fun activities include: Lucky Door Prizes, Ongoing Raffles, Silent & Noisy Auctions, Major Raffle, Various Stalls, Trading Table, Bingo Games and much more.

Come and support highest individual fundraiser in the ACT for the past 5 years. 100% of funds raised to support Cancer Council research.

Name: Pauline Segeri (ID 13760), Thursday 26 May.

Bookings and payment essential by Mon 23 May.

Ph 6238 1996 or email psegeri@bigpond.com

Please consider this your donation if you cannot attend. Donate and book **online act.cancercouncil fundraising.org.au/Teatwamboin**.

ICE 'EPIDEMIC' *from p6*

- Limited access to services because of low numbers of services, lack of targeted services, and cross-border and transportation issues;
- Limited funding for services and on-going programs; and,
- Limited collaboration between stake-holders.

Services currently available in Queanbeyan include the Killard Centre in Crawford Street, which provides drug and alcohol counselling, referrals, opioid treatment programs, and a consultation/ liaison service to Queanbeyan Hospital.

There is an Alcoholics Anonymous Living Sober meeting in the hall behind the Anglican Church, which takes place every Wednesday from 6.30pm to 7.30pm, and the Queanbeyan City Council has also introduced a number of initiatives to help reduce harm caused by drug and alcohol usage.

Council services include Alcohol Free Zones, CCTV, an online community directory, hosting of family events, the Axis Youth Centre, the Community Safety Precinct Committee, Drug Action Week, and the recently successful 'Breaking the Ice Forum'.

The Community Drug Action Team study suggested three areas which require future action in the Queanbeyan region:

- **Promoting community education about drug and alcohol services** by targeting schools, businesses and parents; improving existing resources such as the MyCommunity web directory; ensuring that the Queanbeyan City Council improves the visibility of the directory; and encouraging drug and alcohol services to develop their own websites.
- **Improving access to drug and alcohol services around Queanbeyan** by encouraging more drug and alcohol services to have a presence in the city, and encouraging alternative forms of transportation to and from Queanbeyan such as Uber.
- **Increased collaboration of 'stakeholders'** by encouraging more of those who are affected to have a representative on CDAT, and pooling resources to run community events.

While we probably do not have an 'epidemic' of Ice usage in our communities, we still have a lot of work to do in the region to ensure that our existing drug and alcohol services get the funding they require.

New service providers also need to be supported and encouraged to locate in Queanbeyan and/or Palerang, and all services must be resourced to run targeted programs for those most at risk. ■

Are You Looking For Funding For Your Community Group?

Are you from one of the following?

- Sporting Groups
- Rural Fire Brigades
- Service Clubs
- Schools
- Preschools
- Progress Associations
- Community Health Services
- Churches
- Charities
- Any other not-for-profit organisation which complies with the Veolia Mulwaree Trust guidelines?

Are you located in one of these local government areas?

- Goulburn Mulwaree
- Upper Lachlan
- Oberon
- Palerang
- Wingecarribee
- Wollondilly
- Shoalhaven

Grant and Donation Funding

The Veolia Mulwaree Trust has provided over $8 million in funding since 2005 to support projects for the benefit of the local community and for charitable purposes.

Guidelines and online application forms for the 2016 Community Grant and Donation Program are available at **www.mulwareetrust.org.au**

Veolia Mulwaree Trust

PALERANG COUNCIL

Development Approvals

Notification in accordance with Section 101 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.* Council approved the following development applications in April 2016

Development Consents are available for public inspection free of charge at Council's offices during ordinary business hours.

Application No	Development Description	Date	Property Description
DA.2016.043	Swimming Pool	05/04/2016	Lot 1 DP 1204220 1442 Bungendore Road BYWONG
DA.2016.017	Alterations to existing Shed	06/04/2016	Lot 15 DP 754894 420 Mount Fairy Rd MOUNT FAIRY
DA.2016.037	Shed	07/04/2016	Lot 2 DP 803069 3 McKellar Street BRAIDWOOD
DA.2016.002	New underground fuel tank	07/04/2016	Lot A DP 91198 71 Wallace Street BRAIDWOOD
DA.2016.005	Boundary Adjustment	12/04/2016	Lot 23 DP 533093 & Lot 2 DP 1051898 3815 Kings Highway BUNGENDORE
DA.2016.026	Dwelling and Garage – Dual Occupancy	13/04/2016	Lot 8 DP 285984 129 MacDiarmid Road BURRA
DA.2016.028	Shed	13/04/2016	Lot 2 DP 1193464 358 Widgiewa Road CARWOOLA
DA.2016.039	Alterations and Additions to Dual Occupancy	18/04/2016	Lot 5 Sec 14 DP 758152 70 Cowper Street BRAIDWOOD
DA.2016.047	Change of Use (Shed to Dwelling), Alterations and Additions and new Shed	19/04/2016	Lot 26 DP 285984 235 MacDiarmid Road BURRA
DA.2016.061	Shed	20/04/2016	Lot 55 DP 1170008 42 Hereford St BUNGENDORE
DA.2016.050	Shed	20/04/2016	Lot 246 DP 754882 1661 Sutton Road SUTTON
DA.2016.052	Continued Use	21/04/2016	Lot 81 DP 755905 873 Wallaces Gap Road BALLALABA
DA.2016.040	Dwelling	21/04/2016	Lot 2 DP 1006740 65 Barnet Drive MOUNT FAIRY
DA.2015.278	Dual Occupancy and Alterations and Additions to Existing Dwelling	22/04/2016	Lot 81 DP 1019288 5 Trail Place ROYALLA
DA.2016.010	Continued Use of Alterations and Additions to Existing Dwelling	22/04/2016	Lot 1 DP 1100885 173 Butmaroo Rd BUNGENDORE
DA.2015.116	Signage	26/04/2016	Lot A DP 91198 71 Wallace Street BRAIDWOOD
DA.2016.068	Garage	27/04/2016	Lot 521 DP 559258 1447 Bungendore Road BYWONG
DA.2016.034	Patio	27/04/2016	Lot 49 DP 1170008 7 Angus Place BUNGENDORE
DA.2016.046	Dwelling, Shed and Swimming Pool	27/04/2016	Lot 20 DP 1211797 11 Finch Street BUNGENDORE
DA.2016.079	Tree Removal	28/04/2016	Lot 1 DP 714762 70 Wilson Street BRAIDWOOD
DA.2016.027	Upgrade Existing Bulk Water Pumping Station & Rising Mains	29/04/2016	Lot 7 DP 592796 1103 Googong Road YARROW

Three planets feature this month

— Star Search —
with Dr David Weldrake

MAY PROVIDES us with progressively longer nights and cooling weather, and the bright stars of summer start to disappear towards the west after sunset. The more sparse skies of autumn replace them in the east, and this year the lack of bright stars is offset by the sight of three planets.

Bright stars this month include white Sirius, the brightest star in the whole sky, low in the west, blue-white Canopus higher up, yellow Alpha Cenaturi and the Southern Cross high overhead, and orange Arcturus low in the north east.

The bright winter Milky Way is starting to reappear low in the east after the sky turns fully dark, and will become a major feature during the winter months to come.

Jupiter shines, Mars and Saturn return

There are three bright planets visible in our evening skies during May, and are the highlight for the month. The brightest of these is the giant planet Jupiter, which shines towards the north after sunset.

Jupiter is unmistakable, being the brightest object in that part of the sky and was described in detail last month. Jupiter will continue to be visible in our evening skies for a number of months to come.

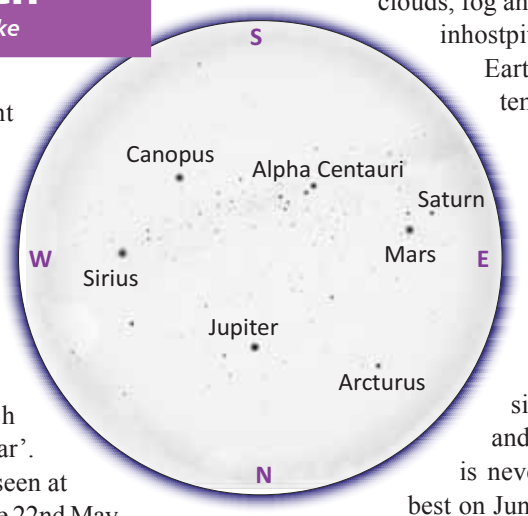
Attached to this article is a picture of Jupiter taken by the author from his back garden in Bungendore on the 14th April. The picture shows the detail that can be seen under our dark rural skies with a backyard telescope.

The large red oval near the middle is the Great Red Spot, a hurricane-like storm, three times the size of Earth which has been raging on Jupiter for at least the last three hundred years. The way in which the spot disturbs the clouds around it can be seen, and there is a large amount of turbulence following behind it.

The small dark spot towards the top of Jupiter is actually one of its moons, Ganymede, which was passing in front of Jupiter at the time. Ganymede is a lot darker than the cloud tops of Jupiter, so comes out as a dark grey spot. Another of its moons, Europa, is visible as the bright star to the left of the planet itself.

The details on Jupiter are dynamic and change all the time, pictures taken the next day would show how some of these features have moved and changed shape. Jupiter suprises us sometimes and astronomers keep a close eye on the cloud patterns to understand the weather on that giant world.

Also visible this month is the red planet Mars, returning to our evening skies after being absent for the last year or so. Mars is also unmistakable rising in the east as a bright reddish coloured 'star'.



Mars is seen at its best on the 22nd May, and is only seen at its best once every two years and two months. This is because of the way in which the orbits of Mars and the Earth line up, and it was back in April 2014 that we last had a close-up look at it.

Take this opportunity to go out and have a look for yourself. Binoculars will show Mars' characteristic red colour and small telescopes will reveal a polar cap and dark surface features. Larger telescopes will show clouds, fog and frost. Although completely inhostpitable to us, Mars is the most Earth-like of the other Solar System planets.

The third planet this month is the ringed planet Saturn, found close to Mars in the eastern sky after sunset, but is identified by its more yellow colour and is much fainter than Mars.

Saturn is a spectacular sight through a small telescope and is something that once seen, is never forgotten. Saturn is at its best on June 2nd, and will be described in detail next month.

The Moon was new on the 7th May, at first quarter (half) phase on the 14th, full on the 22nd and at third quarter phase on the 30th.

Finally, the author has set up a website, go check it out – https://sites.google.com/site/weldrakeplanetary/ ■

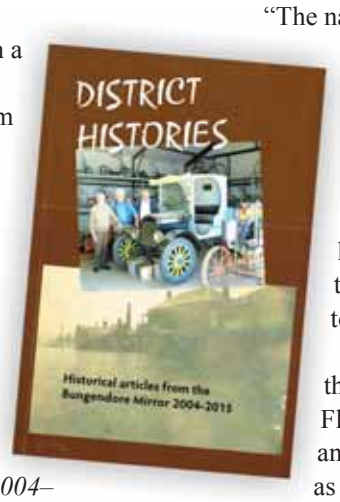
Chart (9pm on the 15th May) produced using the Stellarium software package

NEW BOOK

Bungendore long ago and not so long ago

THE SOCIO-economic implications of the Rabbit Freezing Works (a factory that existed in Gibraltar Street from 1908–1924 which transported rabbits for food consumption by rail); or discussions about why so many streets in Elmslea Estate are named after famous Bungendore Catholics; or why the Bungendore Jockey Club stopped holding race meetings at the local showground in the early 1980s and closed down with a debt of $30,000; or the fact that electricity came to Bungendore as late as 1949. Not to miss where the Macs Reef comes from in Macs Reef Road.

All this and more is in a new book expertly compiled by Angie Angel from historical articles that appeared in the *Bungendore Mirror* over its existence from 2004 to 2015. Angie worked for the *Mirror* for much of this time.



The articles in *District Histories – Historical articles from the Bungendore Mirror 2004–2015* "have been painstakingly collected, some edited to correct obvious errors that went to print the first time, and have been carefully reprinted in book form," said Angie, who guided the publishing effort. The book contains a few previously unpublished photos, as well as many of the photos that went to print originally in the paper.

"The nature of newspaper articles, which attempt to convey much in a small allocated space, has made many of these articles pithy and compelling.

"They attempt to capture some of the major cultural landmarks that have contributed to the Bungendore district today," she said.

Eleven contributors authored the stories. Topics in Captains Flat (including the railway line) and also around Tarago come up as well. There are some oral histories from a few of the older residents of Bungendore, and there is a small section at the back called 'Contemporary Culture'.

"Fascinating history and culture from Bungendore and surrounds. Great that these are now compiled in one anthology," said a *Bulletin* reviewer. ■

The book is available from the Bendigo Bank, Bungendore, for $26.

World premiere musical event at Bungendore's Café Wood Works

CAFE WOOD Works will present a special evening of world-class music on Saturday 21 May. John Mackey's Quartet, featuring David Pereira, Miroslav Bukovsky and Lachlan Coventry, will perform the World Premiere of Mackey's 'Gravity Waves Suite', inspired by John's father Ron, and ANU's new Vice-Chancellor and Nobel Prize Winner, Brian Schmidt.

In recent years Mackey has embarked on large-scale suites that build upon micro melodic ideas, extrapolated to form larger works. This suite is based on several repeating ideas that traverse the performance, culminating in a spiraling effect of melodies that relate with multi-tiered layers of sound.

David Pereira has been a regular performer at Bungendore Wood Works and is one of the world's great cello players. He was cellist of the Australia Ensemble (resident at the UNSW), Principal Cellist of the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Principal Cello with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Miroslav Bujovsky is one of Australia's leading trumpeters, composers and educators and was a founding teacher of the first Jazz course at the Sydney Conservatorium in 1975. He was instrumental in forming groups *Ten Part Invention* with John Pochee and Roger Frampton in 1986 and formed the internationally acclaimed group Wanderlust in 1991.

Lachlan Coventry is no stranger to Café Wood Works performing most recently with vocalist Rachel Thoms. Lachlan presents a unique guitar sound that attests to his piano and guitar upbringings.

Sit back, close your eyes and imagine yourself safely cocooned, floating in space surrounded by melodies of the ethereal dimension. ■

How to CONTACT US at

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COUNTRY LIVING in Queanbeyan and Palerang

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Deadline for contributions and advertising booking
For June issue – 25 May 2016

In addition to mailbox delivery, this free monthly publication is available from:
Braidwood: Miss Ruby's Bookshop and various cafes. **Bungendore:** Food Lovers Market, Gunna Doo Bakery & Cafe. Palerang Council Chambers (Bungendore, Braidwood). **Queanbeyan:** Beautiful Gifting, Monaro St; Queanbeyan Library newspaper section; Riverside Plaza; and Karabar, Jerrabomberra Shopping Centres.

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Look for her next year:

Bywong author and playwright draws big crowds in Bungendore

by Angie Angel

THE BUNGENDORE Amateur Theatrical Society had its heyday between 2007 and 2009, showcasing various original dramatic works, but the lasting impression it left was the entertaining wit behind the scriptwriting of one woman – Bywong based writer Isabella McNickle.

This same woman's wit has resurfaced in a recent experiment running her own one-woman theatre production.

A show called *Funny Business* was run at the Bungendore War Memorial Hall on 8, 9 and 16 April and attracted large audiences in the last two performances. "I did this because I wanted to showcase my plays under my own steam so I could have artistic authority," Isabella said.

The scripts are full of lovably naïve and bemused characters stuck in situational conflicts and misunderstandings.

Four short plays were performed: *Question Time*, a musical trivia fundraising evening at Snake Gully, *If It's Him*, a comedy about some girls in a country town café vying for the attention of an exotic stranger who comes in, *As Time Goes By*, a short skit full of pathos about a pair of actors waiting for an audition, and *Dirty Habits*, a four-act play about an obsessive compulsive newlywed woman, whose desire for cleanliness and sophistication is constantly thwarted by disgusting and earthy relatives and acquaintances.

Isabella grew up in Queensland, married young and moved to Canberra with her husband. She has lived in the Canberra region most of her life.

She has published one children's' book, *The Adventures of Tiffy Rabbit*, won the Eleyne Mitchell writing award in 2013, and has had short stories published In anthologies by Oxford University Press (*A Time of Waiting*) and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association's *Stories from Around the World*. ■

ARTS and EVENTS

Throughout May
Exhibition: *Slow Burn*
Octagon ArtSpace, Bungendore Wood Works Gallery. 22 Malbon St, Bungendore. Featuring works by Pamela Griffith; Greg Hansell. **www.bungendorewoodworks.com.au**.

Until Tuesday 24 May
Ceramic exhibition: *Divergence*
Form studio and gallery, 1/30 Aurora Ave, Qbn. Features work by Elaine Bradley, Veryney Burness, Richilde Flavell, Isabelle Mackay-Sim, Fran Romano and Lia Tajcnar. Free, **www.formstudioandgallery.com.au**.

Sunday 8 May
Mother's Day Bungendore train
Canberra Railway Stn, Kingston ACT. Take a steam train from Canberra to Bungendore and back on Mother's Day. Enjoy art galleries, craft and antique shops or a leisurely lunch in Bungendore's cafes or restaurants. Depart Canberra 9am, arrive Bungendore 10.20am. Depart Bungendore 1.40pm, arrive Canberra 2.40pm. Adult $65, Conc $55, Child $35. **http://canberrarailwaymuseum.org**.

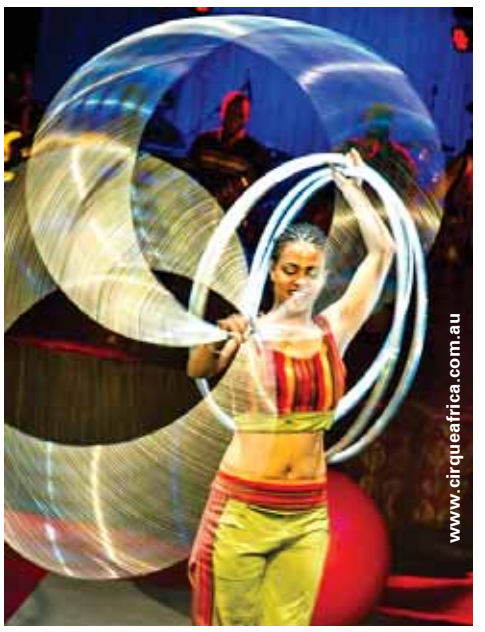
Hoskinstown chestnut roast
Hoskinstown War Memorial Hall, 1697 Hoskinstown Rd. Fresh, locally grown chestnuts; cooking demos; gourmet food stalls, + more. **http://allevents.in/hoskinstown/hoskinstown-chestnut-roast/1579952285653256**

Sunday 22 May
Boro Mt Fairy Rural Fire Brigade AGM
Fire Station, 419 Mt Fairy Rd, 10am. BBQ after meeting, all welcome.

Bungendore Rural Fire Brigade AGM
Bungendore Emergency Services Centre, King St, Bungendore, 12pm. Enquiries **contacts@bungendorerfs.org**.

JOIN US ONLINE
Check out the monthly events calendar and much more at www.districtbulletin.com.au
In the week after we print, you'll find there this month's issue in PDF for those who miss the print copy. Full back issues of all the *Bulletins* … more local, environmental news as it happens … articles from around the web … send us your views via Facebook or comment.

Cirque Africa in Canberra through May



Young performers from throughout Africa in highly athletic Circe de Soleil style acts. WOW factor is high! Highly recommended.

LOCAL MARKETS:

1st and 3rd Saturday of every month
Braidwood Farmers Markets
National Theatre in the main street of Braidwood, from 8am–12.30pm. **www.braidwoodfarmersmarket.org.au**.

Every Saturday
Capital Region Farmers Market
EPIC grounds, Mitchell, 8–11am. A genuine farmers market offering a diverse range of fresh seasonal food straight from the producer to the consumer and an opportunity to discuss with growers. **www.capitalregionfarmers market.com.au**

Southern Harvest Farmers Market
Memorial Hall, Molonglo St, Bungendore, 9–1pm, (opposite Food Lovers Market).

1st Saturday of every month (ex-January)
The Captains Flat Country Markets
Community Hall, Foxlow St, Captains Flat, 9.30–1.30pm. Enquiries to Maggie on 0473 113 398.

3rd Saturday of every month (ex-July, August)
Wamboin Produce Market
Wamboin Community Hall, Bingley Way, Wamboin, 9–12 noon. Fresh produce including cheese, eggs, honey, vegetables, nuts, seeds and plants.

3rd Sunday every month
Bungendore Markets
War Memorial Hall, Molonglo St, Bungendore, 9–2pm. Art, craft and local produce.

Windy Hall Country Markets
Windellama Hall, 10–2pm, craft goods, Devonshire tea, deli delights + more. Bob Shaw 4844 5001.

4th Saturday of every month
Braidwood Markets
Ryrie Park, Wallace St, Braidwood, 8am. Local crafts and cooking, plant and natural products. Call Geraldine 4847 5061.

More on regional / local events / tourism:
www.bungendore.com.au
www.visitqueanbeyan.com.au
www.visitbraidwood.com.au

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Salwa Woodroffe
Kaleidoscope of Australia
Exhibition May—June
Opening Saturday 30th April
Meet the Artist 2—4 pm
Join us for Drinks & nibbles

All Welcome
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every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 6pm

Great new menu
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Veal Marsala with mushroom cream
Plus an extensive selection of risotto and pasta.
Come and give it a try!!

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18 Malbon St
Bungendore NSW 2621
cafewoodworks@gmail.com
bwoodworks.com/cafe

Mad in May
the market @ bungendore
Sunday May 15th 9am–3pm
at the War Memorial Hall
All your favourite stalls
Come along for a browse
Enjoy a variety of refreshments

jewellery, giftware, collectables, local art & craft, garden products, toys & models, cakes & pastries, tea & fresh coffee, soaps & lotions, textiles, preserves, hand knits, candles, cookies, mosaics, homewares, greeting cards, beads & findings, pottery & ceramics, local grown plants, prints & paintings, fruit & vegetables, clothing & footwear

CAFÉ WOOD WORKS
ArtSound fm 90.3 fm 92.7
wood works gallery BUNGENDORE

The John Mackey Quartet
JOHN MACKEY *Sax* – MIROSLAV BUKOVSKY *Horns*
DAVID PEREIRA *Cello* – LACHLAN COVENTRY *Guitar*

In Good Company
A World Class Musical Event
Program includes the **WORLD PREMIERE** of John Mackey's ***Gravity Waves Suite*** inspired by his father Ron Mackey and ANU Vice-Chancellor Nobel Prize Winner Brian Schmidt

3 Course Dinner & Concert
Bookings in the Cafe or Phone 6238 1688

Saturday May 21 6pm

Morgan Merrel - Percussion
Zach Raffan Trumpet
Anna Rafferty - Vocalist
Fraser Findlay - Vocalist
Clarinet and more . . .

LERIDA ESTATE
— MOTHER'S DAY —
Gourmet Lunch
Live music
Present for Mum
Case of wine to be won for Mum
Bookings Essential

Cellar Door
Open Daily 10–5pm
Café Lerida
Open Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays 10–5pm
FREE fine wine tastings
FREE live music on Sundays
Vineyard/Winery Tours by Appointment

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