

The Bangalow

HERALD

2479

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Mangosteen's Yuki

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Justine Elliot MP

Federal Labor Member for Richmond



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Authorised J Elliot, ALP, 107 Minjunbgal Dr Tweed Heads South

From the Editor

This issue of *The Bangalow Herald* is a reminder that our community is not just a place – it’s a conversation.

Across these pages, you’ll find stories shaped by different voices, experiences and values: from the fierce beauty of queer performance to the calm focus of horsemanship, to a heartfelt call for blood donors from the Stockdale family, and the insights of many with a dream of reclaiming the Bangalow Bowl.

These stories might seem unrelated, but together they reflect something vital – that community engagement and representation aren’t just nice ideas. They’re the tools we use to understand each other. To make space for truth. To build something stronger than the sum of our parts.

When people are invited to speak – and are actually listened to – they show up. Whether it’s through surveys, storytelling, or stepping into the spotlight for the first time, every voice adds nuance, depth and diversity to our picture of this region.

Sometimes that picture is joyful, like a dance on the beach. Sometimes it’s hard to read – confronting, even. But that’s life. It’s not all rainbows and unicorns. We can’t turn away from the uncomfortable because we can’t respond clearly to what we don’t fully see.

The local landscape isn’t just about place. It’s about people power, individual and collective identity, hopes and dreams, and belonging. This issue is a patchwork of those realities.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, responded, showed up, engaged, or simply picked up the magazine. Your voice matters. Your stories matter.

Sally Schofield

We acknowledge the original storytellers of the land on which we live and work, the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung Nation.

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Breaking the chain of violence against women Photos Lyn McCarthy - Niche Pictures

Seeing red

I don't remember the first time I felt unsafe. Maybe it was walking home from school and sensing a stranger's stare from an unfamiliar car. Maybe it was as a teen, learning to hold my keys between my fingers like claws, just in case. Certainly by my 20s, when the phone calls to friends while walking home alone at night were like a ritual of survival. 'Text me when you get there.'

It's exhausting, living this way, when your body is a moving target.

That's why V-Day matters. At dawn on Saturday 14 February – yes, Valentine's Day – women, non-binary folk, and allies rise up, dressed in red on Main Beach, Byron Bay.

It's a flashmob that's part of the global One Billion Rising movement, that turns a day of Hallmark schmaltz and overpriced flowers into one of collective power. Because for many, relationships don't always mean romance and respect. Or safety.

With the sand beneath our feet and the early sun on our faces, movement becomes language with a collective dance to V-Day anthem *Break the Chain*.

The dance acknowledges the suffering of the one-in-three women who will be beaten or raped in their lifetime. We dance because our rage needs rhythm. We dance because – unlike the 60-something Australian women who lost their lives to intimate partner violence in 2025 – we are still here. We dance because we're not willing to let that be our daughters' inheritance.

To those who think our slice of paradise is immune to abuses, you're wrong. There are stories here that would make your hair curl, and over the last decade women from around the region have shared their stories as part

of *The Vagina Conversations*, a collaborative show featuring women and people with vaginas. Inspired by Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*, Director Zenith Virago felt that our local community had their own stories to tell. So, she pulled together a contemporary re-imagining – not a monologue but a conversation.

This year, the Brunswick Picture House transforms into a space of courage and truth-telling. This show is not your standard theatre. It's raw, local, real. It's nurses, teachers, aunties, survivors – women from 17 to 83 – who step up to share their personal stories, often for the first time.

There's knowing laughter. There's heavy silence. There are moments when I've had to close my eyes, my face leaking, while I breathe through someone's truth because it's all too familiar.

"This show is activism in action," says Mandy Nolan. And it is. All proceeds support frontline services like the Mullumbimby Womens' Resource Service and Pottsville Neighbourhood Centre. To date, over \$158,000 has been raised to support women escaping domestic and family violence.

So, to anyone who has felt that same tight grip of fear walking home, I say: join us. Sit with us at *The Vagina Conversations* and let someone else's story make you see red. Then, if you can, on Saturday 14 February, rise early, dress in red, and come dance at the beach.

Because when we stand together, nobody flinches when you say *vagina*. And we remember: this body is not a battleground. It's a force.

Sally Schofield

The Vagina Conversations

When 12, 13, 14, 15 February, 7pm (doors open 6.30pm)

Where Brunswick Picture House

Tickets \$49 full, \$39 concession. Suitable for ages 14+. Tickets from venue.

Info vday.org | FB: V-Day Byron Bay

Now in its 11th year, *The Vagina Conversations* features local women and people with vaginas sharing bold, personal, often powerful stories. Created by Zenith Virago with Mandy Nolan, this sell-out storytelling event raises funds for women escaping violence.

V-Day Byron Bay Flashmob Dance

When Saturday 14 February at 7am (gather from 6.30am)

Where Main Beach, Byron Bay

Tickets Free. All welcome. Wear red.

Info onebillionrising.org | FB: V-Day Byron Bay

Part of the global One Billion Rising movement to end violence, this annual flashmob protest dance invites the community to rise, resist and dance in solidarity. Learn the steps online or on the sand. A joyful, defiant act of collective resistance.

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Adam Susz delivers Photo supplied



Up, up, and away at his day job
Photo Christobel Munson

You trained for a Hospitality Certificate III for Crown Resorts. What was that about?

During COVID-19, which heavily impacted the aviation industry, I was grounded for the better part of two years. Because I was interested in numbers, I trained to become a casino dealer in baccarat, roulette and poker. I always wanted to do that! You need to be good with your hands and able to handle a lot of cash and chips.

Haven't you also worked as a football referee?

Yes. For 20 years, I had a stint at an elite level for NSW State League Football Referees (also as their treasurer for two years). I officiated in 750 matches in the highest tiers of Men's Premier League competitions, holding a position on the top NSW panel for six seasons.

What did that teach you?

Valuable skills, such as conflict management, teamwork and communication, combined with fitness and resilience. Useful skills, too, in my role for 10 years as treasurer of the Australian and International Pilots Association. As a trade unionist, I got involved with AIPA to be able to represent my profession. I was involved in negotiating four complex workplace agreements, giving me the chance to pursue my socialist side.

Is that needed in your roles as volunteer treasurer for *The Bangalow Herald* and the Bangalow Historical Society?

Quite the opposite. They're both naturally cohesive groups of people who get along well together. It helps that we're all volunteers who want to be part of the team.

Any other surprise talents, Adam?

I'm a JP, which is useful. Quite a lot of people in Bangalow need services such as Stat Decs. I also love music and play the piano – from classical to jazz. I enjoyed playing at nursing homes where my wife Angela's parents lived, and I recently performed a tune in Barcelona's town square. It's nice to be able to share that with people.

From croupier to treasurer

Christobel Munson speaks with the multi-talented **Adam Susz**, pilot, pianist, volunteer treasurer of *The Bangalow Herald Inc* and the Bangalow Historical Society, and a postie bike-riding member of Murray Hand's delivery team.

What do you enjoy about your roles as Herald delivery-man and treasurer?

The roles are very different. While the treasurer is a desk job fulfilling my passion for numbers, delivering the *Herald* each month is an outdoor pursuit. I love riding my Honda CT125 postie bike through the scenic back roads of Bangalow's hinterland, as I make my way to 360 letterboxes from Coorabell to Binna Burra, Possum Creek, Brooklet and Newrybar. Once the magazine exceeds 32 pages, it gets quite bulky to deliver. The summer edition was a massive 56 pages, meaning I needed to reload many more boxes of magazines.

When did you and your family move to Bangalow?

We moved up to the area from Sydney in August 2021, first renting in Byron for six months. Then we were able to buy in Bangalow, where we lived for nearly four years. Now we're on an acreage at Brooklet, where we're building a new, single level home, designed to take in the view to the Nightcap Ranges. We've planted 650 coffee trees and look forward to sharing our coffee with friends and family.

Apart from the Herald, what's your bread-and-butter work?

For 32 years, I've worked in the aviation industry, piloting Boeing B737, B767, B747 and Airbus A330 passenger aircraft throughout the world. This takes up about 16 days a month, travelling to destinations like London, Frankfurt, Bangkok, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Auckland, Honolulu, LA, Vancouver, New York. I worked my way up from First Officer, taking 24 years to become a long haul Captain. It's a very technical and disciplined job: you have to be able to keep your cool and yes, a certain demeanour is required. Stopovers are usually 24 to 48 hours. Favourite food? Tokyo does it for me!



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The 'Bone Bus' will be at Bangalow Medical Centre from the 27 – 29 April

This is a government funded Bone Density Scan and letters will be sent to our eligible over 70 patients in the coming weeks.

Our 2026 Flu Clinics will Start in April

A free Influenza vaccine is available for everyone over the age of 65, individuals with immunocompromised conditions, pregnant woman and children > 6 months to 5 years. Clinics will be opened in the coming months.

Skin Clinics

Dr Graham Truswell, Dr Alistair Mitchell, Dr Clinton Scott & Dr Emily Dunn are offering comprehensive skin checks, along with expert diagnosis, treatment and management of skin cancer (including minor skin procedures).

Menopause Clinics

Dr Jemma Buultjens is running her Menopause Clinics alongside Dr Julia Chiu, Dr Caitlin Downes and Dr Sasha Morris who are also specialising in menopause, perimenopause, ante natal, hormones, contraception including mirena and implanon insertion and removal.

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Shakespeare – with added sparkle



The fabulous Bertie/Beatrice/Miss B in action Photo Hielrick

Gabby Le Brun meets **Michael Sharmon**, the playwright giving the Bard a new twist.

MC: “You can’t change the world with sequins.”

Beatrice: “But the second those lights hit me, I wasn’t a punchline anymore. I wasn’t the freak at the back of the classroom – I was someone.”

A Midsummer Night’s Queen (MNQ) is a musical written by Bangalow-based Michael Sharmon and directed by Kylie Faud for the Drill Hall Theatre Company – “a vibrant reimagining of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* through an LGBTQIA+ lens”. The exchange above, between the MC and lead character Beatrice, speaks to the pain of marginalisation, and the power of finding your voice. But you don’t have to be queer for these lines to resonate. At the heart of

Michael’s work is the desire to build common ground between people.

Michael was born in Melbourne, but when he was five his family moved to a small regional town in Queensland. From his perspective, it was less a tree change, more a hostage situation. He paints the town in terms of “the stinky pool” and the funky gym mats. In a vicious act of racism, Michael’s Indian father was spat on in the street. It was as if the “brittleness and harshness of the landscape seeped into the character of the community, and parched any softness or tenderness right out of them”, he says.

Michael is the antithesis of this. His manner does not reflect any of the brutal bigotry and violence he’s been subjected to throughout his life.

Tucked into a convivial corner of Bangalow’s Tuck Shop, where we do the interview,



The all singing, all dancing Michael Sharmon
Photo Ines Laimins

Michael’s presence is like a hug for the nervous system. His optimism is contagious. His eyes light up; he’s generous with laughter and compliments. “Oh, she’s amazing,” he says of a mutual acquaintance. You know you can trust that Michael would advocate for you in rooms you’re not in.

“It’s hard to find the strength, when you don’t feel you fit in,” the MC in *MNQ* sings.

Michael says he “hated sport” and yet found himself in a sports-mad town with no community drama clubs or theatre companies. The pain cracks his voice as he describes this period. He managed to escape at 15 by attending high school in Brisbane, where he found his people at La Boite Roundhouse Theatre. But he credits that small town as “where my imagination came from – out of necessity”.

When he was eight, Michael composed his first musical number, featuring the lines:

*“Just look at what computers have done to our lives.
They’ve changed our hearts, they’ve changed our wives.”*

I laugh and ask if there was any political subtext, but he says no: “It just rhymed well. I didn’t think that deeply about it.” I blush, remembering how my sister and I (aged eight and 10) rewrote the lyrics to Sam Fox’s *Touch Me*. Michael is delighted by the confession. That’s what he does – he dissipates shame with representation, compassion and advocacy.

A Midsummer Night’s Queen represents these qualities in action on a grand scale. While it is a funny musical romp with exquisitely rhyming lyrics – and sequins – there’s also an unashamedly political undercurrent. The setting – Lismore’s Tropical Fruits New Year’s Eve Party, the “second largest Pride gathering in Australia” – is a declaration of cultural significance. On a personal level, it’s a tribute to a place where Michael has

found joy and belonging over the years. In a beautiful synchronicity, Michael and two other cast members, including Bangalow local Tia Nelson, performed an *MNQ* medley to much acclaim at Tropical Fruits at the end of 2025.

Michael was already an accomplished singer and actor when he returned to Melbourne to pursue a professional acting career, but was advised by Actors Equity that he needed to add dance to his skillset. At Tony Bartuccio's dance studio, he found himself – a novice – among highly technical and experienced dancers. It was intimidating, but he was determined. He loved the feeling that dance gave him, and the “grace and strength in my body”.

Safe within the dance community, Michael publicly came out. But the professional acting world wasn't as welcoming for a gay man auditioning for roles, and he was advised to “butch up”. He deepened his voice and straightened his gait.

Fundamentally, acting is shape-shifting. But Michael finds parts of himself in each role. In *MNQ*, he identifies most with the character he plays: Bertie/Beatrice/Miss B, who has the drive and courage to face things head on. He acknowledges that the “witty, battle-hardened, glamorous drag artist” is a lot more “out there” than he is, but he's leaning into her exuberance. Still, he's determined not to turn her into a caricature. For authenticity, Michael draws on drag queen mentors from the 90s Melbourne scene at Three Faces nightclub. *MNQ* reflects his strong sense of social justice and advocacy for their community.

The 1993 film *Philadelphia*, starring Tom Hanks as lawyer Andrew Beckett, was considered revolutionary for being the first major Hollywood film to directly address discrimination and homophobia, and make the AIDS crisis personal. *MNQ* also makes the political personal. Beatrice's love interest, Benedick, lives with HIV.

In the number *A Different Kind of Man*, Benedick sings: “There's a rainbow with shades of grey, That most of us don't want to see.”

Michael has known many people like Benedick – those in whom the bright lights and sequins mask silent, taboo battles.

His own life has not been immune from private suffering. His early acting trajectory came to a halt after he was sexually assaulted by a theatre director. He walked away from the industry and went to work in retail. By 2007, he was working full time at a bank, until his mum – living in The Channon – suggested he take a break and visit. He resigned, enrolled in drama at the Northern Rivers Conservatorium in Lismore, and the path back began.

He later worked in Hong Kong as an actor and director for 15 years. In 2016, he performed his musical *Auditions* at the Edinburgh Festival, and it was sold out by the end of the season. When I ask what that return to performing felt like, Michael sparkles: “It was fantastic. I was like, yes! OK! The time is now.”

He returned to Australia from Hong Kong when COVID quarantine restrictions affected his ability to visit family. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with cancer. Post-surgery, his energy went into recovery. He re-emerged teaching drama in Bangalow. In 2024, his Golden Palm Award-winning play *10 Minutes of Fame* was presented at the Drill Hall in Mullumbimby. And in February, the cast launches into rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Queen*.

I assumed that Michael was in his early 40s, but when I texted him to check, he replied with a pink love heart “I'm 50” and a laughing emoji: “Living my best life.”

MC: “You can't change the world with sequins.”

Michael: “You certainly can.”

A Midsummer Night's Queen is at the Drill Hall, Mullumbimby in May. Tickets are on sale now at the Drill Hall website drillhalltheatre.org.au



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Rave reviews, Yuki Yanagi combines her love of music and food Photo supplied

The 'Established 2000 Tokyo' at the bottom of Mangosteen's sign is the first clue that there's more to Bangalow's favourite Japanese café than meets the eye. **Georgia Fox** set off to find out more.

Yuki Yanagi wasn't sure whether she should start a new business in Australia. She was approaching her 55th birthday, and the world was in its second tumultuous year of the pandemic. But luckily for us, a series of serendipitous factors aligned in such a way that opening a sister café to the one she had started in Tokyo 21 years earlier felt inevitable, she explains.

The roots of the original Mangosteen go back even further, though, to 1996, when Yuki and her longtime collaborator, Daisuke Saito, opened a nightclub called Vitamin-Q in Tokyo's Nishi-Azabu. With artists such as Boredoms, Hifana, Tadanobu Asano and Tsuyoshi Suzuki regularly performing, it became a mecca for musicians who Yuki describes as being "at the cutting edge of sound." A new movement emerged, and a strong, tight-knit creative community grew around it.

Yuki discovered dance music while living in London in the early nineties, during her former life as a musician. "At that time I was under contract with a Japanese music company, writing English lyrics and singing," she explains. "They sent me to London to improve my English... but instead I fell head-over-heels for rave parties," she laughs. In 1992 she debuted in Japan as part of a new wave band and continued performing live, while also DJ'ing and becoming increasingly involved in Tokyo's dance party scene. A friend was managing the space in Nishi-Azabu and asked if she and Daisuke would be interested in taking it over.

The club itself was only open for a year, but Vitamin-Q continued to put on dance parties in Tokyo and beyond through the rest of the nineties. The parties grew so large – attracting more than 3,000 people at some – that they eventually had to scale back. "I'm not interested in huge floors," Yuki says. "I love gatherings where you see everyone's faces, where everyone can still feel connected."

In 2000, pregnant with her first daughter, Yuki sought to swap all-night parties for more family-friendly hours. She and Daisuke, along with a group of musicians, DJs and staff they had met through Vitamin-Q, opened Mangosteen in Tokyo's Nakameguro. "We made everything ourselves," Yuki explains, "from the interior design to the menus." Music played a huge part, too, with big-name DJs and musicians dropping by for unscheduled sets. "It was a truly fun space," Yuki says.

While she had never been to Australia, she had heard about Byron Bay from touring DJs. Seeking a life near the mountains and the sea – and away from the omnipresent threat of Tokyo's next major earthquake – Yuki left Mangosteen in the hands of her community in 2005 and moved, sight unseen, to Mullumbimby with her husband and her four-year-old and newborn daughters.

Since becoming a mum, she had been less involved in dance parties, but when her spark reignited in 2009, she wasted no time rebooting Vitamin-Q Byron Bay. Before the pandemic put a dampener on things a decade later, Yuki had hosted 21 techno and house dance parties around the Shire, as well as producing ambitious projects both here and back in Japan – including a dance party



Miso and music at Mangosteens Photo supplied

on a Russian passenger ship off the coast of Fukuoka, and a mass cymbal performance in the Byron countryside. All juggled with her 'day job' as a chef at Mullumbimby's Izakaya Yū.

She loves bringing Japanese DJs out, not only because of the depth of talent, but to help broaden their opportunities "as a way of giving back for all the magic moments we had in Japan," Yuki says. She also wanted to offer something different to the dance party community here. "In Europe and Japan, a DJ builds a long set, crafting a 'journey,' but here it was more like 10 DJs, each playing only an hour – fast hits, no slow build, no wabi-sabi journey," she explains.

Which brings us back to 2021, when Yuki received an unexpected offer from Daisuke to help create a Mangosteens in Australia by securing one of the interest-free loans Japanese banks were offering during the pandemic. The original Mangosteens had

continued to expand since Yuki left Japan, opening a small izakaya (a Japanese bar with snack food) with a liquor store, as well as a brewery in the town of Hokuto, two hours west of Tokyo.

But where would be the right fit for an Australian Mangosteens? Byron Bay had become too commercial for Yuki, and Mullumbimby already had Izakaya Yū. Bangalow, however, retained its village charm, and she knew exactly the right spot – Corner Kitchen. A couple of weeks after an unsuccessful first approach, Yuki received a call from the owners asking if she was still interested.

When her close friend from Izakaya Yū, Kyōhei Harada, received his permanent residency at the same time, Yuki knew she wanted to create Mangosteens together with him. A talented chef and top-level Brazilian jiu-jitsu coach, Kyōhei is described by Yuki as not only being like a son to her but possessing all the qualities she wanted at the core of Mangosteens. "I deeply trust his passion, his attitude towards life and work, and above all, his honesty," Yuki says.

Five years in, Mangosteens has received many offers to expand into other locations around the Shire, but Yuki explains her priority is to protect and maintain the taste and quality of what they do at the shop today – while still having time for dancing and surfing. They import and sell Mangosteens Brewery's award-winning beer from Hokuto, and source the majority of fresh produce from our local farmers' markets, including all the beautiful flowers Yuki arranges for the café's tables and counters each week.

Since restrictions were lifted, Yuki has reprised her Vitamin-Q events, bringing big-name Japanese DJs to venues like Haven and Paradiso Music Room. She has also started Musico Bangalow – an experimental space for music and food – with two parties held to date at Common People Brewing, and more in the pipeline.

Thirty years on from beginning this journey, Yuki's vision and tenacity have created a generational legacy – the children of the original Vitamin-Q and Mangosteens communities embarking on working holidays to Australia, instructed to "go see Yuki!" Yuki's own daughters, too, are global citizens, having grown up between Japan, Byron and Paris, and now spreading their wings back in Tokyo.

"I can honestly say that I am enjoying both my work and surfing more than ever," Yuki reflects, as she prepares to celebrate her 60th birthday this year. Chances are she's going to throw one hell of a party, too.

The dancers amongst us can stay up-to-date with upcoming parties @vitaminq_byronbay and @mangosteens_bangalow

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Bloody hell

Seb Stockdale of the Stockpot Kitchen family Photo supplied

Seb Stockdale, 20 year old son of Stockpot Kitchen founders Jen and Graeme Stockdale is battling rare leukemia. The family is calling on fellow young adults to get tested as a potential lifesaving blood donor.

It was meant to be the adventure of a lifetime. In early December 2025, Seb Stockdale had just landed in Japan on his first solo overseas trip – a working holiday and a snowboarding dream. But it soon became clear that something wasn't right.

"I was over there for about maybe two weeks

before I started getting like symptoms of anaemia, just really fatigued and every day I just be able to do less and less."

That turned into nausea, vomiting, and a complete loss of appetite. Then a cyst under his arm became an abscess which required draining at a Japanese medical clinic, followed by IV antibiotics. "After a few days one of the doctors said I looked quite pale and did a blood test." The following day Seb learned he was dangerously anaemic, and his platelet count was nine. It should have been 180.

That day, Seb was taken to a hospital in Sapporo, about an hour and a half away. "They ran some more tests and then the haematologist came and saw me and basically just said that they found signs of leukaemia."

The medical team gave him blood and platelets to get him stable enough to fly. "Mum actually came over to fly back with me which was great 'cause I had someone to talk to."

Back in Australia, Seb was taken straight to the Gold Coast hospital where further tests revealed a diagnosis of Acute Myeloid Leukemia with FLT-3 mutation, a rare and fast-growing form of blood and bone marrow cancer.

"I need a bone marrow transplant, or it will just keep coming back no matter how many times they get rid of it," says Seb. Dad Graeme puts a finer point on it: "He will not survive unless we find a stem cell donor."

For now, Seb needs to get through three rounds of chemotherapy and prepare for transplant. The transplant means he needs a donor match needs to be found, and the family are appealing to people aged 18-35 worldwide to have their blood tested to see if



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Saturdays 7-11am
Piccabeen Park



All in this together Photos supplied

they are a match and to register on the Bone Marrow Register.

It's not a matching blood type but a search for a blood donor who has six DNA markers that exactly match Seb's. Sadly, no one in the Stockdale family has a strong enough match. 'It's not just about being related,' says Jen.

If your blood sample is found to be a match, the next part of the donation process is far less intense than most people imagine. 'You go to your local hospital or Blood Bank or whatever and they'll just give you party pies, sausage rolls and milkshakes and you just sit there while they take a larger than average blood donation.' No needles in the hip or anything gruesome as maybe have been used in time gone by.

After that, the stem cells are separated from the blood and used to create new bone marrow, and Seb's old bone marrow is removed. 'Then they inject that new bone marrow into Seb's empty bones,' says Jen.

If you're nervous about needles, there are other ways to join the register. 'You can actually order a mouth swab through the mail... if you're anaemic you know you can do the mouth swab as well. It's obviously not the best but yeah, they definitely accept that as well.'

Locally, the Lifeblood donor centre in Lismore even knows Seb's name. 'You can say I'm doing it for Seb Stockdale and then just put it to his tally so he knows that there are lots of people out there thinking of him,' says Jen.

Seb's already gone through one intense month of chemo. The family all shaved their heads in solidarity for Seb's journey.

He's home briefly, before heading back in for the next round. When the time is right, he'll be admitted to the Royal Brisbane hospital for the transplant and recovery, which will take another three and a half months. 'So when he gets inducted into the Royal Brisbane hospital, they call the donor that they found as the match,' says Jen.

The best outcomes come from younger donors, which is why the register focuses on people aged 18 to 35. 'Basically, the older stem cells the harder it is for his body to integrate,' says Jen

Herald readers will remember the Stockdales as the well-loved family behind the Stockpot Kitchen, a hugely popular southern-style eatery that was a crowd favourite operating out of the Bangalow Bowlo for a number of years.

Known for its slow-cooked meats and smoky flavours it brought a welcoming, community-focused vibe to town. After years in Bangalow, the Stockpot Kitchen moved to Lismore, where it continues to serve up its signature hospitality even through the tough times. Like so many in our region, the family faced the devastating 2022 floods with resilience, rolling up their sleeves to help rebuild the town they now call home.

Now they are asking you to roll up your sleeve, literally.

Readers with kids or grandkids in the 18-35-year-old age bracket are encouraged to have a conversation with their young people about giving a blood sample and joining the Bone Marrow Register. They might just save a life.

For more information, visit lifeblood.com.au

Sally Schofield



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Little ones even get a crack in the arena photo Flash Pony



Ean Jones looking whimsical on Trinket Photo Flash Pony

Buckle up, Bangalow

When Zoe Olive first dreamt up the Bangalow Buckle Challenge in 2018, she wasn't chasing ribbons or prestige – she wanted to open the gates of horsemanship to everyone. The result is a uniquely inclusive competition that's grown from 39 competitors in its first year to more than 100 horses converging on the Bangalow Showgrounds annually, all vying for the coveted silver buckle.

"It started because I saw riders who wanted to give stock horse challenges a go, but felt intimidated by the strict rules around registration, gear and presentation," says Zoe. "So I created something independent, more accessible, where it didn't matter what breed your horse was or what saddle you used – you just had to give it a go."

The Bangalow Buckle Challenge is now a two-day event held annually in early March, with categories designed to cater to all levels of rider experience and horse age. From juniors and youth encouragement classes to open super horse and master rider divisions, every entrant has the opportunity to develop and showcase their horsemanship across a variety of skills.

"We don't run a full campdraft," Zoe explains, adding that each competitor rides four core patterns: a hack (a flatwork sequence judged on movement and presentation), a utility pattern (obstacles such as gates, poles and side-passing), a working pattern (showing agility and responsiveness often used in stock work) and cattle work. "We call it 'beast work' – it's a controlled introduction where each rider gets two minutes with a single beast in the arena, aiming to demonstrate control, movement and flow."

Campdrafting, which you may have seen in action at the Bangalow Show, requires a rider to select a single beast from a small group, separate it from the mob in a yard (or "camp"), and then guide it through a cloverleaf-shaped course at speed. It demands a high degree of cattle knowledge, horse skill and split-second decision-making. While thrilling to watch, it can be daunting for less experienced riders – which is exactly why Zoe chose a simplified format that allows everyone to have a go, regardless of background or skill level.

And it's not just the competitors who get involved. The event is run entirely by volunteers, with many participants helping set up, 'pencil' for judges (writing down scores) or serving lunches in between their own rides. "It's a real community effort," says Zoe. "I couldn't do it without them. That's why we introduced the Big Effort Big Buckle – a prize not for the best rider, but for the competitor who shows the most spirit and willingness to help. It started out as a joke but now it's one of the most prized buckles of the event."

One of those buckle winners is former Bangalow Herald committee member Ean Jones, who has taken out both the Master Rider Buckle and the Big Effort Buckle. "He's a real all-rounder," Zoe says. "Always up for helping out and just such a great sport."

The buckle itself is a key part of the event's identity. "I chose a buckle because it's something you can wear. It's a visible trophy – you don't just stick it on a shelf," says Zoe. "People see it and ask, 'What did you win that for?' It sparks stories."

The design has evolved over the years, with Zoe determined to find a buckle maker who could produce a high-quality, personalised piece. She now works with an Australian-owned company to design buckles with custom engraving, coloured stones and each buckle is stamped with the year, event and division. "We try to make each one special. Whether it's for the Encouragement Challenge or the Open Super Horse, that rider has earned it."

That spirit of inclusion is matched by a high standard of horsemanship and judging. Each section has its own judge, many of whom return year after year. "I encourage riders to chat to the judges, ask questions, get feedback. It's a learning opportunity as well as a competition," she says. In fact, the event kicks off with a two-hour warm-up session where competitors rotate through each ring to practise patterns and get rid of their "nerves and butterflies" – both horse and rider.

And while Zoe has run the event independently since day one, she's quick to acknowledge her loyal supporters. Local businesses help feed the judges and volunteers, and a huge array of sponsors keep the event running. "We couldn't have done this without them," she says.

Despite running the event, Zoe has managed to ride in previous years – though she admits she's yet to claim a buckle of her own. "I've come second," she smiles. "But this year I've told my team that everyone who helps has to get their ride in too. We're not riding for sheep stations—we're doing this so everyone can have a go."



Horse and rider are put through their paces Photo Flash Pony

The Bangalow Buckle Challenge is also evolving. This year sees the debut of a whipcracking competition, complete with community barbecue and bar, judged by a former Australian whipcracking champion. "It's all part of creating a space where the whole town can come and participate, even if they don't ride," says Zoe.

That mindset – of making room, breaking down barriers and encouraging growth – is what sets the Bangalow Buckle Challenge apart. "Whether it's a child on their first pony, an older rider coming back after a break, or someone just wanting to try something new, there's a place for them here," says Zoe. "And if they win a buckle? Even better."

The Bangalow Buckle Challenge returns to the Bangalow Showground on Saturday 28 February and Sunday 1 March 2026, featuring two full days of versatile horse challenges for all breeds. The program includes the Super Horse Challenge, Encouragement and Jackaroo/Jillaroo Maiden Challenges, Youth and Young Horse classes, and the popular Bangalow Bucket Obstacle Trial. Special awards include the *Equestrienne Magazine* All Round Lady Rider Award, the Norco Stock Feeds Magnificent Master Rider Award and the Glen Gough Big Effort Big Buckle Award. The Triple Crown Trophy will also return, spanning three regional events. Saturday begins with practice at 7.30am and competitions from 9.30am, followed by a Lions Club BBQ and the inaugural Northern Rivers Whip Cracking Championship. Sunday features cattle work, obstacle trials and awards. Public spectators most welcome - free entry. Nominations close Monday 16 February 2026..

The Bangalow Herald



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Where do we grow from here?

Get back what you put in from a community garden like this one in Fish Creek, Victoria Photo Juneen Schulz

When he moved from rural Victoria to Bangalow eight months ago, **Byron Leeworthy** saw it as a great opportunity to plant some roots and join the community garden.

With soil quality envied by many, ever-rising food costs, and a proactive community, a town as lively as ours has community garden written all over it. You can imagine my surprise when I got here only to find out there isn't one. So I decided to find out why we don't have a garden, and what we can do about it. Here's what I discovered:

In asking around town, people kept mentioning an attempt that was made in the estate out behind St Kevin's church. I visited Charlotte Street park and found a lovely, great big open patch of grass being mostly unused. In 2019, a proposal was put forward to Byron Shire Council with overwhelming local support and only three naysayers. I spoke to Sarah Maddox, who spearheaded this push, to try to find out what has happened since.

"I saw an opportunity to use some Council land to create community gardens for the neighbourhood," Sarah says. Starting the application process around March 2019, she knew there was a long road ahead. "We knew it was going to take probably 12 months for the Council to change their plan of management."

Most people would imagine this process to be quite the uphill battle, but Sarah assures me that the Council was supportive of the idea. "They came down and assessed the land," she says, "and the community consultation was overwhelmingly positive."

People's concerns were addressed by the Council releasing a Plan of Management, confirming the park would be kept as a multi-use area. "It wouldn't be taking away the kids' opportunity to go and kick a ball."

Due to COVID and personal matters, Sarah's attempt had to be put on the back burner. "We just need someone to pick it up and run with it," she says. "A lot of the groundwork is already laid out; it would be a great launching-off point."

The next step is to form a corporation so the community can lease the land from the Council. There is a document on the Council's website which outlines what needs to be done. Laid out in seven steps, it gives tips and advice on how to form a committee, find funding, and get a licence approved.

"We're all on residential blocks. It'd be a nice space to extend our backyards and grow some sort of edible produce, to have this meeting space that could be communally used," Sarah says.

Sarah sees a lot of importance in encouraging children to spend time in the garden. "We have a lot of kids in the area. When we first started the application, my neighbour and I planted some fruit trees along the meadows," she says. "They're just starting to fruit this year and the young ones are already eyeing them off."

Kids eating fruit right off the tree sounds like an idyllic situation. We all want seeds in the ground and harvests to share with friends and those in need – but what is a productive community to do while waiting



Buckley Park, Victoria Farm Photo Juneen Schulz

for an application to be finalised? Plant the seeds anyway.

Guerrilla gardening, in its simplest form, is where community members reclaim public (or sometimes private) land being unused and left unkempt, and take it upon themselves to improve it by adding plants – often native flowers or edibles – without Council knowledge or approval. I’m not suggesting this should be done in Bangalow, but a few raised beds around town couldn’t do much harm.

My hometown of Fish Creek in South Gippsland Victoria is a wonderful example of how guerrilla gardening can be a catalyst for community. Fish Creek already had a small established garden, but some thought it wasn’t enough. I spoke to Juneen Schulz, president of the garden, to learn more.

“We wanted to grow more local food for more local people,” Juneen says. “That’s

when we started looking for a bigger block.”

She and a friend, Marg Watson, started working to repair the soil health on some land next to an unused oval. “We started small, using a solarisation method to help make the land fertile,” Juneen says. When it was time to get more people involved, the pair enlisted some friends to help. “It just kept growing organically, through word of mouth.”

Nowadays, there is an active community working around the garden – and the South Gippsland Council have caught on too.

“They weren’t too happy at first because they wanted to sell the land,” Juneen says. “The Council manages the land, but it was bequeathed to the community, which works in our favour.”

A strong community often falls on the backs of a few keystone members. Juneen is the president of the Buckley Park Community

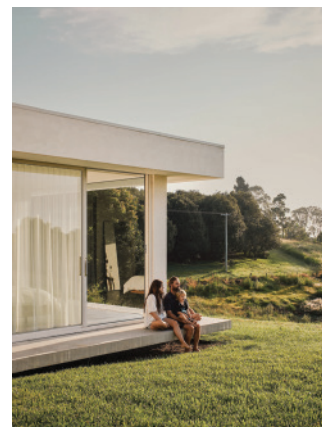
Farm but likes to keep it casual. “I want it to be comfortable and easy-going; it’s about trying to create a community within the garden.”

If guerrilla gardening sounds interesting to you, Juneen’s advice is to just start. “Start small and do it well,” she says. “And consider your access to water.”

“We’re trying to promote the idea that we need to grow food. In order to be resilient for the future we need to grow more food locally – we need to be eating seasonally within our own region,” says Juneen.

Byron Council’s *Byron Shire Community Garden Guidelines* offers guidelines and information about approval. Approval means the garden can be maintained in long term. There’s some great unused land on the side of the railway track in Bangalow. Who knows – we might even get to use the old station as a clubhouse?

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Simon Winfield brings world-class music to Pearces Creek Hall Photo Digby Hildreth

The little hall that could

Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Pearces Creek: every few weeks, international and Australian musicians depart from their big city touring schedule to play a gig at a humble country hall nestled in the hills a short drive from Bangalow, **Digby Hildreth** reports.

The evolution of Pearces Creek Hall into a “must play” venue in recent years is an extraordinary development, a resurrection largely due to the efforts of local resident Simon Winfield. The softly-spoken Englishman doesn’t stand out as someone who has resolved to “go harder” in life – but that is exactly what he has chosen to do: dedicate himself to turning the tiny heritage hall into a vibrant, and sustainable, cultural hub.

Since 2019, Simon has raised funds, booked performers, MC’d shows and, as café loungers in Bangalow’s high street can testify, posted concert fliers wherever there’s a space.

He’s a ball of calm, can-do energy, committed not only to the hall but also to its natural and social environment. The hall’s presentations come mainly in the form of roots music – folk, country, bluegrass – but it is also building a solid track record as a centre for the dissemination of progressive ideas, everything from regen agriculture to the use of sound as a tool for healing.

An increasing awareness about health and longevity helped to concentrate Simon’s mind further, he says, “because you realise you don’t know what your life expectancy is, right? I’m not saying that negatively; it’s just a reminder that you’re not going to live forever,

and a stimulus to live more fully.”

Born in England, Simon lived in Africa and Europe for his first 14 years, then went to boarding school in Britain, followed by a career in finance in London and New York. When he and his wife, Jen, and their three young children travelled the world in 2003 they came across Byron Shire. The memory stayed with them and four years later they came back.

They rented homes in Bexhill, then Clunes and Bangalow before settling in Pearces Creek. The children attended Bangalow PS and Byron High, and both parents got involved – “the usual things, like the P&C, the school canteen stuff,” Simon says.

“What I loved about the schools in this area was that you could get involved; it’s encouraged, and it’s part of your contribution, and a great way to meet people. The volunteer aspect of this country is incredible in whatever form it might take, whether you’re looking after Heritage House or, you know, working on the local paper.”

Volunteering seems part of his DNA: he has also signed up to help at the Writers Festival for the past eight years.

Their Pearces Creek home sits on 30 acres and as the “the house and child person” with a wife busy with full-time studies, Simon was keen to learn about how to best manage the land. “I hadn’t a clue about anything,” he says, so he set about finding out, at numerous field days, agricultural studies at SCU and Wollongbar TAFE and an “absolutely fascinating” trip to (Natural Sequence Farming movement founder) Peter Andrews’ place near Canberra.

Simon credits his commitment to reviving the hall to his interest in land management. He understood that as someone who was “basically an immigrant who’s worked in an office for 25 years” – he couldn’t lean over the fence and say to the third or fifth generation farmer ‘have you thought about doing it this way?’

“So we invited Brian Wehlberg, the holistic management and regenerative ag educator, to the hall to do a talk, and it was very well attended.” Since then, they have hosted 16 talks, with artists, foragers, farmers, nearly all of them connected with the land and environment, attended by about 1000 people altogether.

While his hopes of creating a viable alternative farm have not been realised (“because I haven’t put in the physical labour”) their property has seen a huge increase in biodiversity, and the hall has similarly thrived.

By 2019, the hall was in decline: there was no money in the kitty and the committee was looking for new people and new ideas. Simon felt the community needed a hall and had an obligation to make it viable.



Emerging local artists Honey and Silk play the hall this month Photo Digby Hildreth



Charm, history and great acoustics Photo supplied

They ran a raffle and raised \$3000, applied for government grants, held craft markets and, when a speaker dropped out, invited Immortal Soils' Bob Horan and Selena Murray to stage one of their large-scale botanical art installations, which opened up the possibilities for the space.

Musical events followed, and the confidence felt by the team of enthusiastic volunteers to stage such acts grew – as did the hall's reputation among performers as a terrific venue. Musicians, it seems, love to play there: it's intimate, a haven apart from the busy world. "They also love being welcomed; and so does the audience. They love the food, and having a cup of tea and a piece of homemade cake."

Above all, it's a true listening space, where the music is the focus, and the audiences are attentive, appreciative. World-class bluegrass band Midnight Chicken declined the offer of moving the benches out for the second

half, so people could dance. "They go, 'no, we don't want dancing. We want listening audiences'."

The hall best suits acoustic acts, with complex harmonies and a close connection with the audience: "We ask all our musicians to play at least one song with no electronic sound, and ideally down off the stage," Simon says.

At the first gig in 2026, bluegrass quartet Charley Castle and the Boys in the Well did just that, closing their show with a four-part a cappella rendition of *Goodnight Irene* that had some in the audience reaching for their hankies.

Local musicians are encouraged too. Hootenanny Highway, Will Hearn and Tara-Lee Byrne have recently used the hall for rehearsals, recording and performances.

Honey and Silk play on the first Saturday of this month, and another country duo, Wicker

Suite, appear the following weekend – part of a tour in which they're just playing country halls. Interspersed with the music there is a launch of Ian Kirkland's book *Booyong and Pearce's Creek District – Part of the Big Scrub* (see page 24) and cellist and sonic alchemist Tara-Lee is returning with her CELLOFINITY – a cello sound bath, where participants lie on the floor to soak up the chakra-healing reverberation of the music.

To an audience member, it feels as if the hall's growing success is not only due to Simon's enthusiasm as a promoter but also to his passion for such concepts, and for this kind of music.

"There is a selfish side to it," he admits. "The musicians I book are a reflection of my tastes. But I don't want it to be just my taste. And the same with the talks. I want to have a product that people can take somewhere else or use. There's no point in me doing it if it can't ... if it doesn't have a life after me."



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Local news



Drew setting up outside Heritage House. Photo Christobel Munson

New Byron Writers Festival GM

Byron Writers Festival has welcomed Molly Ward as its new General Manager.

An experienced arts leader, Molly has worked across major festivals, placemaking initiatives and cultural programs. Her background includes delivering destination events that celebrate creativity, foster connection and engage broad audiences.

Festival organisers say Molly brings strong leadership, a collaborative approach and a focus on innovation and sustainability. "Her work has consistently created experiences that leave a lasting impact," a spokesperson said.

Molly joins the leadership team alongside Artistic Director and CEO Jessica Alice, with the two expected to shape the next chapter of the Festival.

The annual literary event is a key part of the Northern Rivers' cultural calendar, attracting writers, thinkers and audiences from across the country. With planning underway for 2026, organisers say Molly's appointment positions the Festival for continued growth.

Further program announcements are expected later this year.

The Festival also recently announced their first author event for 2026 featuring with the queen of wit and fearless feminist Kathy Lette, Friday 6 March, 6.30-7.30pm at the A&I Hall Bangalow.

Tickets via Humanitix

Coffee is coming

Great excitement emanating from Bangalow Heritage House Museum - a new mobile kitchen-come-coffee trailer has arrived! Drew Fernie, a recent arrival to the shire from Port Macquarie, is establishing his 'Drew's Brews and Catering Est 2024' service, outside the museum.

As he tests the waters, initially Drew will be open Wednesday to Sundays from 6.30am to noon, selling a selection of hot and cold drinks, as well as bacon and egg rolls, toasties, banana bread and other sweet treats. In Drew's words, it's "hearty, fairly-priced food, made using good local produce". Currently he's preparing "coffee cold brew into a unique frothing keg. It pours like a Guinness and is very popular, particularly in this warm weather".

Drew has developed his cooking skills over 20 years, including comprehensive training in vineyards in the Hunter Valley, and - when he's not at the busiest corner of Piccabeen Park - will also be offering full catering to events of all sizes, one specialty being gourmet pizza, made in his state-of-the-art Italian pizza oven.

For four years, Drew worked in mental health and disability, having obtained a Cert III in Individual Support. (That's a vocational qualification that allows him to provide person-centred support to people with disabilities, that focusses on developing their independence, daily living skills, and participation in community life.) Once he's received his NDIS provider number, Drew will be looking for local trainees. The coffee he uses is roasted by a "courageous" young friend, Josh Collis, in Burleigh Heads. A non-verbal autistic 22-year-old, Josh now has his own business 'Brews of Change'.

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The Younger Heroes in action Photo supplied

Support for kids of ADF members

The Younger Heroes (TYH) is a three-day nature program disconnected from the outside world designed to reconnect current or ex serving ADF members and their children, learning communication skills and strengthening relationships through shared activities and stories. In 2025, programs were delivered in Uki (NSW), Busselton (WA), Fitzroy Falls (NSW) and Stanley (TAS), supporting 40 families and representing more than 900 combined years of military service.

Since launching, The Younger Heroes has delivered over 30 programs, reaching more than 2000 individuals and representing 5045 years of service across its community.

Founder and Director, Bangalow's Damien Schofield said the organisation's achievements were only possible thanks to its facilitators, donors and supporters. "Your belief and support allow real change to happen where it matters most – within families," he said.

Looking ahead to 2026, six programs are already planned, with a focus on helping children gain the confidence and understanding to communicate more openly.

Damien also praised the team of facilitators for the commitment and presence they bring to each event. "It is always an honour to stand alongside them and do this work together. They bring their lived experiences and stories from serving their country. The majority come from elite backgrounds serving in the special forces such as the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR)".

Updates and announcements for upcoming programs will be shared via @theyoungerheroes on social media channels.

Tree vandalism in Piccabeen Park

Two mature Camphor laurel trees in Bangalow's Piccabeen Park have been deliberately poisoned and will be removed in the coming weeks, Byron Shire Council has confirmed.

The trees, thought to be at least 40 years old and measuring up to 35 metres in height, were found with drill holes at their bases. They have since deteriorated significantly.

Malcolm Robertson, Manager Community Facilities and Open Spaces, said it is a blatant act of vandalism that will have a massive visual impact on the park.

"Piccabeen Park is a peaceful, green space in Bangalow, and it has been a gathering place for the community across generations because of the local weir," Mr Robertson said.

"The deliberate poisoning of these large trees is extremely upsetting, and illegal.

"It's a big blow for the volunteers in the Piccabeen Parklands community group, who work so hard to make the park the special place that it is.

Although Camphor laurels are an exotic species, Malcolm said they were appreciated for the shade and character they brought to the space.

Community members with information are encouraged to report public damage or vandalism to Council via the Report It tab on the Council website or by emailing council@byron.nsw.gov.au.

Fines of up to \$3,000 per tree apply for illegal damage.

BANGALOW

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Buzz off, buffalo flies Photo Kor Paola

Cattle farmers of this area are well aware that fly season is upon us. The season runs from November to April, in fact, and we are right in the peak of it.

Buffalo flies, for those not aware, are common pests that annoy, stress, and transmit diseases to livestock, significantly reducing weight gain and milk production. These flies also cause the spread of pinkeye, mastitis, and other infections that can seriously harm any breed of cattle.

There is also hide damage caused by irritation, in which biting and rubbing leads to skin ulcers if left untreated. A lot of farmers have already been proactive in treating the fly through the tagging and spraying process.

However, while chemical treatments remain a tool for peak infestations, cattle producers in the Northern Rivers are increasingly turning to integrated pest management to protect their herds and their bottom line. Those interested would have heard of the rise in alternative treatments being considered as an alternative to tag and spray, such as the sulphur and garlic block. These blocks are similar to the common salt licks and are now a popular natural supplement for livestock fly control.

They work by releasing sulphur compounds such as allicin from garlic through the animal's skin and breath, creating a repellent odour that deters flies, ticks, and other external parasites. It is less labour-intensive for the farmer and the cattle seem to be drawn to them.

These blocks, often combined with essential minerals like phosphorus, provide a "set and forget" method to reduce fly pressure, boost immunity, improve feed conversion, and support overall herd health. They also help reduce synthetic chemical reliance, especially when used in conjunction with tags and spray. The flies become minimal even in peak season.

To gain best use of this natural treatment

- Start early – Begin supplementation at least 30–60 days before the peak fly season (ideally by September/October) to allow the sulphur compounds to build up in the cattle's system
- Provide continuous access – Since the active compounds are excreted within 48 hours, cattle need constant access to the blocks for the repellent effect to remain active

- Strategic placement – Place blocks near water sources or camp areas to ensure all members of the herd utilise them.

Incorporating garlic and sulphur mineral blocks serves as a vital first line of defence. By reducing fly landing rates by up to 50 per cent naturally, these blocks allow farmers to delay the use of synthetic chemicals, thereby slowing the development of insecticide resistance and avoiding chemical residues in meat and milk.

For the best results in Bangalow's unique climate, local producers should support natural predators, including encouraging healthy populations of dung beetles, which disrupt the fly breeding cycle by burying manure before larvae can develop. They should also monitor thresholds, only escalating to chemical interventions (like ear tags or pour-ons) if fly numbers exceed 200 per beef animal or 30 per dairy cow.

As always, the best treatments are natural; they take time and consistency, and this one has no withholding period. That's surely a win for everyone.

Danielle Mathie

Land news



Bangalow Show Stewards Jo Dwyer and Grescha Brewer Photo Bangalow Show Society

New and small landholder event

Join Local Land Services and Byron Shire Council's agriculture team at Coorabell Hall this February for a free BBQ featuring local produce, and hear stories from sustainable farmers in the area. Rebecca and John Zentveld will share their farming journey, which began on the family farm in Newrybar in 1993, and explain how the hills of the Byron hinterland are well suited to coffee production. This is a great opportunity to meet your neighbours, connect with local rural services and learn more about caring for your land.

When Thursday 12 February, 5.30pm-7pm

Where Coorabell Hall, 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell

Contact Navanka Fletcher on 0409 319 417 or navanka.fletcher@lls.nsw.gov.au

Stewarding for a show society

The Bangalow Show Society, like every other show society across Australia, is volunteer-based and community-run. Events like the local show promote regional agriculture and the livestock industry. They also create core memories of childhood happiness, whether it's competing in events or exploring sideshow alley with friends.

There is a key group of people who volunteer their time each year to make the show a success. Alongside the judges, these people are known as stewards. A steward is a volunteer or official responsible for organising and ensuring the smooth, fair and safe running of a specific section or event within an agricultural show. They are integral in helping manage exhibitors, exhibits and judges, and in upholding the event's rules and guidelines.

There are stewards for every event at agricultural shows. Each section has one head steward and at least one other steward to help coordinate the section. In the pavilion alone at the Bangalow Show there are 12 sections. Other areas include beef and dairy cattle, horses and poultry.

If you are a steward or are interested in becoming one, there is always room for more volunteers. The Kyogle Show Society is hosting a stewards workshop day for all members of the Far North Coast Group of Show Societies (Group 1). This workshop is designed to help support, encourage and train new and existing volunteers, stewards and community members.

It's an exciting thing to do within the community, especially around show times. If you have any questions about this event, feel free to get in contact with Anne, the Bangalow Show Secretary. We always welcome newcomers.

When Sunday 15 March, 8am

Where Kyogle Showgrounds

RSVP by 8 March to bangalowshow@outlook.com

Bangalow Show Society



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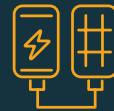
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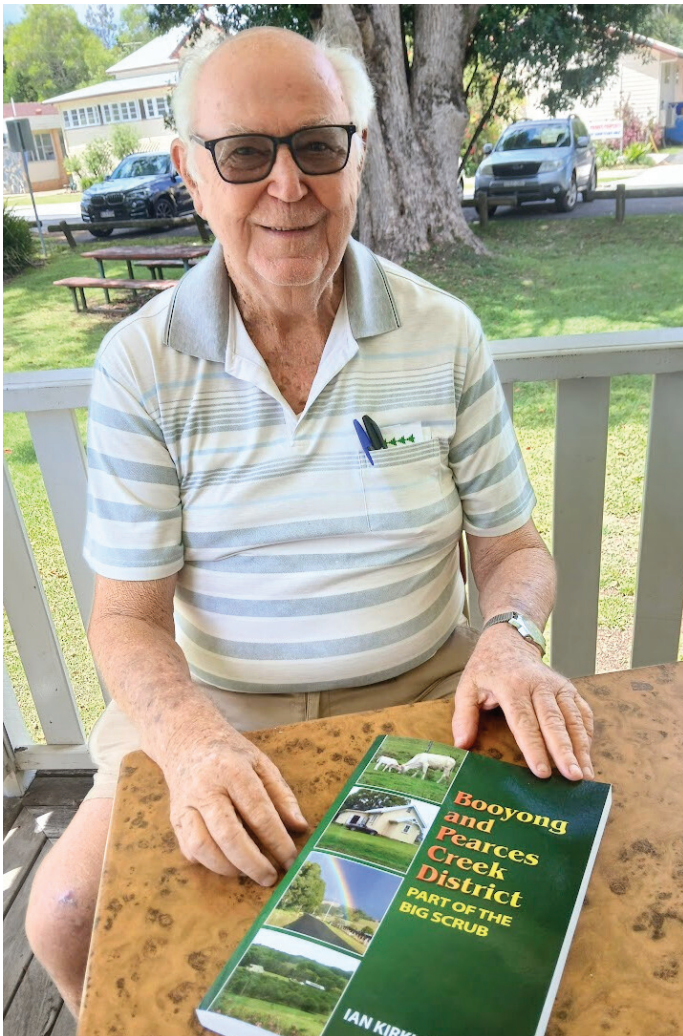
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Prolific writer and local historian Ian Kirkland Photo supplied

History is in his blood

At 2pm on Sunday 22 February, the latest local history book Ian Kirkland has written will be launched at Pearces Creek Hall, the land for which was donated to the community by Ian's great uncle Hugh Kirkland in 1897. The book is called *Booyong and Pearces Creek District – Part of the Big Scrub*. It covers the early settlement of the area, lives of the pioneer families and changes the district has seen.

Ian has deep roots in the area: members of his family – Kirklands and Trimbles – moved to the area in 1881, and he's the third generation living in the district. He's lived in the same Booyong house, built in the 1920s, for most of his life, so his credentials for writing this latest book cannot be bettered.

A teacher for 29 years, Ian taught primarily at Lismore and Alstonville Public Schools, with a few years away teaching in Nowra and in Canberra. A turning point came in his working career. "I had to make a choice: promotion or writing books." He chose writing books, with this latest being his 30th local or family history.

Writing books started when he was still teaching. In about 1982, during basic year-end skills tests, Ian observed that some girls in his classroom had been having problems understanding mapping. He also noticed boys having trouble with literary skills and other social studies subjects. To help students better understand and learn, Ian wrote his first books, published by Martin Educational Books. By 1988, he'd written a bicentenary book about the people of Australia, published by Southern Cross University Press, and in 2000 he wrote the useful *Olympics for Australian Students*, published by Domini Books.

Retiring in 2003, he "fell into writing books by default". He's been associated with the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society since 2001 and a member since 2003. Invited to be a guest speaker at the Society, his first talk was about little-known railway lines running from Ballina to Booyong, and from Casino to Tenterfield. His book *Out of Puff* was published in 2006.

For four years, Ian was president of that Society, and a number of other historical books followed. Among them, the Society has published his books on Uralba, on citizens of Ballina and Alstonville, about soldiers from Tintenbar, the migration of dairy farmers from the Illawarra to the Richmond, dairying on the Alstonville Plateau, wartime hero Jessie Blanch, as well as a history of Alstonville Public School where he was assistant principal from 1989 to 2003. He's also published his autobiography, *Skipper*.

Most of Ian's books are available from the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society. Many of them were designed by Lismore graphic designer Jeanette Gilligan – though now Ian does his own design and layout. His latest book took five years to research and write, and he "always has two or three on the go". He's expecting the 22 February launch to create a "bit of a family reunion" with members of several related local families attending – including Kirklands, Trimbles, Priddles and Stewarts.

The Bangalow Herald



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Barefoot and ready to roll Photo supplied

All ends considered

Community consultation does more than collect opinions – it gives people a way to say what they care about, why it matters, and what they are willing to accept or resist.

The recent Bowlo community survey, initiated by the Save Bangalow Bowlo Steering Committee, ran from 11–25 January. Designed as a stakeholder consultation, not a formal vote, its purpose was to document community sentiment to inform negotiations about the club's future.

The survey was online and promoted via email, social media, flyers, word of mouth, and local media, including *The Bangalow Herald*, *Bay FM*, *The Echo* and *Byron Coast Times*. It was open to both Bowlo members and the wider community.

More than 200 responses were received – a strong engagement level for a village the size of Bangalow, especially for a 25-question survey that took five minutes or more to

complete. This reflects the community's readiness to participate constructively in shaping the future of this shared asset.

Results show consistent preferences: respondents overwhelmingly support a return to genuine community ownership. While pathways differ, there is broad consensus on the need for transparency, enforceable commitments, timeframes, professional advice, and financial realism.

When asked about options including a community purchase or a 25-year mortgage arrangement with Norths, many voiced concerns about cost and fairness. Several questioned why the community should bear the burden of losses stemming from Norths' decisions. One respondent noted, "Any deal needs to acknowledge what has gone wrong. Why should the community pay for Norths' mistakes?"

Many believe that previous commitments made by Norths have not been honoured, leading to widespread mistrust. Respondents stressed the need for transparent and

binding agreements backed by timelines, not vague assurances. "I don't trust Norths' intentions anymore," one wrote. Another added, "Norths has not shown they are acting in the best interests of the Bangalow community."

This erosion of trust underpins growing sentiment that while negotiations should continue in good faith, stronger measures such as legal or media pressure may be necessary to ensure progress and accountability. Respondents do not suggest this as a first step but as a contingency if goodwill fails again.

There is also clear support for a phased strategy: keep negotiating, prepare for purchase, and retain leverage if needed.

Respondents envision a future Bowlo prioritising hospitality, social connection, family-friendliness, and a strong sense of belonging – all underpinned by transparent, accountable governance.

Sentiment towards Norths Collective was overwhelmingly negative. Concerns centred around process, alignment and impact. While some responses were blunt – "Free of Norths" – others called for experience and stewardship with local decision-making. "Get the right people with experience, but keep decisions local."

A recurring theme was disconnection. One respondent described Norths as "too far removed from the local community." Another wrote, "Norths have proven they don't understand Bangalow." Others expressed a perceived loss of character and connection: "The Bowlo has lost its soul under Norths."

Respondents also acknowledged the complexity of the situation. "This is a community space that needs to be future-proofed to serve the community," one said. Others conveyed urgency: "Get the club open."

Crucially, the survey replaces anecdote with documentation. In negotiations where power imbalances exist, community evidence adds weight. The results demonstrate a community not only willing to speak but ready to engage constructively, with clarity about both values and vision.

Save Bangalow Bowlo Steering Committee

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Milkman by Anna Burns

Anyone who reads my reviews regularly will know that, in general, I love Irish authors.

The story of *Milkman* is told in an interesting and powerful voice by another Irish author. The characters in the book are seldom given names other than 'first sister', 'second sister', 'third brother-in-law', and 'wee sisters' (the children younger than the narrator, who is 'middle sister').

The setting is the heartland of the Troubles in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the book covers a short period of about two months in the 1970s. The narrator is 18 years old and has been romantically involved with 'maybe-boyfriend' for almost 12 months. Part of her reluctance to commit is the gossiping, interfering nature of her mother and the neighbourhood in general. Middle sister tends to attract attention because of her quirky habits, such as reading-while-walking and long-distance running. But interest in her becomes focused when she captures the attention of Milkman.

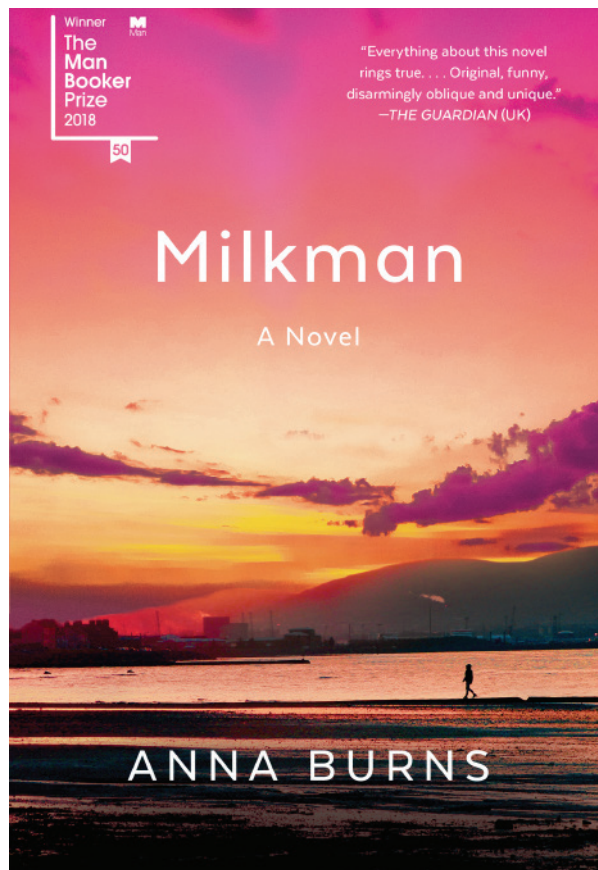
This book manages to be enormously funny at times despite the simmering tension in the background (between the Renouncers of the State and the Protectors of the State), and the sudden, ominous threat posed by Milkman's unwanted attention.

Milkman is known to be high in the hierarchy of the Renouncers of the State, and when he stops his little white van beside middle sister as she's out reading-while-walking, she is sufficiently aware of his status to be alarmed and to avoid involvement. The problem is that any interaction with Milkman is immediately transmitted around the neighbourhood, and within 24 hours, middle sister is being told by her ma to end her affair with the married Milkman – at a point in time when she has not spoken a single word to him.

Milkman's persistence is a constant and malignant threat, having a profound impact on the narrator, who is young, intelligent, and desperately trying to be invisible.

This book, which won the 2018 Man Booker Prize, captured my attention immediately and did not let go until the very last page.

Carolyn Adams



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A hybrid in the large family *Proteaceae*, there is horticultural disagreement about the parentage of *Grevillea splendour*, which developed by accident in a Melbourne garden in 1976 and was registered in 1988.

It is most likely *G. oleoides* × *G. shiressii*, but there are several other possibilities, and it is sometimes known as *Grevillea poorinda splendour*.

Horticultural registration of hybrids can be a game of one-upmanship – infuriating or amusing, depending on your perspective – but it’s taken very seriously in some circles. Nevertheless, this is a lovely grevillea: hardy, adaptable, and spectacular.

Grevilleas were first named for C.F. Greville, an 18th-century patron of the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society. Over 300 species have been identified – not including hybrids, of course.

This one has bright pinkish-red, translucent flowers that occur at the tips of branches. It’s beloved by honeyeaters, both large and small, and provides an important source of nectar for bees.

Unlike the closely related *Hakea* species, grevilleas have clusters of paired flowers – a conflorescence that forms a raceme-like blossom.

There are no obvious petals or sepals; the blossoms are described as having four “tepals” (a term I have only just discovered in my reading).

The foliage is delicate and open, with long, narrow leaves that are lovely in floral arrangements, even when the plant is not in flower.

Grevilleas mostly require open, well-drained soils in full to half sun, and are drought-resistant once established.



The splendid Grevillea

Grevillea splendour, a splendid sight Photo Carole Gamble

As a member of the *Proteaceae* family, they are adapted to poor and phosphorus-depleted soils, so they do not tolerate most fertilisers. However, the organic soil improver Seasol, applied lightly throughout the year, will increase blooming and speed up growth.

It is produced from sustainably harvested seaweed and offers several benefits – which is why I’m such a fan! It helps plants withstand stress, assists nutrient uptake by the roots, improves soil structure, and acts as a perfect liquid compost.

Incidentally, Seasol should be used at the recommended rates – more is not better – and it’s economical.

Finally, grevillea roots are shallow and non-invasive, benefiting from mulching to keep roots cool and prevent drying out.

They can be lightly pruned to maintain shape and increase flowering the following year, but this isn’t essential. *Grevillea splendour* is fairly compact, reaching two metres by two metres in open situations.

Carole Gamble

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Raspberry amaretti biscuits

A delicious twist on Italian amaretti biscuits from the clever chef, Nadiya Hussain. These will be sure to become a family favourite. I've adapted the recipe slightly to make them even more appealing.

INGREDIENTS

- Butter, for greasing
- 4 egg whites
- 340g caster sugar
- 340g ground almonds
- 18g freeze-dried raspberries, blitzed into tiny pieces
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 1 punnet fresh raspberries
- Icing sugar, for coating

METHOD

Preheat oven to 170°C (fan-forced) and line two large baking trays with baking paper. Lightly grease the trays to help the paper stick.

Whisk the egg whites until firm. Add the sugar and gently fold through with a spatula. Add the almonds, freeze-dried raspberry pieces and almond extract. Mix until you have a smooth paste.

Take a heaped tablespoon of mixture (about 40g) and shape into a flat, round disc. Wrap the disc around a fresh raspberry to fully enclose it – the paste may crack slightly, but don't worry.

Place icing sugar in a large bowl. Drop each biscuit into the sugar and roll to coat well. Place seam-side down on the prepared trays, about 2cm apart to allow for spreading.

Bake for 12–15 minutes, or until slightly browned. Leave on the tray for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool.

These will keep well – if you can leave them alone that long!

Recipe and illustration Lyn Hand

Freeze-drying raspberries is a preservation method that removes moisture while keeping the fruit's shape, colour, flavour and nutrients intact. First, raspberries are frozen, then placed in a vacuum chamber where the ice inside them turns directly from solid to vapour. This gentle process avoids heat damage and preserves the delicate structure of the berries. The result is light, crisp raspberries with an intense, tangy flavour and a long shelf life. They can be eaten as a snack, added to cereal, baked goods or desserts, or rehydrated for sauces. Available at Woolworths, health food stores and specialty stores.

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The fast and the curious

Sober-curious or doing FebFast, **The Bangalow Herald** lists our favourite zero alcohol beverages.

Since 2007, FebFast has encouraged Australians to take a month-long break from alcohol, sugar or social media – raising money for youth programs while giving the liver a little love. For many, it's a health reset after a heavy festive season; for others, it's a chance to re-evaluate their relationship with drinking altogether. The rise of complex, zero-proof drinks mean going dry no longer means sacrificing taste.

Find out more about FebFast at febfast.org.au

Top tipples

NON 1 Salted Raspberry and Chamomile

Tart, floral and gently salty, this alcohol-free wine alternative has surprising depth and a dry finish.

Heaps Normal Quiet XPA

An Aussie favourite – citrusy, tropical and convincingly beer-like, without the booze. Great with pub food.

Altina Le Blanc

Sparkling and aromatic, with notes of native wattleseed, green tea and finger lime. Elegant and food-friendly.

Sobah Davidson Plum Gluten-Free Lager

Made by a First Nations-owned brewery, this crisp, fruity beer is refreshing with a subtle bush tucker tang.

Seedlip Grove 42

A distilled, citrus-based spirit featuring orange, lemongrass and ginger. Add soda or tonic for a zesty highball.

Brookies Free Spirited 0% Blood Orange Spritz

A local blood orange spritz packed with zesty citrus goodness. Made from Aussie rainforest gin botanical distillate and blood orange. Just sip, savour and embrace the flavour.

23rd St Non-Alcoholic G&T

Master-distilled botanicals and Riverland citrus mingle to make this no-sugar, no-alcohol sparkling tonic. It's vibrant and tangy, definitely not a soft drink.

Peroni Zero

An Italian premium alcohol-free lager that mirrors the taste of the classic by using the same recipe but employing a dealcoholisation process after brewing, resulting in a crisp, refreshing and sophisticated brew.

Pyewackets Shrubs & Detox Tonics

Fermented from vinegar plus select fruits, a 'shrub' is a botanical cordial that you can top up with soda or tonic. Originating some 500 years ago, it's the OG alcohol-free tittle, and now made right here on Bundjalung country.

Tread Softly Everything Except Rosé

A gently sparkling, low-calorie rosé with notes of strawberry and citrus. Light, floral and picnic-ready.

T.I.N.A. Spritz by NON x Four Pillars

A limited-edition, booze-free spritz: bitter orange, verjuice and native botanicals make this a grown-up sunset sipper.

Noughty Organic Sparkling Chardonnay

French-made, dry and celebratory. Toast-friendly and convincingly close to the real thing.

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Slash Me Silly 0429 994 189

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Council matters

Community

AA (6pm Tues)	Karen Mc	0403 735 678
ArtsNational	Dianne	0412 370 372
Al-Anon (2pm Fri)		1300 252 666
Bangalow Koalas	Linda	0411 491 991
Bridge Club	Brian	0429 311 830
Community Children's Centre	Kerry	6687 1552
Co-dependents Anonymous	Gye	0421 583 321
CWA (Mon-Fri 10am-2pm/Sat 9am-12pm)	Lydia	cwasecbangalow@gmail.com
Garden Club (1st Wed)	Diana	0418 288 428
George the snake man	George	0407 965 092
Historical Society/Museum	Trisha	0429 882 525
Kindred Women Together	Janice	0401 026 359
Koala rescue line (24 hr)		6622 1233
Land & Rivercare (8.30am Sat)	Noelene	0431 200 638
Lions Club (6pm 2nd/4th Tues)	Nashy	0418 440 545
Men's Shed	John	0427 130 177
Op Shop (M-F 10am-2pm, Sat 9.30am-12.30pm)		6687 2228
Piccabeen Park	Lynn	0429 644 659
Park Trust Committee	Shane	0475 732 551
Police - DCI Matt Kehoe		6629 7500
Pool Trust	Jo	6687 1297
Community Association	Ian	0414 959 936
Poultry Club	Hector	6687 1322
Quilters (2nd/4th Thur)	Karen	0413 621 224
Red Cross (1st Fri)	Liz	0409 832 001
Show Society	Anne	6687 1033

Sport

Bowls men (1pm Wed & Sat)	Gerry	6687 1142
Bowls women (9.30am Wed)	Frances	6687 1339
Cricket	Anthony	0429 306 529
Karate self-defence	Jean	0458 245 123
Netball (3.30pm Wed)	Ellie	0429 855 399
Pony Club	Rebecca	0410 706 959
Rugby Union (Rebels)	Dave	0412 080 614
Soccer (Bluedogs)		0434 559 700
Tennis court hire	Bernie	0433 970 800

Venues

A&I Hall	Belinda	0499 392 812
All Souls' Anglican Hall		6684 3552
Bowling Club	Chris	6687 2741
Coorabell Hall		coorabellhall@gmail.com
Heritage House	Trisha	0429 882 525
Lions Club Kiosk	Nashy	0418 440 545
Moller Pavilion		6687 1035
Newrybar Hall	Kerry	0414 560 119
Scout Hall	Shane	0475 732 551
St Kevin's Catholic Hall	Russell	0423 089 684

Ballina Shire News

Ballina Council has upgraded the old and deteriorating Historic Ballina Waterfront signs to a new Water Stories and Soundtrail, with 23 new hard signs and an immersive audio walk. The Soundtrail starts at the Marine Rescue Tower and ends at the Pioneer Cemetery. The Soundtrail contains stories from Nyangbal knowledge holders, and is narrated by the late Nyangbal elder Uncle Ricky Cook, local historian Kate Gahan, and local actors voicing early settlers.

Kylie Jacky, Chairperson of the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council described the project as 'the first time the Ballina Shire will hear all the voices of our shared history that makes Ballina what it is today.'

Open the Soundtrails app in your app store and download 'Ballina's Water Stories' to get the full audio experience as you stroll from the mouth of the Richmond River, past Shaws Bay to the cemetery at East Ballina.

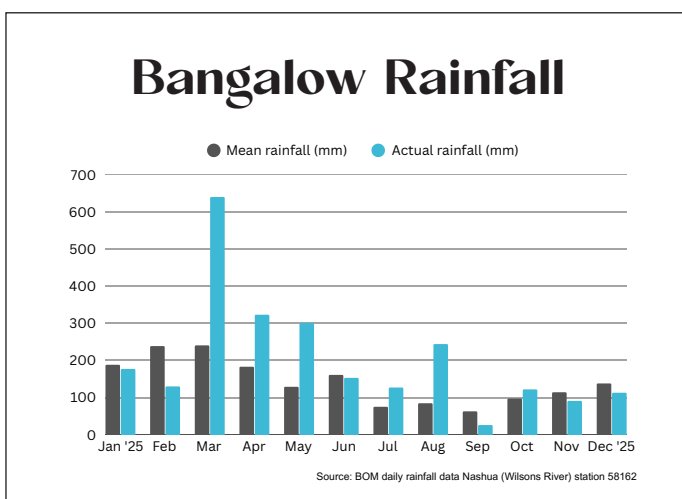
Ballina also has a brand new pump track. Completed just in December 2025 it is designed to national competition standards and has a main track, a junior track, and new facilities for riders and spectators. The precinct is located at Kingsford Smith Reserve, near Missingham Bridge.

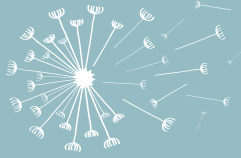
Byron Shire News

If you would like to Have Your Say about Byron Council's Draft Sustainable Community Markets Policy, go to tinyurl.com/38mh6fep before 15 February.

Ordinary Council meetings resume after the summer break on Thursday 19 February.

Jenny Bird





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Thurs	Yin Restore Yoga	5.30 to 6.30pm
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Catching some ZZZZS

Bangalow's **Paula Todd** has been a fitness trainer for over 30 years, most of that time working with older adults. In the first of a series of columns on healthy ageing, this month she writes about the all-important (but sometimes elusive) good night's sleep.

Healthy sleep patterns are vital for a happy brain. Poor sleep can affect cognitive performance and long-term brain health. Sleep influences brain health and vice-versa, so to help your body and brain to function optimally, good sleeping habits are vital. Good sleep is essential to protect the brain, as sleeping is when the brain clears waste products and consolidates memory.

If getting a good night's sleep is so important for our physical, emotional and psychological welfare, why is this simple goal so elusive for many of us?

Adult humans need between seven and eight hours sleep per night. Indeed, extensive research shows that getting less than a consistent seven hours a night will decrease your life expectancy.

We always knew that sleep is good for us, but it seems that it actually keeps us alive for longer. Not getting enough sleep will also reduce your brain function, making you less alert and less able to make quick and clear decisions.

So what can be done if you find you are not getting your optimal rest each night?

- Try not to nap during the day. If you do, make it short (less than an hour), don't change out of your 'day clothes' and don't snuggle under the covers in bed – nap on the couch or even sitting up in a chair
- Have a pre-bed routine and try to stick to it. This can include a deliberate relaxation session
- Keep bed for sleep – not watching telly, writing, working on your laptop or eating
- Make the room dark and quiet. This includes black-out curtains and keeping your digital clock out of view
- Clear your head before you sleep. 'Dump' what is worrying you or occupying your mind by writing it down before you get ready for bed
- Limit your intake of stimulants: caffeine, amphetamines, diet aids
- And, most importantly, make sure you have exercised during the day. Regular exercise – particularly strength training – has been proven to have a very positive effect in terms of improving sleep patterns.

If you're really struggling with sleep, talk to your GP.



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What's on

Shaking the Family Tree

When February - ongoing
Where Bangalow Heritage House and Museum, Cnr Ashton and Deacon Streets, Bangalow
Tickets \$5 entry or by donation
Info 6687 2183

Shaking the Family Tree is a new exhibition celebrating Bangalow's multicultural heritage. On display are treasured family-owned items that reflect the diverse backgrounds of local residents - from goldfield diaries to heirloom ceramics and wartime photographs. The evolving collection offers insight into the lives and resilience of those who migrated to Australia. Open Wednesdays to Fridays 10am-2pm, Saturdays 9am-1pm. The Historical Society is holding a raffle with a prize of a DNA test, which may - or may not - uncover hidden family secrets.

Bangalow Garden Club

When Wednesday 4 February at 1.30pm
Where Moller Pavilion, Bangalow Showground
Tickets Yearly membership \$25. Guests welcome.
Info bangalowgardenclub@outlook.com
Diana Harden 0418 288 428

For those new to the area, the Bangalow Garden Club meets on the first Wednesday of the month. Enjoy guest speakers, a plant auction, Q&A, and afternoon tea. Bring a mug. New members welcome.

Coorabell Hall Film Club

When Wednesday 4 February
Where Coorabell Hall, 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell
Tickets Film Club Membership - \$30 (4 films)
Info coorabellhall.net | coorabellhall@gmail.com

February's film is *Oliver!* - a musical masterpiece by Sir Carol Reed, celebrated for its vibrant choreography, Oscar-winning production, and the iconic line: "Please sir, I want some more." Doors open at 6pm with the film starting at 7.30. Food and a bar are available. Entry via Film Club membership, and you can join at the door.

Portraits in the Front Room

When Opening night Thursday 6 February, exhibition runs until 6 March
Where Station Street Co Op, 14 Station Street, Bangalow
Tickets Free event
Info gallery3byronbay.com.au/works-1

Over 30 local artists push and pull at portraiture through painting, sculpture, photography and threaded works. Identity, presence and absence unfold in the autonomous space of the Front Room at Station Street Co Op.



Wicker Suite Photo supplied

Connecting Generations summer event

When Saturday February 7, 4pm - 6.30pm
Where Bangalow Heritage House and Museum, Cnr Ashton and Deacon Streets, Bangalow
Contact Ruth Winton-Brown 0413 261 011 or ruth@reclaimingjoy.com

Young families and older members of the community are invited to come along to the Connecting Generations summer event at Bangalow Heritage House & Museum for a free fun afternoon of activities such as art, craft, music and dancing. There will be free face painting, a free sausage sizzle, an intergenerational drumming circle and Shorty Brown the Clown will pop along. Sponsored by Bangalow Men's Shed, Connecting Generations offers seasonal events that aim to provide support to those without extended family in the area and help older people live a longer, more fulfilling life.

Honey and Silk - live

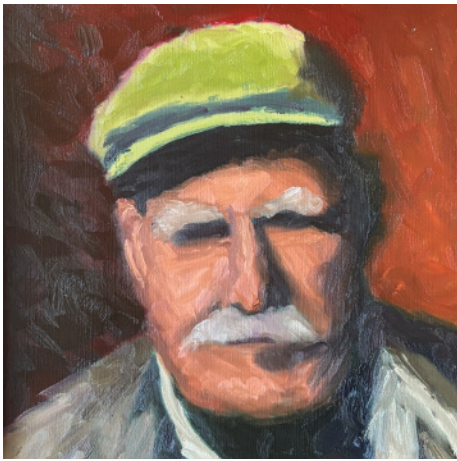
When Saturday 7 February at 5pm
Where Pearce's Creek Hall, 40 Pearce's Creek Road, Pearce's Creek
Tickets \$25
Info pearcescreekhall.com.au | 0458 801 941

Aimie and Benita formed Honey and Silk after performing at Bangalow and Byron music festivals. Their debut at Pearce's Creek Hall includes new arrangements featuring drums, bass and saxophone. A soulful and harmony-rich evening awaits.

Wicker Suite - live

When Sunday 15 February at 2.30pm (doors)
Where Pearce's Creek Hall, 40 Pearce's Creek Road, Pearce's Creek
Tickets From \$27
Info pearcescreekhall.com.au @pearcescreekhall | 0458 801 941

Wicker Suite bring country, bluegrass and folk to the hall, supported by Thor Phillips and Katie Brookes. Expect warm storytelling, exceptional musicianship, and Golden Guitar Award-winning talent. Inspired by the country hall tours of Slim Dusty and Fanny Lumdsen.



Portraits at the Station St Co-Op Photo supplied



Honey and Silk Photo supplied

Hold Me Tight – Viisti Dickens

When Monday 17 February – Friday 28 February

Where Station Street Co Op, 14 Station Street, Bangalow

Tickets Free event

Info gallery3byronbay.com.au/viisti-dickens

Viisti Dickens' evocative new show explores light, shadow, and the vivid colours of summer. Created largely during a residency in France, her paintings brim with emotion and luminous texture, connecting past, present and future.

Kindred Women Together anniversary party

When Wednesday 18 February, 5.30–7.30pm

Where TBC

Tickets TBC (ticketed event with limited numbers)

Info hello@kindredwomentogether.com

Celebrate six years of Kindred Women Together. Reconnect with members, hear about upcoming initiatives, and enjoy a relaxed evening of community. Final event details coming soon. Save the date!

Booyong and Pearces Creek by Ian Kirkland – Book Launch

When Sunday 22 February, 2–4pm

Where Pearces Creek Hall, 40 Pearces Creek Road, Pearces Creek

Tickets Free entry | Afternoon tea \$5

Info pearcescreekhall.com.au @pearcescreekhall | 0458 801 941

Launch of Ian Kirkland's comprehensive local history, *Booyong and Pearces Creek District*. This 360-page book spans from the 1870s to today, filled with stories of families, change, and connection. Books for sale; tea by Pearces Creek Hall Committee.

CWA Cake and Produce Stall

When Saturday 28 February, 8am–1pm

Where CWA Rooms, 31 Byron Street, Bangalow

Info cwasecbangalow@gmail.com

The CWA's popular monthly Cake and Produce Stall returns on the last Saturday of the month with cakes, jams, pickles, slices and other homemade treats lovingly prepared by CWA members. Get in early for the best selection, and stock up school lunchboxes.

Bangalow Buckle Challenge & Northern Rivers Whip Cracking Championship

When Saturday 28 February – Sunday 1 March

Where Bangalow Showground

Tickets Free entry for spectators

Info Zoe 0419 449 448 Bangalow Buckle Challenge on Facebook

All welcome to watch skilled riders in action across three days. Saturday: hack, utility and working patterns. Sunday: cattle work and obstacle trial. Featuring divisions for Youth, Young Horse and Superhorse. Don't miss the inaugural Whip Cracking Championship on Saturday evening. Lions BBQ and bar available all weekend.

Bangalow Show Society AGM

When Monday 2 March 2026, 7pm

Where Show Office, Bangalow Showgrounds

Info Anne 0409 890 858

Bangalow A&I Society is hosting its Annual General Meeting in March. This is your opportunity to join a group of dedicated community members who focus on bringing you the best little show on the North Coast. Election of Office Bearers and Show Committee. If you are interested in becoming the new Show Secretary, please contact Anne for more information. General meeting to follow. All welcome to come along and join in the planning of our 125th Show.

Diary

February 2026

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7	Connecting Generations summer event Honey and Silk - live
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17-28	Hold Me Tight – Viisti Dickens
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March edition deadlines

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Bite me

Dr Airdre Grant finds hope for humanity in the unlikely realm of competitive eating.

I was full of resolve. It's all in the mind, I thought, and if I focus on the right things, then all good things will follow. And if they don't, well, a positive mindset will help me navigate with grace and good humour. Oh, look at me go! Inspiration to all!

Then I had a quick flick through the news. Oh boy. The unfolding

tragedies, dramas, fights, posturing – it seems bad behaviour abounds. For anybody who is feeling pessimistic, I offer this antidote to world gloom: in 2025, Sydney man James Webb placed third in Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest in the States.

Old mate James came in third and was able to eat 45 and a half hot dogs in 10 minutes. Proud of you, James. Represent. The person who came second ate 46 and a half, but nobody could beat Joey "Jaws" Chestnut. The 17-time champion ate 70 and a half hot dogs.

Our James has a history in such events. His first major achievement was in Cessnock, where he ate a 5kg hamburger (with onion rings and fries, of course) in 27 minutes and 30 seconds. He holds that record. He has also eaten 70 glazed doughnuts in 8 minutes, 245 chicken wings in 10 minutes, and 338 pistachios in 8 minutes (presumably at different events). What a guy! Proof that it's all about a positive attitude and what you focus on.

I moved quickly from hot dog eating championships to pickle-eating contests. I found myself absorbedly watching one from Mississippi. It's a slippery slope once you start researching pickle-eating contests, let me tell you. I am now able to bring you up to speed with the rules. There is a surprisingly large number of these contests. The rules vary a little, but the main ones are:

No professional eaters (who knew such people existed?)

You get a time frame – commonly 5–10 minutes – to eat as many pickles as possible

You must eat the pickle completely, but you don't have to eat the stem

One pickle at a time (don't be cramming them in)

If you spew, you're out (in the States, it's politely called a "reversal")

For this, you could win a trophy, maybe some money – and glory. Lots of glory.

But wait! We are no slouches when it comes to eating competitively here in the Northern Rivers. At Beef Week in Casino, there's a pie-eating competition, complete with junior section. That comp is about speed. The winner last year ate a pie in 1 minute 42 seconds. Impressive.

Let's not forget the Big Bang Bite competition at the Bangalow Show! Very popular – especially with teenage boys – it's been going since 2011 and requires contestants to consume a beef burger with the lot and a 500ml chocolate thick shake and a side order of chips. We take eating very seriously! People train for this prestigious event. First to finish wins \$50 and a stylish rosette.

Mark my words, I'll be taking a front row seat next time. It's important to focus on things that uplift – like competitive eating contests.

On that note, I'm off to get myself one of them excellent, locally made pies. That should perk me right up.

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