

The Bangalow

# HERALD

2479

**Just like honey**  
Coorabell's bees

**Cranky women standup**  
Comedy with Joan Leeds

**Pour a second cup**  
A café renaissance



## White hot

# 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

There is a quiet theme running through this month's edition: movement.

The bees at Coorabell migrate and return, swarming and resettling as part of their natural cycle. A rescued figbird is lifted from a milk crate and carried from Byron to Bangalow and back into care. Families trace journeys 'from all the lands on Earth' to this small postcode we now share, documenting the passage of time.

But movement is not always gentle. Bangalow's Jack and Sophia share their café journey in Burringbar, through disaster and back again, re-emerging in a new form. There is domestic upheaval too – whitegoods and weary dogs navigating the emotional geography of moving house. Council voted unanimously to pursue heritage recognition of a beloved civic space – the Bangalow Bowlo – to the relief of many concerned about its future.

Creators are also making all the right moves. Local theatre-makers redevelop and reimagine a work in collaboration with a Tony Award-winning writer, and on a smaller scale, former postmistress Joan Leeds moves from counter to comedy, transforming frustration into laughter.

Seasons shift, and gardeners anticipate the abundance of autumn, both edible and decorative. Our tastes have also undergone a transformation, with no- and low-alcohol options gaining popularity with both young and old.

Movement, in the pages of this month's edition, is not always about leaving (although we acknowledge the hard work of Asren Pugh as he departs his role on Byron Council). It is about our capacity to appraise, adapt and continue, sometimes against the odds.

We move between roles, homes, identities, careers and interests. We carry memory forward – lessons learned, mistakes made – while making room for what comes next.

In Bangalow and beyond, we are always in motion. The question is not whether we move, but how – and who we move with.

*Sally Schofield*

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

**Editor:** Sally Schofield

editor@bangalowherald.com.au

**Advertising:** Pippa Vickery

advertising@bangalowherald.com.au

**What's On:** Sally Schofield

whatson@bangalowherald.com.au

**Design:** Gaby Borgardts - GEEBEE DESIGN

**Cover image:** All white on the night Photo Joel Cooper

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PO Box 45, Bangalow, NSW 2479

**Contributors:** Carolyn Adams, Bangalow CWA, Bangalow Historical Society, Bangalow Lions Club, Georgia Fox, Carole Gamble, Lyn Hand, Digby Hildreth, Gabby Le Brun, Byron Leeworthy, Neville Maloney, Christobel Munson, Vivienne Pearson, Sally Schofield, Save Bangalow Bowlo, Adam Susz, Paula Todd.

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Laodekia at the Coorabell sanctuary Photo Digby Hildreth



A swarm at Laodekia's property Photo supplied

# Listen to the bees

Bees are our best friends and closest allies, says self-confessed 'flower girl' Laodekia, who suggests we spend more time in their company. **Digby Hildreth** reports

It is only natural that someone devoted to supporting the well-being of bees should prove as buzzy and life-affirming as the sight of the industrious insects going about their business in our garden or bushland.

But the warmth and enthusiasm that apiarist and floral alchemist Laodekia brings to the task verges on the preternatural – and indeed, her approach to the crucial undertaking involves a substantial sprinkle of cosmic vision.

Laodekia not only shepherds her own network of hives at Nashua, but she is the visionary behind a project to turn spare ground at the rear of the Coorabell Hall into a wild bee sanctuary – a food garden for them and a meeting and "grounding" place for bee-loving humans.

Her guiding angels in the enterprise are the bees themselves, Laodekia says, as the selection of Coorabell Hall as a location for a pollinator haven demonstrated.

"Coorabell is such a beautiful and significant site," she says, "looking out over both the

hinterland and the ocean." Her initial intention was to build a garden full of edible medicinal flowers there, "like a living apothecary", where people could come and pick healing plants for themselves. Then came the idea to bring in bees – natives, and the European variety as well.

But it turned out the bees had got there before her. The same day she received the OK from the hall's managers to create a garden at the rear, Laodekia learned that a thriving wild hive already existed there.

It seemed magical to her and her fellow apiarists. "The bees welcomed us here, and they kind of confirmed that this is what's meant to happen," she says. "It tells you that the place is already perfect, right?"

An opening ceremony for the sanctuary was held a year ago followed by a number of gatherings "where we got to meet the bees, and be around them and their sound, which is super healing".

There are regular get-togethers at the equinox and solstice dates where, as well as communing with the bees, group members offer something to the community, such as a sound healing or a floral alchemy session.

Laodekia attends the garden at least twice a week, and others pop in to water and mulch. Twenty new flowering seedlings were planted as this article was being prepared, just in

time for the rain mid-month. It has evolved into something of a sanctuary for locals as well. Anyone can come and bring offerings to the bees and many often just sit to enjoy a connection with nature.

"We all need sanctuaries," says Laodekia, who insists that what the bees provide humanity far exceeds what we do for them.

There are other sanctuaries near Bangalow, including one behind Newrybar Community Hall which the Colony Bees group has serviced since 2022, where a strong population of sugarbag bees (*Tetragonula carbonaria*) are thriving in a log hive. The area supports many other swarms and wild hives.

Laodekia has her own apiary at her home in Nashua. Its name, Pleiapia, is a blend of the words Pleiades and Apis, because her seven hives are laid out like the Pleiades constellation, the 'Seven Sisters' that traditional farming communities consult to plan their planting season.

The hives are home to European bees, but the property, lush with medicinal plants, a hundred bush tucker trees and set amid a rainforest, is like "a big sanctuary planted all around us," Laodekia says, and the flowers are usually alive with the sugarbag species. "We have blue lotuses in the pond, and the Europeans and the natives are all there together, pollinating, rolling in the flowers.



A honey bee in its element Photo supplied

They all get along, he said. No drama.”

The plants in the garden at Coorabell Hall are all pollinator friendly, and many are also natural insect repellents. There’s Melissa (lemon balm), which she says the bees love: “It’s a plant of joy.” There are also sunflowers, salvia, sage, holy basil (Tulsi), rosemary, hyssop, some calendula, borage, echinacea. Blue and purple colours as much as possible.

Most of the seedlings planted here come from the Byron Bay Herb Nursery. “We work

together really well. They love what we do and we love what they do,” Laodekia says.

The goal now is to create sanctuaries all over the Shire – a pollinator corridor with multiple different sites, nourishing biodiversity – and resilience.

Other halls have said yes to the establishment of a pollinator sanctuary, but for now Laodekia is keen to slow down. “The more I do, the less I can actually be present,” she says. And for someone who sees beekeeping as akin to parenting, just being present is the

most important thing. “That relates to the health of the hives as well, and the garden. The most beautiful garden is the one where the grandma is there all day.

“I just want to anchor my energy here first, make this the environment that I wanted it to be, and extend from there. It’s also important getting more people involved. Like, we can do it, but everyone needs to be part of it. It’s not a one-person thing, it’s not just me. This is a community thing.”

The tiny stingless sugarbag bees endemic to the north east of Australia are among the most community-minded of all bees, with a highly developed social structure compared with other species.

The loose coalition of sanctuary supporters in the region aim at a similar cohesion and cooperative spirit. Their project has taken on a life of its own, Laodekia says, with members joining forces to grow more pollinator sanctuaries within – and for – our community.

As part of the natural cycle of things, the Coorabell bees have migrated from their tree trunk home behind the hall, so the plan now is to bring in a variety of new hives, in the hope that the bees will settle in. If all goes well, you will see – and hear – both native and European bees at the Coorabell Sanctuary by the end of swarming season.

The Flower Show is on at Coorabell Hall on March 14 and 15; Laodekia will be offering visitors ‘a little floral alchemy session’, outlining the healing power of plants.



Contact Anna at  
[anna@annamckay.com.au](mailto:anna@annamckay.com.au)  
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Joan Leeds gets serious about comedy Photo Lyn McCarthy Niche Pictures

# Special delivery

Former Bangalow Post Mistress **Joan Leeds** swaps cheeky customer service banter for cranky comedy gold.

Joan Leeds may have only operated the Bangalow Post Office for a short time, but she left her mark on the village. Known for her risqué banter, quick wit and easy friendliness, she was never one for bland small talk across the counter. Customers queueing to collect packages – large and small – were just as likely to receive a cheeky aside as efficient service.

Now Joan has taken that natural comic instinct and put it to the test, recently completing Mandy Nolan's Cranky Women comedy course – a workshop designed to help women of a certain age find their voice, shape their stories and say the things they have been ruminating on and raging about for years.

Joan saw a Facebook post looking for “cranky women” interested in comedy. “I wrote back, ‘I’m 69. I’ve got bloody lots to say.’”

And with that, she was in.

The first workshop took place at the Drill Hall Theatre in Mullumbimby. More than a dozen women arrived, most of them strangers, from different backgrounds and different decades of life experience. But they shared a sense that something inside them was ready to be voiced.

“It turned into comedy therapy, to be really honest,” Joan says.

Before anyone worked on punchlines, Mandy’s comedy students were invited to loosen up physically. “We had to do silly dances,” she says. “I have no rhythm at all so you can imagine how well that worked for me.” The laughter began there, awkward and freeing.

Then the mood shifted.

Each woman was asked to stand before the group and speak about the one thing that was truly upsetting or worrying her. That was when the hearts began to crack open and the emotions seeped out. Or in some cases, flooded.

What followed was raw and confronting. Some women spoke about grief, others about illness, family strain or isolation. One confessed she was afraid she would not be able to stop crying – and then proceeded to bawl her eyes out.

“The courage of those women was just incredible. There were so many hugs,” says Joan.

For Joan, who has never been shy of conversation, the exercise was unexpectedly powerful. “It wasn’t what I thought I was signing myself up for,” she says. “But once you make yourself vulnerable like that, you’ve got nothing to lose.”

Only after that emotional clearing, and the shaking off of the rusted-on armour of survival, broken hearts and broken dreams, could the laughter begin.

In smaller groups, each participant shared an embarrassing story, a mortifying anecdote or cringe-worthy gaff. Later, someone else in the group had to retell it on stage – embellishment and poetic licence essential.

“It was hilarious,” Joan says. “The way people could take your story and make it sound like it happened to them. Make something that was already awkward even more unbearable and hysterical.” On stage, humiliation transformed into shared laughter.

Joan’s own story involved a sudden and unfortunate gastrointestinal incident in the freezer aisle of a supermarket. Her improvised escape strategy – involving a reusable shopping bag and a swift exit – became, in the retelling, comedy gold.

Yet the course was not only about confession. It was about craft.

“I didn’t know how to write comedy,” says the naturally funny Joan. “I usually just feed off what’s in front of me. That’s just me. But Mandy taught us about the structure, the set-up. It’s a skill.”

Participants were coached in microphone technique, projection, where to stand and how to use their hands. They learned how to look at an audience without staring down a single person in terror. They workshoped their material one-on-one, refining wording and sharpening jokes.

Joan’s final routine drew heavily on her time at the Post Office, particularly her frustration with customers glued to their smartphones.

“I used to say, ‘I don’t need another app!’ but you bloody do,” she says. “If you want to know where your parcel is, you need the app.”

A cheeky reference to actor Liam Hemsworth



The first graduates of Mandy Nolan's Cranky Women's Comedy, Mandy front and centre Photo Lyn McCarthy Niche Pictures

and an imagined "big package" at the counter – polished with Nolan's guidance – added another layer of bawdy humour, very much in keeping with the wit locals remember.

On the night of the final performance, Mandy M'ced, warming the room and stepping in between performers to keep the flow of the evening.

"It was a high," Joan says. "I'm up there doing my thing and people are laughing. I'm like, this is great."

What moved her most, however, was watching the transformation of the other women.

"There were women with absolutely zero confidence," she says. "From 'I can't stop crying' to standing up there and making ceiling mould funny. Every one of them landed well. It was bloody brilliant."

For Joan, the course was cathartic in ways she did not anticipate. It was not just about being cranky. It was about being heard.

At 69, she is not winding down. She is cranking things up. Whether she returns to the stage remains to be seen. Life, as always, is moving – in more ways than one.

Cranky that you missed it?

The next Cranky Women's Comedy course runs on Sunday 17 May, 9am-3pm at Coorabell Hall with a performance at the hall on Friday 22 May.

The course cost is \$150 for the full day, and funds raised at the Comedy Show performance will help support the SHIFT project.

[mandynolan.com.au](http://mandynolan.com.au)

Sally Schofield



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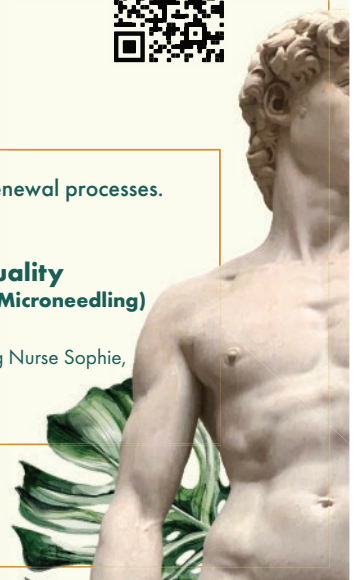
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# Local news



Asren Pugh making a difference to Bangalow Photo supplied

## Councillor Pugh steps down

Bangalow resident and Byron Shire Councillor Asren Pugh has announced he will resign from Council effective 13 March 2026.

"It has been my immense pleasure to represent our little heritage village of Bangalow for the past four years," says Asren. "Getting the Rail Trail policy changed was one of my proudest achievements and when built will make such a difference to Bangalow."

"But I feel I've been able to bring focus to Bangalow with everything from supporting the mens shed to get no overnight parking signs removed, to getting the Bowlo heritage listing progressed."

"I want to thank the Bangalow community for all of their support over the years, I really does mean a lot."

*The Bangalow Herald*



On the road again Photo Maralyn Hanigan

## Call out for new Derby logo

Bangalow's much-loved Billycart Derby is inviting the community to help shape the look of the 2026 event with a logo design competition. Held each May, the Derby transforms Byron Street into a lively racetrack lined with hay bales, as homemade carts speed downhill to the cheers of families and spectators. Run by the Bangalow Lions Club, the event has become a highlight of the local calendar. Designers of all ages are encouraged to submit an original, gender-inclusive logo that captures the energy and spirit of race day. Entries must be finished artwork at 1800 x 1800 pixels, 300 dpi, in JPEG format. There is no entry fee. Submissions close Monday 23 March 2026, with the winner announced Friday 27 March. The selected logo will appear on official promotional material and merchandise. Send designs to [lions@bangalowlionsclub.org.au](mailto:lions@bangalowlionsclub.org.au).

## Road closed and changed traffic conditions - Bangalow Rd Hayters Hill



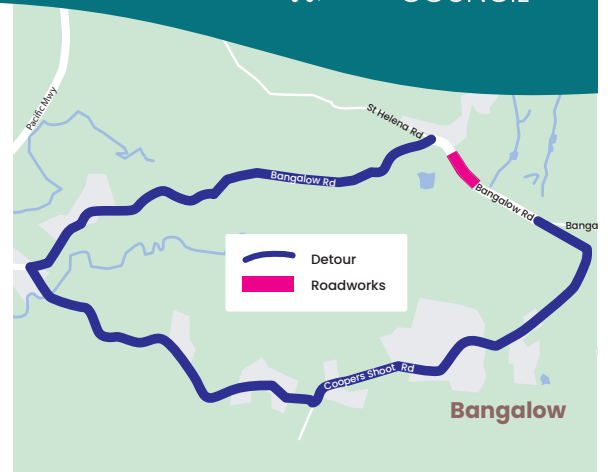
### The following traffic changes will take place:

- **Until 24 March** – One lane closed. Traffic control.
- **25 March** – Bangalow Rd closed between St Helena Rd and Coopers Shoot Rd. Detour via Coopers Shoot Road.

Please note this work schedule may change due to weather conditions.

### More information

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The late Colin Cook Photo supplied

## Vale Colin Cook

Colin Cook (25 August 1924 - 9 February 2026) was the founder and driving force behind *Bangalow's Heartbeat*, the publication that later became *The Bangalow Herald*. The first edition appeared in March 1998 as a single A4 sheet asking a simple question: did Bangalow want a publication? The answer was clear. What followed was nearly two decades of monthly issues that chronicled village life, highlighted local events and encouraged thoughtful discussion about Bangalow's future. Colin never saw *Heartbeat* as an end in itself. It was a vehicle to get people talking, to promote meetings and inspire new community groups. Its covers marked the rhythm of the year – the Billycart Derby, the Show, Christmas Eve – and reflected the nitty-gritty of community life. *The Herald* continues that tradition. Born in England, Colin trained as a mechanical engineer before he and his wife Carol moved to Tasmania in 1981, later retiring to Bangalow in 1994 which was their home until Carol died in November 2017. In 2018, Colin moved to South Australia. Curious, independent and engaged well into his 90s, he remained deeply interested in community, governance and humanity. It was only in his 99th year that he moved into an aged care facility, previously managing his house himself: driving, shopping, cooking and doing his own cleaning and maintenance.

Initially, Colin was an engineer designing suspension systems for army tanks. In those days he carried an umbrella to work in London and wore a bowler hat.

The Bangalow community who knew Colin will also remember another local identity, Jan Hulbert, and the battles they both had with each other. It's the strong personalities and the driving force of people like Colin and Jan that give us the robust, caring community we have today.

Colin held strong views and just a few months ago he was still sending out emails expressing opinions about world events and suggesting lengthy articles to read.

Colin helped Bangalow remember its past and imagine its future. For that, the village - and *the Herald* team - gives thanks.

*Neville Maloney*



Top tea cosys Photo supplied

## Keep warm

There's nothing better than snuggling up with a hot water bottle on a cool night. To keep that trusty winter companion snug and safe, why not give it a handmade cover instead of a mass-produced one destined for landfill? The Bangalow CWA Hot Water Bottle Cover Competition invites locals to get creative. Covers can be crocheted, knitted or sewn. Make a rabbit or an echidna, stitch in some affirmations, create something silly or something beautiful – the choice is yours. Entries will be judged by popular vote and displayed in the Bangalow CWA windows. Ahead of winter, they will be offered for sale, with proceeds supporting local homelessness charities and outreach programs. The competition is open to members and non-members. Completed covers can be delivered to the Bangalow CWA between 10am and 2pm on weekdays. Entries close 16 April and will be on display from 17 to 30 April.

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Sophia and Jack are back Photo Georgia Fox

# Second Pour

Three years after fire destroyed their Burringbar café, Elwood, Bangalow couple Jack and Sophia Deacon are back with their new coffee bar, Pour Good. Turns out that's not even half of it, **Georgia Fox** discovered.

Theirs is a Bangalow hospitality love story. They met over Corner Kitchen's coffee machine, where Jack, Bangalow-born and bred, was working as the barista after returning from six years in Brisbane and Melbourne. Sophia, hailing from the café's namesake suburb of Elwood and raised in country Victoria, was a relatively recent arrival to the area, managing the newly

opened Woods. On their very first date they talked of starting their own place.

So when the chance came to take on Burringbar's only café in 2019, they jumped at it. They loved the village's old-school charm, which reminded Jack of the Bangalow of his childhood. And it was affordable. "Coming in with a skeleton budget, we felt like it was the last little country town within striking distance where we could dip our toes in and have some fun working together," he explains.

Hospitality is tough. But for Jack and Sophia, it was a particularly wild ride from the moment they opened the doors. In their first weeks, bushfires came within just a few kilometres of the village, bringing prolonged

heavy smoke, ash fall and ember risk, and a steady stream of frazzled evacuees, their cars crammed full of belongings.

Then just four months later, the pandemic was declared, which saw the first-time operators spend the next two years grappling with the challenging logistics of ever-shifting regulations. The silver lining was that with the café as one of the village's few social hubs, a strong and deep connection was forged between the couple and the community, and they soon relocated to an idyllic rental nearby.

The relief at the ultimate lifting of restrictions in late 2021 was unfortunately short-lived when, again, just four months later, the same weather system that inundated Lismore flooded low-lying parts of Burringbar and brought devastating landslips further up the Range.

Sophia, five months pregnant at the time, found herself stuck on the Gold Coast while visiting her grandmother. Back home, Jack refused to let the four flooded causeways in his path prevent him from opening the doors at Elwood while the town still had power. Once the waters were low enough, he packed a survival kit and made his way on foot to the car they'd left on the other side, even swimming part of the way.

Cut off, the residents rallied, transforming the area around the café into a command post and recovery hub, corralling services and supplies. Amid the crisis, Elwood provided a vital community space – serving some of the most delicious coffees of Jack's career, thanks to the buckets of fresh Jersey milk delivered by local cheesemaker, Deb Allard.

But again, the dust barely had a chance to settle when, just four months later, on the evening of June 23 2022, with Sophia in the early stages of an overdue labour, Jack's phone rang. There was a fire at the café.

Sophia's sister en route, Jack raced into town, arriving just as the battering ram was about to break down the heritage shopfront's beautiful cedar doors. He rushed to unlock them, and along with most of Burringbar, watched in shock as firefighters brought the blaze under control.

With forensic reports completed and the building deemed safe, Jack was escorted inside, where he retrieved a charred stack of five-dollar notes from the safe. The café was dark and smoky, but he didn't think it looked too bad. Plans were made to meet the chief fire inspector early the next morning, and he locked the doors behind him and returned home to Sophia, whose labour had stalled in the stress.

After a sleepless night, Jack headed back to the café at 6am, finding the doors smashed wide open. He feared the café had been ransacked, but it was much worse. The fire, thought to have been started by an electrical fault, had reignited in the early hours of the



A signature brew Photo supplied

morning. The building was unsalvageable.

Surreal days stretched on, with Sophia becoming increasingly overdue and Jack navigating the gruelling insurance process – which, three years later, is still ongoing – until finally, a week later, daughter Mally was born.

Jack, Sophia and Elwood had become firmly embedded in the tight-knit community, and their absence was felt profoundly. “It’s such an odd thing to experience,” Sophia says. “It was like the loss of a friend. We still have people saying how sad they are it’s not there anymore.” Today, the vacant block remains as a literal hole in the village.

They continued living in Burringbar, but when Jack’s father

suffered a debilitating stroke six months later, they returned to the Bangalow family home. After some time to recalibrate, Jack started working at Old Quarter Coffee and Sophia at Harvest, where she remained until baby Miles joined the mix in 2024. “It’s given us all a new perspective,” Jack says of their multi-generational living arrangement. “They support us as much as we support them.”

But Jack and Sophia weren’t done with their dream, or with the community they loved so much – and thanks to an interesting proposal from an old Elwood neighbour, they had a chance to pick up where they left off.

Bron of Natural Wine Shop & Bar was taking over the old laundromat out the back of her store when she approached Jack and Sophia with the idea of sharing the space: their coffee by day, her wine by night. This increasingly popular hybrid hospitality model suited them perfectly.

With no kitchen and an atmospheric fit-out that wouldn’t be out of place in one of Melbourne’s laneways, the space called for a different strategy from last time. And a new identity. “Elwood was a really special time for us,” explains Jack. “We decided to leave the name to rest with the memory of it.”

For Jack and Sophia, ‘Pour Good’ is about being conscious of the entirety of the process behind the cup of coffee in your hands – from cultivation to labour to preparation. If you’re going to drink coffee, make it good.

Underpinned by Old Quarter Coffee, Pour Good showcases different roasters each week, offering a menu of experimental specialty cold pours alongside the classics, and a pastry cabinet stocked with Lehem Breadhouse goodies. They’re open Friday through Monday mornings, with plans for additional days now that Jack is no longer juggling his travelling sales role at Old Quarter.


The demand is certainly there, not only from locals but from the steady stream of visitors the Rail Trail now brings to the area – something Jack and Sophia passionately hope Bangalow will get to experience too, having seen the phenomenal effect it’s had on the Burringbar community. Jack was on the platform the night the last train ran through town. “And we’ll be first in line when the tender goes out for the old Bangalow station!” he says.

**@pour.good**  
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# Giving a fig about wildlife

A male adult Australasian figbird. Photo supplied

"Is that a baby bird?" my husband asked, pointing to a milk crate at the base of a Norfolk Pine tree in central Byron Bay. I had to squint my eyes and bend my knees to see a ball of fluff with a beak sitting calmly within the crate. Our plans to head home were suddenly on hold.

We were in Byron after celebrating *The Bangalow Herald's* 100th issue at a shindig at the A&I Hall. We'd enjoyed lots of chat and laughter with friends old and new, plus speeches made by editors past and present, but we hadn't eaten, so off to Byron we'd

gone. A kebab on the grass at Main Beach while watching schoolies enjoying their night was ideal for the first really hot spell of summer.

Our tiredness disappeared into insignificance now we were faced with a baby bird in peril. Though Byron was generally busy, the playground where the crate sat was empty, so it was definitely on us to do something. We had no idea how long ago the baby had fallen from its nest but surmised that someone had placed it into the crate to protect it, perhaps having neither the time,

nor knowledge to help further.

Luckily, we knew about WIRES, the Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service. The volunteer who answered our call took down all the details of our location, stressing that accuracy was important in the hope that the bird could be eventually reunited with its parents. We also spent a few moments trying to identify the bird's species.

She then asked that we take the bird to the Animal Emergency Service at Bangalow. "Surely they won't be open at 11pm on a Friday night?" we asked, wondering whether



*S. v. salvadorii*, illustration by Johannes Keulemans, 1877

we'd need to take the bird home overnight first. The WIRES volunteer assured us that AES is available 24 hours a day. "Do we phone or will there be a doorbell?" we asked. "No, my information is that the door will be open," the volunteer says. So, back to Bangalow we went.

First, we had to work out how to get the bird there without causing further harm. Like many Northern Rivers locals, we always have a towel in the car (you never know when an opportunity for a quick swim might happen!) so we used this to wrap the crate that

we'd carefully picked up from the ground, trying hard to keep the baby bird steady and upright. My hubby held the crate next to him in the back seat while I drove along Ewingsdale Road and Hinterland Way far more slowly than I had just an hour or two earlier.

The door to Animal Emergency Service, which operates as Bangalow Vets during weekdays, was slightly open as promised and the waiting room was already occupied by two dogs and their clearly very worried owners. A vet nurse joined us, took down our details and the WIRES case ID number we'd been provided and told us that the bird would be looked after overnight before transfer to Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital.

She also confirmed the WIRES theory that our ball of feathers with a beak was a figbird. We, of course, looked up pictures on our phones and were surprised to find that, despite this native species not being endangered and males having striking green wings, black heads and red around their eyes, we couldn't recall seeing them around.

On our eventual drive home, we nicknamed the bird Figgy and hoped, perhaps beyond hope, that it would survive the night's ordeal. So, it was delightful, on following up Figgy's fate for this story, to hear from Dr Bree Talbot, General Manager of Veterinary Services at Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital: "This little one did well – was stabilised in hospital then transferred out to care to be reunited with its parents."

How common is this outcome? "The majority of figbirds that are healthy and have been orphaned will go into care to be reunited," says Dr Talbot. "There is a disease called leucocytozoonosis which figbirds are prone to and can unfortunately result in death. We see it in clusters each year, thankfully this year hasn't been too bad."

I am left incredibly impressed by how this chain of services – WIRES, Animal Emergency Service and Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital – worked together to save this one little bird. I am still astounded to know that Bangalow has a 24-hour vet, and am even more impressed to discover that they accept and care for injured or sick wildlife without any financial compensation.

"All the wildlife organisations ask people to drop wildlife off to us and we are very happy to take them in," says Silja Mack, Operations Manager for Animal Emergency Service. "We get koalas on behalf of Friends of the Koala, seabirds on behalf of Australian Seabird and Turtle Rescue, and other wildlife and birds on behalf of WIRES and Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers. We saw 41 wildlife in January this year and wouldn't turn anything away but, no, we don't get compensated for wildlife rescue work."

So, on behalf of myself, my hubby and, of course, Figgy, a very big thank you to all the staff, volunteers and those who donate to wildlife organisations.

Vivienne Pearson

**Vivienne Pearson is a Byron Shire freelance writer. Her writing lives at [viviennepearson.com](http://viviennepearson.com)**




**Koala Tree Planting**

Sat 14th March 2026  
Coraki

**Time: 10.00am start**  
**Trees: 1000**

**Koala Tree Planting**

Tues 17th March 2026  
Byron Bay

**Time: 10.00am start**  
**Trees: 1120**

**Koala Tree Planting**

Fri 27th March 2026  
South Gundurimba

**Time: 10.00am start**  
**Trees: 1500**

**RSVP:** Bookings are essential, email to book your place today at: [president@bangalowkoalas.com.au](mailto:president@bangalowkoalas.com.au)

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# Drover drive on



A drover's life for me Photo supplied

Restraint, nostalgia, togetherness, and an insistence on keeping alive the Aussie tradition of wearing thongs to the pub – Drover are one of Bangalow's great musical exports, writes **Byron Leeworthy**.

After releasing their debut album late last year, the band is setting their sights on a big 2026. Made up of Bobby, Roy, Molly, and Rhys, Drover let tender vocal melodies sit over a driving, unmistakably Australian backbeat. Their album *Notion* explores themes of loss, friendship, guilt, and the need for community. Recorded in Thornbury, Melbourne, the band worked with Archie Shannon from the band Floodlights at their studio.

To learn more about Drover, I went straight to the horse's mouth, and shared a cup of tea with Roy and Bobby at a beautiful place overlooking the hills of Coopers Shoot.

Drover's songs are drenched in a sense of place. Connection to the land and a deep respect for nature is embedded in the band's identity. "We had filmmaker, Luka Raubenheimer, put together a clip for one of the singles. It's full of native wildlife and aids the song in really capturing that feeling of being out in the bush," says Roy.

Don't be fooled by the subtle sentiment of these recordings though, as the band knows how to amp it up when playing to a crowd. "We love being able to change the dynamics of a song depending on what the night needs," says Roy. Drover was frequenting the Bowlo, and still play other local venues like the Bangalow pub, and most recently the Eltham Hotel.

"I think our biggest artistic constraint is time," says Bobby. "Roy lives in Melbourne, so it can be quite limiting in a way. We just have to make the most of the time we get together."

While apart, they spend time writing and gathering experiences. "Our lyrics are quite reflective, thinking

**Byron**  
FARMERS  
MARKET  
\* SINCE 2002 \*

**REAL  
FARMERS,  
REAL  
FOOD**

**Bangalow**  
FARMERS  
MARKET  
\* SINCE 2004 \*

**BYRON BAY**  
Thursdays 7-11am  
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**BANGALOW**  
Saturdays 7-11am  
Piccabeen Park



"I'd love to see more bands coming up from around here; it's so hard to make it by yourself. If you see these big movements, it's always people lifting each other up," says Bobby.

While Molly and Bobby's guitar work and Roy's bass make up the core band, they keep an ever-changing roster of musicians to help fill out their sound. The pair agree that the changes keep older songs new, with each performance giving something fresh. "It's a key part of the band. The songs are malleable; we can add in a slide guitar part or even go without drums. Each line-up brings the tracks into a new light," says Roy.

There's a lot to be said about goals and success: Drover isn't looking to sell out stadiums but would love to get some more experience on the road. "Getting a tour support slot for a bigger band would be great, maybe playing the odd festival here and there," says Bobby. "I'm not looking to quit my day job too soon though."

"It would be fun to try and find our limits, to find bigger stages and more access," says Roy. "There's also the recording element, to be able to set up a home studio where we can just be a little song factory would be heaps of fun."

Songs like *Sorry* and *Stay* feel like an acknowledgement of personal shortcomings or self-sabotage, usually feelings someone holds close to their chest. Roy says he gets a sense of resolve when singing out to a pub full of people. "I think it's good to share these things; you show people your mistakes and they say that's OK, I'm human too."

As for the name, it comes from the Henry Lawson poem, *The Ballad of the Drover*, a perfect encapsulation of the band's bleeding heart.

about relationships and mental health. I don't know if we could just write a song about the surf," says Bobby.

Working as a band in the Northern Rivers doesn't always give the same opportunities as in the big cities, but Roy doesn't see that as a negative. "I've played in a handful of bands around Melbourne, sometimes it can be quite competitive. Up here people are more willing to give you a crack."

The importance of a strong music scene can't be overstated. Having lots of bands to show up and play shows with each other is the lifeblood of live music, especially in regional areas.

But someone's eyes are saddened,  
And someone's heart still bleeds,  
In sorrow for the drover,  
Who sleeps among the reeds.



Bangalow Market,  
simply stunning



Bangalow Showgrounds  
4th Sunday of each month  
8am ~ 2.30pm

Parking is available for \$2 in the  
Showgrounds at the Market.



# How the 'shoots' got their names

Early timber getters in the late 19th century Photo Bangalow Historical Society

Imagine, for a moment, that you are an Australian red cedar tree (*Toona ciliata*). You're more than 80m high, and 10 metres around. The seed that you grew from, took root five hundred years earlier, in the area now known as Bangalow.

It's the year 1873. A rugged team of pioneering cedar-getters, frantic to find money to survive, has finally sliced off the massive ancient vines which had shrouded you like chain mail.

The team has spent weeks scouting the dense forest to find you, tapping into the skills of your friends, First Nations men, who can readily locate you in the crowd. Such a magnificent find, the cedar-getters say! Then, climbing your trunk in pairs, they spend long, sweaty hours sawing into you from either side. Finally - down you crash!

Next, your bark - like a shell - is slit open and you're skinned alive. Then, your valuable inner core is ready for what's coming next...

Desperate to find a way of earning a living around the Sydney settlement, the word had spread among tough free settlers and former convicts: there's 'red gold' in the hills in the

distant north coast: massive trees, red cedar. But to make any money out of you, you have to be shipped off, far away, to Europe.

Trouble is, the only way to get you to the ship, is to get you to fly. So you're dragged to the steepest point at the top of the escarpment, and, with a bunch of your other friends that they've felled this month, they're about to toss you over the edge, and shoot your slippery self down the hill.

McLeod's Shoot - named after the land newly settled by an enterprising Scot, John McLeod - is about to become the place where big logs like you learn how to fly.

(In about 150 years, people with wing-like things strapped to their backs will also try and imitate birds from this point, and hang-glide over this same cliff. But in 1873, it's just you and your mates, about to shoot off the cliff!)

At the bottom of the cliff, they've got a team of bullocks at the ready. After your 170m flight - completely unimaginable to you, having been root-bound for your entire life of many centuries - nothing further will ever surprise you again. The axe-men tie you and

your mates onto the waiting bullock-carts, and hoik you down to the beach at Byron Bay, where you wait, washed by the breakers, for the next convenient cedar schooner.

First, it will take you to the nearest sawmill at Shaw's Bay, in Ballina. There, you'll be sliced into a more convenient size and shape, then finally loaded onto a ship. That ship might end up in Sydney, perhaps, where red cedar was widely used in architectural joinery and fine furniture in places like Government House and other colonial mansions, or maybe Sydney Town Hall, banks, post offices and courthouses, even coffins or fancy cigar boxes. Or you may be bound for the other side of the world. A greedy market wants to make you into classy furniture, wood panelling, even to build ships. Let's hope the voyage across the world will be easier than this flying business...

McLeod's Shoot, Possum Shoot, Coopers Shoot all got their names from those early settlement days in the 1860s to 1880s - named after the flying red cedar.

Christobel Munson



Mick O'Regan (right) interviewed four local residents. Photo supplied

# From all the lands on Earth we come...

Wandering down Bangalow's main street or through our rural lanes, it's likely you'd be stunned to discover just how many people living and working in 2479 have family who originally came to Australia from another country.

There's the high-profile gallery owner who identifies more with his Assyrian ancestors than his Irish. Though his family was originally of the Druze faith, he was raised Catholic.

The deli owner comes from a tiny Italian town, population less than 1,000. His shop pays tribute to Italian village stores, where "neighbours gather, flavours flourish".

Next door at the post office, the owner grew up in a city of five million, in a province of 85 million, in a country of 1.4 billion – now living in a town with a population under 3,000.

Out in Coorabell lives a woman who, until fairly recently, had no idea her three-times great-grandfather arrived in Australia in 1820, convicted of forgery. Resilient and flexible, his descendants thrived and prospered, becoming wealthy landowners, denying their convict origins for more than 100 years.

Over in Newrybar, on one side of the road is a coffee plantation founded by an escapee from the Netherlands, who left his birth country at a time when "there was no future there; millions had already died". On a neighbouring property lives a dentist, son of an Estonian father and a Prussian-Swedish mother. He was born in Poland, as the family made their way out of war-ravaged Europe, finally arriving at a Parkes refugee camp. There, he learned English so well he won a scholarship to university.

This is a taste of some of the fascinating family histories currently on display at Heritage House. Kickstarting the 'Shaking the Family Tree' exhibition, a Q&A session was held one hot summer afternoon, in which journalist Mick O'Regan interviewed four of these locals. Each of the 10-minute interviews celebrating their diverse family origins can be viewed on the Bangalow Historical Society YouTube page, a sneak preview of what's on display.

To have your family history included, you are invited to complete a questionnaire available at the Museum. It will form part of the emerging display, in which local family histories are linked, with coloured ribbon, to their countries of origin on a giant world map. It will remain on display for most of the year. A raffle is being held, closing on Anzac Day, 25 April, with a prize of a DNA test. Exhibition entry is \$5. Opening hours are Wednesday to Friday, 10am to 2pm; Saturday 9am to 1pm. Phone (02) 6687 2183.

*Bangalow Historical Society*



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The cast of *Vivid White* will debut their collaborative Eddie Perfect production this March Photo Joel Cooper

# BTC are white hot

For those of us who have watched Bangalow Theatre Company (BTC) grow over the years – from COVID-inspired roving pop-up events to risk-taking contemporary works – there has always been a sense that something special is happening here. But their latest foray hits different.

When Australian composer, performer and writer Eddie Perfect – the Tony-nominated creator of Broadway’s *Beetlejuice the Musical* and *King Kong* – chooses to redevelop a work with a regional company, you take notice. When he then hands that company the keys to premiere the newly reimagined production, you realise you are witnessing something big.

And 19-28 March, BTC will present *Vivid White* at Brunswick Picture House, a newly imagined work that evolved from an intimate and interactive workshop process with Eddie Perfect himself.

For Bangalow’s Joel Cooper (who plays celebrity architect Evan Prescott and co-produced the development phase) – the journey has been extraordinary.

“It has been incredible on so many levels,”

he says. “For the company to be working so intimately and closely with Eddie – someone of his esteem – has just been so amazing.”

The relationship began with BTC’s production of Eddie’s play *The Beast*, directed by BTC co-founder and fellow Bangalow resident Anouska Gammon. That bold, left-field work struck a chord with Northern Rivers audiences and went on to earn multiple awards and widespread recognition, cementing BTC’s reputation for ambitious, intelligent theatre.

“*The Beast* really translated well for our local audiences,” Joel says. “They are receiving new theatre in a really open way, and that’s exciting.”

That openness planted a seed.

Eddie first wrote a version of *Vivid White* for Melbourne Theatre Company in 2017 but had always felt passionate about reworking and revisiting the piece, giving it more time in the creative development space. “The stars aligned when he saw that BTC was performing *The Beast* and he called Anouska and offered BTC the opportunity to be the vessel of redevelopment of the work.

A small cast assembled for a workshop process that was anything but routine. Eddie arrived with new material, rewrites and songs still taking shape. The work was a living, breathing, pulsing project that fused enthusiasm and experience in an organic and compelling way.

“He was writing songs in the space with us,” Joel says. “The outcome was to complete the show and see some new ideas and new character arcs and how they would land within the context of the work. We were just blown away.”

Importantly, the workshop was not a guarantee of performance rights. “It was never like, let’s workshop this and then you can do it,” Joel explains. “There were still a lot of questions around the show, and the future of the piece remained in Eddie’s hands.”

But the BTC held quiet hopes that they would be entrusted to light up the piece on stage for its debut.

Months later, after Eddie had stepped into the title role of *Beetlejuice* in Australia, BTC reached out again.



Tony award-winning Eddie Perfect. Photo supplied

“He’s constantly in turmoil between two worlds,” Joel says. “He’s got the success, the money, the richness, but he’s watching the world he knew crumble away.”

At its heart, *Vivid White* is a satire about property, ambition and the Australian dream. The title itself references the Dulux paint colour – a nod to renovation culture and aspirational aesthetics that is so synonymous with our postcode.

Like Perfect’s earlier works, the show tackles big ideas through satire and comedy rather than didacticism.

“It’s these big topics all painted in the stroke of satire and comedy,” Joel says. “We hope the audience leaves feeling inspired and challenged, but they’ve also had an absolutely raucous night at the theatre.”

For theatre lovers in the Northern Rivers, this production is more than a season announcement. It is evidence of the calibre of talent working quietly – and now not so quietly – in our region.

To workshop a major musical with a Broadway-calibre Australian artist is rare. To premiere the finished work is extraordinary.

For Bangalow Theatre Company, it is both a milestone and a statement: regional theatre can be fearless, sophisticated and significant.

And for those of us lucky enough to sit in the audience, it promises to be a blindingly good night out.

Sally Schofield

“There was a moment where we, as a theatre company, said ‘We really want to do this. We think we can tackle this,’” Joel says. Anouska spoke to Eddie and “And he said, let’s do it. Let’s take it to season.”

For a volunteer-driven regional company, that trust speaks volumes – and reflects the strength of leadership within BTC. Under Anouska’s direction, the company has consistently embraced challenging, contemporary work while nurturing a deep well of local talent.

“We’re all volunteers pouring our heart and soul into it. To be recognised at that level and for Eddie to trust us in that process was phenomenal,” Joel says.

Even now, the shape of the show is transmuting. Songs have shifted. The ending has been transfigured more than once.

“The piece is alive,” Joel says. “Eddie and Anouska and the creative team are back and forth every week. ‘How did this land? How is this song working?’ We’ve just flipped the ending again and now have this fabulous, hilarious ending song that was never in the iteration of the show.”

For BTC, this process has tapped into a collaborative flow-state fuelled by creative resonance.

“Bangalow Theatre Company has never had to work like this – being so agile and having the writer be such an active part of the whole production timeline.”

The play follows two university friends who have taken vastly different paths: Evan Prescott (played by Joel), now a television celebrity architect, and his former peer, who has wound up working in community housing. The tension erupts at a house auction, and much tension pivots on the extreme collision between renters and buyers – particularly poignant in the midst of a housing crisis.

“It’s very topical,” Joel says. “It leans into the issue of housing and will make people feel uncomfortable – not in a negative way, but in a holding-a-mirror-up-to-society way.”

His character, Evan, walks that fault line.

“Evan has had to succeed in the world as it is, not in the world as it should be,” says Joel quoting a line from the play.

## **Vivid White**

**9 - 28 March**  
**Brunswick Picture House**  
**[brunswickpicturehouse.com](http://brunswickpicturehouse.com)**

**Presented by**  
**Bangalow Theatre Company**  
**and Brunswick Picture House**



# The case for no and low

Refreshingly dry Photo Chris Curry

We're talking alcohol here, folks. The word is that low and zero alcohol drinks are becoming increasingly popular, especially if you're under 40 or over 65.

**Christobel Munson** speaks with Bangalow bottle shop manager, Liette Snow to get the low-down...

Bangalow's well-loved and well-frequented bottle shop: The Cellar, Bangalow, has always offered a variety of non-alcoholic drinks for those wanting to ease off alcohol

consumption. Think soft drinks, mixers, lemonade, soda – you know the story. But deciding not to drink alcohol at all? That's next level.

"There are a number of reasons people choose zero alcohol drinks," explains The Cellar's manager, Liette Snow, who has observed a particular increase in their popularity over the past four years. "We live in an area with no public transport; someone has to be the designated driver to take you home from a party or an event, so there's always been a need. Non-alcoholic beer has led that category. Now, too, it's also

more widely accepted for people to drink responsibly."

In the UK, they have Dry January, suggested to give people's livers a rest after a Christmas season of heavier-than-usual drinking. There, the first non-alcoholic beer, named Barbican, hit the scene in 1979, "a sad, bitter apology for a beer", according to *The Guardian*. Since then, investment in R&D has improved quality and taste.

The Australian equivalent of Dry January is probably FebFast. Since 2007, it's encouraged people to take a month-long

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Authorised by Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.



One of the drinks on everyone's lips Photo supplied

break from alcohol, sugar or social media, while raising money for Lifeline. In the same vein, there's also Dry July and Sober October (October) – month-long alcohol-free challenges designed to improve physical and mental health, often while raising money for cancer charities. Participants report such benefits as improved sleep, higher energy and better skin, while also being a break for the liver and a 'reset' for social habits.

Last month *The Bangalow Herald* ran a list of a dozen increasingly popular non-alcoholic drinks. Top of that list in terms of popularity, Liette says, is non-alcoholic brand NON. Popular chef Matt Stone collaborated with NON to create NON PROGRESS1 Poached Plum & Finger Lime, "a limited-edition, small-batch, alcohol-free beverage, featuring native Australian ingredients like Davidson plum, finger lime, and Murray River salt, it is a dry, bright, and slightly smoky alternative designed for food pairings." Based on botanicals, it tastes like wine.

If this sounds a bit too flowery for you, it's easy to go back to basics and try Heaps Normal Quiet XPA. Billed as "beer-like, without the booze; great with pub food", it sells well at this bottle shop.

The demographics most likely to buy zero-alcohol versions of alcoholic drinks, according to Circana, an American market research and data analytics company, are those under 40 and over 65 years of age: predominantly pre- and post-family life stages. For example: "Recently catering for a hen's party, the organiser explained she had three pregnant ladies coming. She ordered the non-alcoholic Prosecco, perfect for occasions like that," Liette explains.

More and more winemakers are producing de-alcoholised wine for people looking for a taste of wine – though that's a particularly complicated and expensive process, she adds. Other non-alcoholic drinks are either grape or tea-based. The bottle shop also sells quantities of non-alco gins and whisky, rosé, and offerings such as Peroni Zero.

"Once craft beer hit the scene, it's been fulfilling a need, too. And since there's so much competition among specialist breweries, many of them have started creating the no- and low-alcohol drinks. It's really about providing an option for everyone."

Even the Bangalow Lions Friday afternoon kiosk is getting in on the act, stocking Coopers and Heaps Normal, which "taste like beer without the alcohol". And supermarkets, too, sell the Edenvale range of award-winning alcohol-removed Australian wine, says Liette. Interestingly, Angus Dickson at the Bangalow Pub says it's had no interest and stocks no alcohol substitutes.

So why are people making the change? "It's becoming way more popular; people are wanting to be healthier, don't want hangovers, and are becoming more and more conscious of what we're doing to our bodies. Ten years ago in the UK, a brand called Seedlip was a pioneer in the 'non-alcoholic or sober-curious' movement there, popular with 16-24 year olds." Founded in 2015 by Ben Branson, Seedlip created the world's first non-alcoholic spirit, aiming to solve the "what to drink when you're not drinking" dilemma by offering an adult alternative to sugary mocktails or soft drinks.

But guess what! If you look as though you're under 25, you'll need to produce ID to be able to buy non-alcoholic drinks. Why? This policy – in effect at many major retailers – "aims to reduce confusion and prevent minors from purchasing products that closely resemble, in taste and packaging, traditional alcoholic beverages."

The no- and low-alcohol movement may be about what's missing from the drink, but for many, it's about what's gained in the morning.




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# Arts and about

## Art and Ageing Enrichment Program

Creative connection is at the heart of the Art and Ageing Enrichment Program at Lismore Regional Gallery. Held weekly on Friday mornings, the award-winning program is designed to enrich lives and enhance social interaction for older members of the community through engagement with the arts in an accessible and supportive setting.

Facilitated by artist River Mueller, each session includes a guided tour of the gallery's current exhibitions, morning tea in the event space and a hands-on art activity. Volunteers Julie, Helen and Colleen support the program, with morning tea generously supplied by the Country Women's Association.

River Mueller is an emerging artist living and working on Widjabul Wia-bul land in Bundjalung Country. Working primarily with large-scale acrylic paintings, River explores themes including social justice, identity and decolonisation, and brings a thoughtful, inclusive approach to the program. The sessions are free, though registration is essential (phone 02 6627 4606), and participants are encouraged to attend all six weeks.

**6 March–17 April, 10am-12pm**  
**Lismore Regional Gallery,**  
**11 Rural Street, Lismore**  
[lismoregallery.org](http://lismoregallery.org)



The Versace Boys are at it again, this time for Byron Live 'Iconic' Photo supplied

## Byron Live is 'Iconic'

What does it mean to be iconic in a place that trades on its own mythology? Byron Live returns to the stage with a line-up that leans into that question, mixing humour, nostalgia and a fair dose of local self-examination.

Hosted by comedian Mandy Nolan, the show takes the form of a faux studio chat show, complete with live band, choreographed opening number and a rotating cast of guests drawn from the region's cultural orbit. Nolan, who has lived in Byron since the early 1990s, brings her conversational style to artists, activists and long-time locals.

This edition features actor and activist Madeleine West, surfer Rusty Miller, singer-songwriter Gyan, musician and visual artist Jimmy Willing, and satirical duo The Versace Boys. Across the evening, stories range from old Byron and its shifting identity to creative reinvention and life in the public eye. Framed as entertainment but grounded in lived experience, Byron Live blends performance with conversation, offering a snapshot of the personalities who shape the town's cultural life.

**Saturday 21 March, 8pm**  
**Byron Bay Community Theatre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay**  
[byroncentre.com.au](http://byroncentre.com.au)

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'Softening Encounter' by Shaz Rhodes Photo supplied

## Byron Writers Festival 2026 – save the date

Marking its 30-year anniversary, Byron Writers Festival returns to the heart of Byron Bay from Friday 14-Sunday 16 August, transforming the township into a lively literary precinct. After years at Bangalow Showground, the festival shifts to multiple venues across Jonson Street and Bay Street, bringing conversations, panels and performances into the everyday rhythm of town life.

Artistic Director Jessica Alice says the move signals a new chapter, one that strengthens connection with the community while making the program more accessible and weather-resilient. Across three days, writers and thinkers from around Australia will gather on Bundjalung country to explore storytelling in its many forms, from big-idea discussions to intimate workshops and feature events.

Day passes allow audiences to move between official festival venues, creating the chance to shape a personal itinerary and linger in local cafés and bookshops between sessions. Workshops and feature events will be ticketed separately, and the full program will be released in June, with Early Bird tickets available from April.

**Festival dates - 14 - 16 August**

**Byron Bay township precinct**

**[byronwritersfestival.com.au](http://byronwritersfestival.com.au)**

## Emerging artist at Lone Goat

'Soft Return' brings together the work of two emerging art school graduates, artists Shaz Rhodes (Byron School of Art) and India Swinton (National Art School). Shaz presents a series of emotionally charged portraits, her figures hovering between presence and concealment, layered with gesture and shifting expression. India's paintings are quieter in tone, built through the layering of colour and texture, that draw attention to interior states and the sensory experience of looking. Together, these works invite an unhurried encounter and evoke ideas around memory, vulnerability and the spaces between outward appearance and inner life. Installed across the gallery, the paintings create a contemplative atmosphere that rewards close viewing.

**Until 21 March,**

**Wednesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm**

**Lone Goat Gallery, 28 Lawson Street,  
Byron Bay**

**[lonegoatgallery.com/exhibitions/soft-return](http://lonegoatgallery.com/exhibitions/soft-return)**

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Oscar Wilde's enduring comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* opens the 2026 season for Lismore Theatre Company, offering a brisk and sharply observed take on a familiar classic. First performed in 1895, Wilde's play skewers the manners and moral certainties of the English upper class through mistaken identities, romantic misadventures and some of the wittiest dialogue in theatre. More than a period piece, its satire of status, sincerity and social performance still feels uncomfortably recognisable. Directed by Sharon Brodie and John Rado, this production leans into the play's social edge while keeping the humour front and centre. A local cast, including Jenni Law, Junia Wulf and Vilma Giacomini, is joined by Jason Wallace as Jack and Michael Sharmon as Algernon. Together they navigate Wilde's intricate plot of invented names and double lives with energy and precision. For regular theatre-goers, it is a chance to revisit a cornerstone of modern comedy. For newcomers, it offers an accessible introduction to live performance, built on language that still sparkles more than a century on.

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# Moving day



Locked and loaded Photo Gabby Le Brun

A fridge, two elderly rescue dogs and a missing “U” are the unexpected centre of a tale of moving house, writes **Gabby Le Brun**.

Last Friday night was the first time I’ve been brought to tears by whitegoods. But they came, wet and messy and in snotty gasps.

Our new fridge was delivered from Brisbane just as we brought our senior dogs over to the new house. I didn’t see the 15-minute warning text from the driver. I had lost my phone somewhere between our outgoing rental at #24 and our new house at #11 on the same street.

Our rental had an inbuilt fridge, microwave and outdoor kitchen, complete with an entertaining-size Beefeater BBQ that, it suddenly dawned on me the day before settlement, did not come with us. The vendors kindly offered to sell us their fridge, but I was too overwhelmed by the moving mountain to recognise a simple, less expensive solution. I said no.

That was one of those moments in time you wish you could have a do-over. “Yes, I would love to buy your fridge, thank you.” Tick. Problem solved. Instead, I lost hours in the addictive vortex of Facebook Marketplace. The good fridges were on the Gold Coast, the local one was gazumped, and by Thursday morning I’d had enough. In a moment of frustration and financial nihilism, I clicked on

Appliances Online and got out my credit card. I was running late for a dance class – there wasn’t time for buyer’s remorse. But I did have the satisfaction of knowing at least that was One Less Thing.

The next major task was to secure the new backyard for our two rescue dogs, Teddy (16) a fox terrier x Jack Russell cross, and Rusty (16), a mostly deaf and blind, red cattle dog x corgi. But none of the tradies I contacted had the time to do it in such a tight timeframe.

On moving day, we propped an old picket fence around the deck as a makeshift safety barrier. And because rescue dog carers are advised to keep any new environment secure and free from upheaval, we delayed bringing them to the new house until the removalists



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All boxed in Photo Gabby Le Brun

had gone and things had calmed down somewhat.

By the time we loaded them into the car, there was nothing left in the rental but the miscellaneous – receipts, Tupperware without lids, some retro hair curlers and a violin. The emptiness was stark and the house echoed.

Once at the new house, the transition was not smooth. As expected, Rusty couldn't navigate the two steps down into the garden from the back deck. He couldn't find the doggie door and banged his head on the glass. His usual signposts of where he was in space were gone. Teddy trotted laps of the house, panting and bug-eyed. "Resting Dobby face," we call it, after the house-elf at Hogwarts. His breed is known for being shaky but, with his history and the week he's had, his vagal nerves were all out of whack.

"You order a fridge?" A voice boomed up from the street and a large delivery truck idled out the front. It was just on dark. I tucked Teddy under my arm and headed down the front stairs to sign for it. We dismantled the picket fencing to allow the fridge trolley to come up the side. The back door was slid open to enable access. Ted and Rusty placed themselves right underfoot. An OH&S violation under any standard.

The fridge was unboxed on the deck in a flurry of foam wrapping, appliance tape, cardboard and dog hair. "This one doesn't have a water attachment," one of the delivery guys said.

"I ordered one that can be plumbed in," I said, too tired to clock what he meant.

He pointed to the smooth, shiny surface. "No tap."

Someone was holding back the dogs, someone was asking me what model I ordered, someone was saying I'd ordered the wrong model. "Get your computer and check," my daughter said.

The internet was slow and it took a lifetime to open my email. The model number of the fridge in my kitchen was missing a U. The "U" came with a tap and an ice-maker.

"You can always put an ice tray in the freezer," Delivery Guy 1 laughed. It was good-humoured but it didn't land.

Once the invoice downloaded, I realised that not only had I ordered the wrong model, but the one I received was more expensive. I had only bought the one I thought I did because it was on special. And now everyone knew how much I'd spent.

When I was growing up, the kids who had an ice-maker in their fridge were the rich ones, as far as I was concerned. And if they had a rumpus room or an in-ground pool, that was really something. I've always made ice in an ice tray. And now I'm a person who orders a fridge with an inbuilt ice-maker. Well, tried to. Who even am I?

The delivery guys witnessed my existential crisis from the open doorway. Mullets and work boots. Gently offering solutions. They could have run away at that point. But they didn't.

"We can swap it over, no charge," they offered. They really needed to get back to Brisbane. It had been a huge day for them too, and this quick transaction was taking longer than it should. An Accidental Counsellors course should be part of their training. There are so many fridges on Marketplace because someone forgot to measure a doorway.

Maybe I should keep this one. I don't know. The pressure of finding a house, booking the removalists, the bond cleaner, connecting the internet and electricity, packing boxes, stressing about the dogs, the weird unsettled feeling of transplanting one's life from one house to another – and all the Other Things – had melted my Executive Function.

"We'll ring our boss. We'll get it swapped over."

I nodded through my tears.

The new fridge was beautiful. Black and shiny. She was snug in the fridge cavity. At least I'd got the dimensions right. I imagined her thoughts: "Ice trays are very effective." She was happy here. But she couldn't stay.

"Let's swap it over," I sobbed.

Decision made, the delivery guys headed back down the side of the house in the dark. They left the new fridge – beautiful, impotent, expensive, her insides stuffed with foam packing – and would be back Monday with the new, new fridge.

We plugged in the camping fridge and, over the weekend, survived on whatever fitted in there.

Monday, on the way to school, we stopped at the local shop to stock up on lunch things for my daughter. I overshared to the woman at the counter. "We just moved."

"Oh yeah," she said. "Where from?"

"Bangalow to Bangalow," I said. I'm not sure why I felt the need to tell her that. I think I was trying to explain my dishevelled appearance. Maybe I just needed a hug.

I'd just received a text from the bond cleaners at #24. "Your freezer is full of food."

"I know," I texted back. "We're waiting for a fridge."

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# Mateship with Birds

## by Carrie Tiffany

*Mateship with Birds* is Carrie Tiffany's second novel, and one that had been sitting on my bookshelf beckoning to me for some time.

It tells the story of a microcosm of rural life. The longer the book stayed with me after I finished reading it, the more its possibilities rang true.

This isn't a fast-paced story, but rather a gentle reflection on the peaceful pace and quiet rhythms of country life.

The story focuses on three farmhouses situated within cooe of each other. Set in Australia in the 1950s, the residents of the first house are Betty and her two apparently fatherless children. Betty works at the local nursing home, where she is well loved by the residents. At times, during her breaks, she changes her clothes and pretends to be the wife or daughter of a resident living with dementia.

Betty has a friendship with Harry, her neighbour, who has been deserted by his wife. Harry is a quiet man with little to say, but he regularly comes over to help Betty and share a meal. Betty is glad to have a male presence in the life of her son, Michael. I'm not sure why the author chooses to keep the nature of Betty's relationship with Harry somewhat obscure for much of the book, and I found that frustrating.

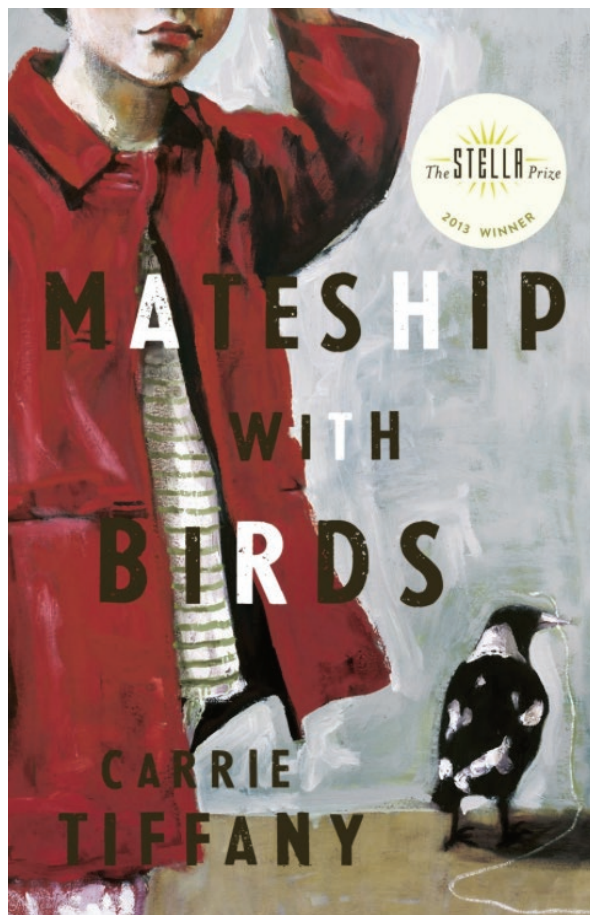
Michael enjoys helping Harry milk the cows in the mornings and spends a great deal of time tinkering alongside him. Harry shares his love of birds with Michael and keeps a journal documenting the lives of a family of magpies living nearby.

The other neighbour, Mues, is a deeply unpleasant character who does not feature prominently in the story.

The relationship between Betty and Harry is tested when Harry takes it upon himself to teach the adolescent Michael about the facts of life by writing him explicit letters, which are later discovered by Betty.

This book won't appeal to everyone, but I found it beautifully written. I enjoyed the unhurried country pace and the quiet poetry woven through the story.

Carolyn Adams



The Bangalow

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# Honey roasted cauliflower with spiced almonds

A side dish that not only looks impressive but also delivers bold flavours, crispy texture, crunch and freshness with a little sweet and savoury balance. This is a delicious use of this satisfying vegetable. Adding the honey takes it to another level.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 large head of cauliflower, cut into medium florets
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1½ tbsp honey, slightly warmed
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp curry powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ cup whole or flaked almonds
- Pinch of chilli flakes (optional)
- Handful of chopped parsley or coriander, to garnish

## METHOD

Soak the cauliflower for 10 minutes.

Dry well to ensure it becomes super crispy.

Preheat oven to 220°C.

Line a tray with parchment paper.

Combine olive oil, honey, curry powder, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the cauliflower and toss well to coat evenly.

Spread the cauliflower in a single layer on the lined tray. Do not crowd the pan – you want the florets to roast, not steam. Roast for 25–30 minutes, turning halfway through, until golden brown and crisp at the edges.

Toast the almonds in a dry pan for three to four minutes until lightly golden.

If using, sprinkle the chilli flakes over the cauliflower once roasted. Transfer to a serving dish and scatter over the toasted almonds and chopped parsley or coriander.

*Recipe and illustration Lyn Hand*





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*Lagerstroemia indica* or Crepe Myrtle is part of the *Lythraceae* family. Originally named 'loosestrife', it was first named by the famous and widely travelled Carl Linnaeus, with the genus *Lagerstroemia* dedicated to his good friend, a director of the Swedish East India Company.

The botanists and horticulturalists accompanying great sea voyages of discovery and trade were often welcome paying passengers and friends of the owners and sailors as they 'discovered' new lands, peoples and plants.

In the days of sailing ships there were many ingenious inventions to assist in the transportation of delicate plants and materials and it must have been an exciting time to be involved.

Crepe or crape myrtle was found growing in many locations in India, South East Asia and, surprisingly to me, northern Australia in a somewhat stunted and non-deciduous form. Its many hybrids are hardy, adaptable, pest-free and do well in open, sunny locations with good soil.

The flowers are crinkled and hence the name 'crepe' or perhaps 'crape' – an old-fashioned European mourning bonnet. Stamens and pistils are bright yellow, creating great contrast, and the seeds are green-brown capsules full of winged seeds.

The one pictured is about three metres tall and has not been pruned except for the removal of occasional dead branches, so it retains its wonderful open vase shape. This year has been ideal for many flowering plants, and I have noticed more in flower locally than ever, in shades from white to dark purple.

The trunk and arching branches shed their light bark throughout the year, revealing beautifully mottled smooth timber. This makes growing *L. indica* worthwhile, especially if the winters are cold enough for the leaves to turn glorious autumn shades before falling. The occasional bare deciduous trees we are able to grow in the subtropics are special and I am wondering if I can squeeze a couple more into my garden.

Pruning should aim to retain the 'vase' shape,



# Autumn blooms

Crepe Myrtle in bloom Photo Carole Gamble

with only excess, dead or crossing branches removed at the trunk. Sometimes there are suckers lower down to be removed as well, but avoid the dreadful amputated limbs of excessive brutalising sometimes seen, as the natural shape is magnificent and an important part of selecting *L. indica*.

With a proliferation of hybrids, you can choose plants that may reach 30 metres high or tiny 30-centimetre specimens, so choose carefully for the spot you want to plant.

Carole Gamble

The word *autumn* comes from the Latin *autumnus*, meaning the season of harvest. In ancient Rome, *autumnus* described the time of year when crops were gathered and fruit ripened on the trees – a season closely associated with abundance, maturity and reward after growth. From Latin, the word passed into Old French as *automne* before entering Middle English as *autumn*. In Australia, we use 'autumn', while American English prefers 'fall', a term that refers to leaves falling from deciduous trees as the season turns cooler.

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The Wedds' way with flowers Photo supplied



The hugely popular flower crowns Photo supplied



Billie in blossom Photo Gaby Bogardt

# Blooming again

The Coorabell Flower Show returns on 14 and 15 March, bringing colour and community back to Coorabell Hall for its 54th year.

Last year's event was cancelled when Cyclone Alfred flattened gardens across the region, a huge disappointment for growers and regular visitors alike. This year, organisers say the show is well and truly ready to bloom again.

Records show the first Coorabell Flower Show was held in 1951, launched by the combined Church of England Women's Guild and Methodist Church Ladies Aid. Some of the same local families who featured as prize winners back then are still part of the district today, a reminder of how deeply the event is

woven into hinterland life.

The 2026 show will welcome exquisite dahlias from champion growers Bruce and Steven Wedd, alongside displays from other local florists and gardeners. In a shift from earlier years, organisers have dispensed with competition categories and entry fees to focus on creating an open, welcoming celebration. Entry is free, with donations appreciated.

Excitement is already building around the free flower crown making workshop on Saturday 7 March. The workshop has become a popular lead-in to the show, drawing children, families and the quietly crafty who arrive ready to weave blooms and

greenery into something fabulously wearable.

The hall will open from 12 midday to 4pm on Saturday 14 March and from 10am to 4pm on Sunday 15 March and entry is free (although donations are always welcome). Alongside the blooms there will be dance performances, plus fabulous cakes, slices, and a sausage sizzle for purchase, and a raffle. Flowers will be sold at the end of the day on Sunday.

After a year's pause, the Coorabell Flower Show returns not just as a display of dahlias and seasonal blooms, but as a celebration of resilience, continuity and community spirit.

*The Bangalow Herald*

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# Massive tools

**The Reckoner** sets his sights on the real menace to our society – monster trucks.

Facing an invasion of big black Tonka trucks, Bangalow authorities look set to decrease the number of parking spaces available on the main street of the boomer caliphate to just six in an effort to accommodate the new breed of gargantuan gas-guzzlers.

With two world wars percolating along nicely in oil rich parts of the world and climate change turning the Pacific Ocean into bouillabaisse logic should dictate cars become smaller, electric and with more beverage holders.

Counter-intuitively, instead of cutting fuel consumption, vehicle manufacturers are aggressively marketing a range of Tonka toy inspired trucks with each new model suffering from autonomic gigantism.

Such is the overweening militarist stance of the new black Tonkas that on any given Saturday morning Byron Street in Bangalow looks more like the Halliburton staging area during the second Iraq War than a quaint village street.

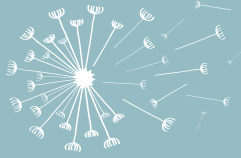
Eschewing his beloved Subie, Bangalow pseudo-tradie Stan Dadbloke is one of many stumping up the equivalent of the deposit on a house for his children to acquire a Testosterone Tonka.

Feared within his family as an accident waiting to happen on any job-site, Dadbloke enthused to his non-plussed partner, Bea Mused, about the tool-carrying capacity of his new matte black ecological nightmare.

"Imagine how many tools and jet skis I can pack into this baby," he shouted down from driver's seat 12 feet above ground level.

"It's already got a massive tool on board as far as I can see," Ms Mused said.

The Reckoner didn't need to consult the Owner's Manual to know what she meant.



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# Brain hygiene



Cards keep you sharp Photo Malcolm Lightbody

**Paula Todd** is a qualified fitness trainer with more than 30 years' experience working with people of all ages, from pre-schoolers to those in their 90s. Here she shares some practical, evidence-based ways to protect and strengthen your brain.

## Basic brain hygiene

Avoid brain injury – wear a helmet if you ride a bike, ski or horse ride, or take part in other higher-risk activities.

Limit exposure to neurotoxins such as alcohol, drugs, nicotine and pollutants. The brain damage caused by addictive substances and other toxins is well documented.

Control exposure to stress. Change the situation, remove yourself from it, or alter your reaction through practices such as meditation. Care for your mental and

emotional wellbeing. Long-term stress can deplete the immune system and elevate cortisol levels, which are harmful when consistently high.

The Shingrix shingles vaccine has also been directly linked to a reduced risk of developing dementia and, of course, protects you from the significant pain and complications of shingles.

Protecting the brain from harm is only part of the picture. Staying socially and mentally engaged is equally important.

## Social activity

Humans are wired for connection. Social isolation is a fast track to cognitive decline, so get involved and connect with others. Laugh. Have a purpose. Everyone needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

Volunteering is one way to build that sense of purpose. There is increasing research showing volunteers gain

significant mental health benefits through social engagement and helping others.

A great idea is to exercise and socialise at the same time. Find a type of movement you enjoy and join a group class.

Alongside social connection, deliberate mental stimulation keeps the brain adaptable.

## Stimulate your brain

Keep those neurons firing. Encourage neuroplasticity by challenging yourself and never stop learning –learn a language, develop new skills, or try a dance group. Safely push yourself outside your comfort zone.

Sudokus, crosswords and other brain puzzles are really beneficial. Playing cards is particularly good because it combines cognitive stimulation with social interaction. Win win!



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## What's on

### Coorabell Film Club – *The Conformist*

**When** Wednesday 4 March, 7:30pm  
**Where** 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell  
**Tickets** \$15  
**Info** coorabellhall.net

Coorabell Hall Film Club presents Bernardo Bertolucci's elegant 1970 socio-political noir *The Conformist*. Set in 1938 Fascist Italy, the film follows a government employee tasked with assassinating his former anti-fascist professor. Renowned for its striking cinematography and rich design, this classic is widely regarded as a masterpiece. Enjoy food and drinks from our licensed bar from 6pm.

### Bangalow Garden Club

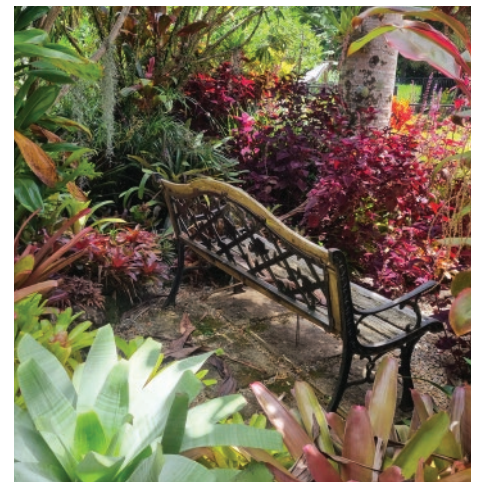
**When** Wednesday 4 March, 1:30pm  
**Where** Moller Pavilion, Bangalow Showground  
**Tickets** Yearly membership \$25. Guests welcome.  
**Info** bangalowgardenclub@outlook.com  
Diana Harden 0418 288 428

Friendly and informative meetings for all things plants and gardens, featuring a different guest speaker each month, flower of the month and plant auction, followed by a fabulous afternoon tea. Bring your own mug. New members welcome. A garden visit takes place on the Saturday after the meeting, offering more time to socialise.

### Song Sharing Circle

**When** Thursday 5 March, 10.30-11.30am weekly  
**Where** Newrybar Hall, Old Pacific Highway, Newrybar  
**Tickets** by donation  
**Info** Benita 0425 772 248  
benitapeacock@yahoo.com.au  
Instagram @benitasinging

Songwriters of all levels are invited to join a welcoming weekly circle to share original songs, workshop new material and connect with other local musicians. Participants can present finished pieces or works-in-progress and receive constructive feedback in a supportive, collaborative setting. If you are refining a tricky verse or developing your sound, this is an opportunity to explore ideas and gain fresh perspective. Instruments are available and all genres are welcome.



A secret garden Photo Adelina Linardon

### Kindred Women Together monthly social group

**When** First Thursday of the month, 5.30-7.30pm  
**Where** Bangalow Hotel Restaurant Deck  
**Info** kindredwomentogether.com

Kindred Women Together is a group of friendly women who enjoy social interactions and developing friendships and connections with other women from our community. We meet monthly at the Bangalow Hotel and have other KWT Clubs offering other activities and opportunities for women to connect. All women welcome.

### Kathy Lette in conversation

**When** Friday 6 March, 6.30-7.30pm  
**Where** Bangalow A&I Hall, Station Street Bangalow  
**Tickets** events.humanitix.com/kathy-lette-in-conversation-2026

Hosted by the Byron Writers Festival, bestselling Australian author Kathy Lette visits Bangalow for an evening in conversation with Nell Schofield. Known for her sharp wit and observations on modern life, relationships and family, Kathy will reflect on her writing career and latest work in a relaxed interview-style format. Nell famously appeared in the 1981 film adaptation of Kathy's *Puberty Blues*, so should be a great reunion. Food and bar available.

### ArtsNational presents: Johannes Vermeer and the Absent Subject

**When** Monday 9 March, 6pm welcome drink, presentation 6.30pm  
**Where** A&I Hall, Station Street, Bangalow  
**Tickets** Membership \$160 single or \$280 double for eight lectures. Guests \$30 per lecture.  
**Info** artsnational.au/societies/northernrivers

The first lecture in the 2026 ArtsNational Northern Rivers series is presented by Albert Godetzky, a renowned international expert on Vermeer. Comparing Vermeer's serene interiors with those of his contemporaries, the lecture explores shifting interpretations of his work and the circumstances that may have influenced him. A lavish book on the artist will be awarded as a door prize.

# Diary



Darling dahlias at the Coorabell Flower Show Photo supplied

## Coorabell Flower Show

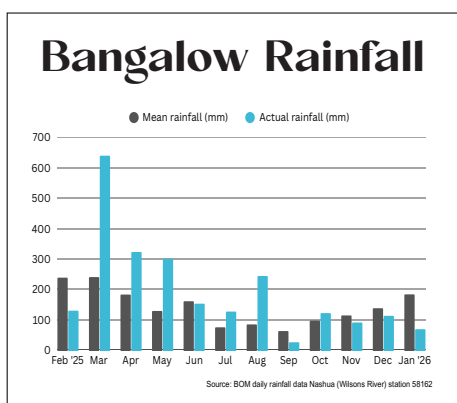
**When** Saturday 14 March, 12–4pm and Sunday 15 March, 10am–4pm  
**Where** 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell  
**Tickets** Free entry. Donations appreciated.  
**Info** coorabellhall.net

The 54th Coorabell Flower Show returns, showcasing prize-winning dahlias from champion growers Bruce and Steven Wedd alongside local florists and growers. Enjoy flower crowns, fabulous cakes and slices, dance displays, a sausage sizzle and raffle. A free flower crown-making workshop will be held on Saturday 7 March ahead of the big weekend. Flowers will be sold at the close on Sunday.

## Koala Tree Planting Days

**When** Saturday 14 March, 10am Coraki | Tuesday 17 March, 10am Byron Bay  
**Where** Coraki and Byron Bay locations provided on registration  
**Tickets** Free, bookings essential  
**Info** president@bangalowkoalas.com.au

Join Bangalow Koalas and partners for two upcoming community tree planting mornings aimed at restoring vital wildlife habitat. Volunteers will help plant native species to create food and shelter corridors for koalas and other local fauna. The plantings are funded by Veritree and IFAW, with trees supplied through One Tree Planted and the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife. Suitable for all ages and abilities, the events offer a practical way to support conservation while connecting with others outdoors. Places are limited and registration is essential.



## Vivid White

**When** 19–28 March  
**Where** Brunswick Picture House  
**Tickets** brunswickpicturehouse.com

Bangalow Theatre Company joins forces with the Brunswick Picture House and Australian composer and writer Eddie Perfect to present a reimagined production of *Vivid White*. Described as a post-apocalyptic real estate musical, the work premiered with Melbourne Theatre Company in 2017 and has since been reshaped in creative development with the Bangalow ensemble. Directed by Anouska Gammon, the new staging brings together Northern Rivers performers for a bold take on ambition, survival and desire, delivered with satire and sharp humour.

## Mimi Gilbert and Ruby Gill

**When** Friday 20 March, 6pm  
**Where** Pearces Creek Hall  
**Tickets** \$38.80  
**Info** tinyurl.com/Mimi-Ruby

Mimi Gilbert (USA) and Ruby Gill (Australia/South Africa) reunite for an intimate autumn tour blending award-winning alt-folk and spoken-word poetry. Gilbert launches their new record *Undrowning*, while Gill performs work from her poetry collection *I'm not exaggerating when I say*. Expect protest songs, lyrical honesty and powerful storytelling in a moving live performance.

## Dr Baz's Fun Friday Film Night – Sci-Fi Edition

**When** Friday 20 March, 7-9pm  
**Where** 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell  
**Tickets** \$10 at the door  
**Info** coorabellhall.net

Dr Baz returns to Coorabell Hall with a special sci-fi edition of Fun Friday Film Night. The evening features Baz's own award-winning short thriller *ENTOMBED*, winner of Best Experimental Film at the 2024 New York Arthouse Film Festival, plus *Project Sentinel* and curated sci-fi music videos. Licensed bar open. An inspiring night of futuristic storytelling and digital creativity.

## March 2026

4	Coorabell Film Club – <i>The Conformist</i> Bangalow Garden Club
5	Song Sharing Circle Kindred Women Together
6	Kathy Lette in conversation
9	ArtsNational presents: Johannes Vermeer and the Absent Subject
14-15	Coorabell Flower Show
14/17	Koala Tree Planting Days
19-28	<i>Vivid White</i> Mimi Gilbert and Ruby Gill
20	Dr Baz's Fun Friday Film Night – Sci-Fi Edition

## April edition deadlines

What's on	13 March
Copy	13 March
Advertising	13 March

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The original clubhouse Photo supplied



Early construction work at the club Photo from the archive of Jan Hulbert

# Saving the space in between

In a huge win for the Bangalow community, Byron Shire Council has unanimously supported the recommendations of a Heritage Assessment recognising the Bangalow Bowling Club's social and architectural value.

While the formal listing process still has steps to complete, the motion marks an important public acknowledgment: the Bowlo is more than a building. It is a place of continuity and community.

For decades, the club has functioned as Bangalow's common ground – a multi-purpose civic space where sport, celebration, music and everyday connection intersect. It is one of the few venues in town where a pensioner, a young family, a sporting committee and a touring musician could share the same floor.

The Heritage Assessment identified the building's distinctive exposed metal ceiling trusses that define the main hall space as structural features that are characteristic of bowling club architecture from the era. Comparable trusses at Willoughby Bowling Club in Sydney, built in the same period, have already been heritage listed – demonstrating that such elements are recognised as architecturally and socially significant within NSW club heritage.

But heritage, in this case, extends beyond the walls.

The bowling greens facing Byron Street herald your arrival in Bangalow. They mark a physical threshold – from highway to village – but also signal something about identity and place. The greens speak of participation, sport and shared space.

"I believe the Bangalow Bowlers who originally selected and bought this land then constructed the clubhouse on which it sits alongside its picturesque lawn bowling green, would be thrilled that their efforts will possibly be enshrined

in a heritage listing which would help to ensure the whole community get to enjoy the space – and the game they love – into the future," says Shane Mahony, current Bangalow bowler and former greenkeeper.

Council's unanimous vote does not immediately place the Bowlo on the Local Environmental Plan's Schedule of Heritage Items. What it does is endorse the assessment and signal that the formal listing process will proceed. That process typically involves preparation of a planning proposal, a Gateway determination from the Department of Planning, public exhibition and, ultimately, gazettal.

When listed, demolition would be highly constrained, major external alterations would require heritage impact assessment, and any future development would need to respect the site's recognised significance.

For many in the community, this news will be met with a collective sigh of relief.

The January 2026 community survey conducted by the Save Bangalow Bowlo Steering Committee found strong alignment on one core objective – that the Bowlo should return to genuine community ownership and control. The survey also confirmed that the club is valued as a social asset, not just a property, with respondents repeatedly referencing loss of access, routine and connection if the venue's character were compromised.

Those themes surfaced again in council debate: heritage recognition is not about nostalgia. It is about continuity of use.

The Bowlo has hosted sporting competitions, local club meetings, fundraisers, weddings, wakes, live music and daily social rituals. It has provided an accessible venue in a village with limited multi-purpose, multi-generational spaces.

Heritage recognition in this context does not freeze the building in time. It regulates demolition and unsympathetic alteration, while still allowing ongoing operation, upgrades and maintenance.

Heritage listing, in effect, strengthens the likelihood that this site remains a sports and leisure venue into the future. It does not mandate bowls forever, nor does it prevent operational evolution required to keep the venue relevant and viable. But it makes large-scale redevelopment for any other purpose significantly more difficult, and strengthens the case for the site's continued use as community infrastructure.

Of course, heritage status also carries responsibility. A listed building must be maintained appropriately. Works require careful documentation. Future operators – whether community-led or through amalgamation – would need to balance preservation with viability.

To the casual observer, the Bowlo's greens, hall and modest façade may not shout 'architectural grandeur' – although architect F.J. Board was described in the Northern Star as "possibly Lismore's greatest architect".

The significance of this site, inside and out, lies in the accumulation of social life and participation over decades.

Heritage protection recognises the importance of proactively safeguarding such spaces.

The next steps now lie in the formal planning pathway, including public exhibition. For now, however, the February decision signals something clear: Bangalow's bowling club is being recognised not just as a building, but as shared ground and a community asset worth protecting.