

The Bangalow

HERALD

2479

Up close and personal
With local artists

Excellent humans
Tributes to greatness

For the love of the game
Bangalow women's tennis



Good things



MORE TAX CUTS



**A FAIR GO AT
BUYING YOUR
OWN HOME**



**STRENGTHENING
MEDICARE FOR ALL**

**Justine
Elliot MP**

Member for Richmond



From the Editor

This edition is full of good things.

Not perfect things, and not always easy things, but stories of real people pursuing dreams.

We celebrate Caitlin Reilly's selection as a finalist in a prestigious international art prize in Venice, recognition for years of thoughtful and deeply human art practice. Fellow creator and co-cover star ME Baird shares experiences from a lifetime of interrogating the dark through music and words.

Carole Gamble's remarkable journey reminds us that a life well lived almost certainly contains many chapters and few surprises, while our tribute to Big Scrub champion, the late Tony Parkes, reflects on the lasting impact one person can have on a landscape and a community.

Louis Costa talks about his journey into winemaking with local honey, transforming the ancient drink of ancient mead into a premium tippie for modern palates.

Musician Luke Bennett reflects on how a single email, almost missed in a spam folder, led to opportunities, friendships and a musical journey that continues to this day. Possum Creek's Rina Genis proves that creativity doesn't come with an expiry date, as she embarks on her first art exhibition at age 87.

We also have an exclusive extract of *Raised by Wolves* from Bangalow's own Tristan Bancks in the lead up to next month's Byron Writers Festival, an event which will be filled with many good things.

We honour the memory of Ruth Ryan, whose encouragement and support helped generations of local artists find their voice through Bangalow's Barebones Art Space.

We also acknowledge the colourful and well-loved Bobby Dudgeon, former Bowlo Courtesy Bus operator, and reveal that the bus is back in now revamped and back in local hands ready to serve the community.

This month, we hope you'll enjoy celebrating some of those good things with us.

Happy reading.

Sally Schofield

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

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Cover image: Caitlin Reilly and ME Baird shooting the breeze in Bangalow

Photo Yutaro Fukuhara

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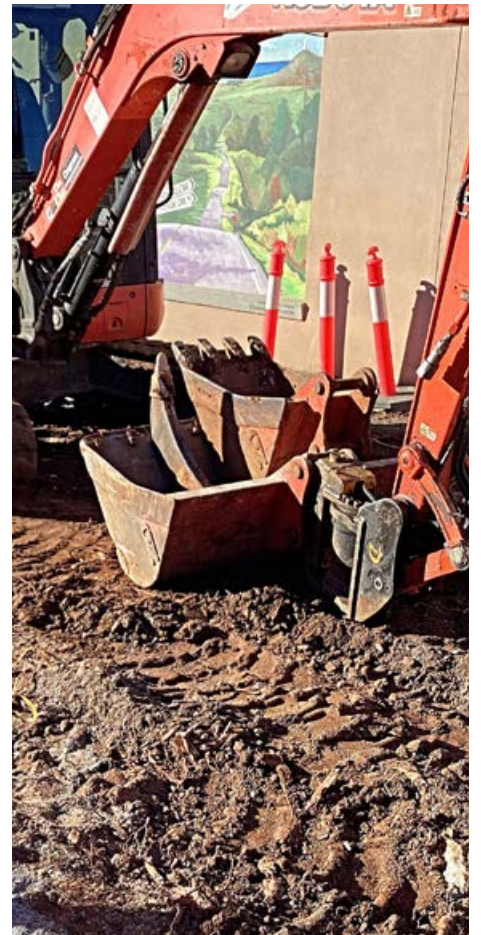
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Top Agent in Bangalow 2025 REA Awards Of Excellence

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David Aldous at work preparing a portrait of the felled liquidambar tree in Station Street Photos Murray Hand

Weighted lines

Many of the trees growing on the footpath of Bangalow's main street are marked for removal and, in fact, several have already been cut down. Byron Council has deemed them to be a problem due to damage being caused by their roots to the footpaths and buildings. Both the liquidambar beside the Cellar have gone due to damage that is readily evident to the building.

These fabulous trees are gone but some won't be forgotten, especially if artist David Aldous has anything to do with it. David made ink impressions of the growth rings of fallen trees so that their footprint is forever preserved. He recently spent a weekend preparing the remaining stump of one of the liquidambar.

The process he uses is slow and uncomfortable as he squats over the remnant for hours, applying fire to the stump and brushing away the soft burnt wood between the growth rings, making a relief that can be inked onto paper to create a unique work of art.

David calls his business Weighted Lines. He travels through remote forests and national

parks in Australia, New Zealand and Japan seeking fallen trees. He presses their growth rings with ink onto Japanese art paper, honouring the trees.

Whilst living in Melbourne, David fell in love with the Victorian High Country. He says, "One afternoon in 2014 on Mt Feathertop I sat down beside a stack of fallen mountain ash and everything shifted. All those rings! All those lives! Similar but different. I didn't know what I was looking at but I needed to find out."

David soon stumbled upon an artist called Brian Nash Gill who used fire to open the grain and bring the rings to the surface. Hours of experimenting and practice followed, not just to get the texture; he wanted to think deeper about what the trees meant, bringing him to a deep sense of duty to speak for the trees.

David says, "I am not a full-time artist in the way people imagine. I am a person who found something important to do and is trying to do it properly."

weightedlines.com.au

Liquidambar, or sweetgums, are native to Asia, the eastern Mediterranean and North America. They are large, deciduous trees that develop a vigorous root system.

The trees have been removed from beside The Cellar and have now been replaced with native Ivory Curl trees, which are widely admired for their lush foliage and spectacular floral display. From late summer through autumn, the trees produce a breathtaking display of creamy, fragrant flowers that cluster in curled racemes at the branch tips. These nectar-rich blooms not only add beauty and fragrance to the landscape but also attract a variety of birds, bees and other pollinators, enhancing biodiversity.

Murray Hand

Byron Writers Festival

Richard Flanagan
Antoinette Lattouf
Bob Carr
Geetanjali Shree (IND)
Roman Krznaric (UK)
Thammika Songkaeo (SGP)
Kerry O'Brien
Niki Savva
Robert Forster
Evelyn Araluen

Meg Mason
Trent Dalton
Osher Günsberg
Siang Lu
Amy Remeikis
Steve Toltz
Micaela Sahhar
Melissa Lucashenko
Tasma Walton
Luke Bateman

Celebrating 30 years
14—16 August

Tickets
byronwritersfestival.com

Four decades after finding his place in Melbourne's Goth and post-punk scene, Bangalow musician and artist **M.E. Baird** is opening a new creative chapter. **Digby Hildreth** discovers how illness, survival and a lifelong search for meaning continue to shape his music.

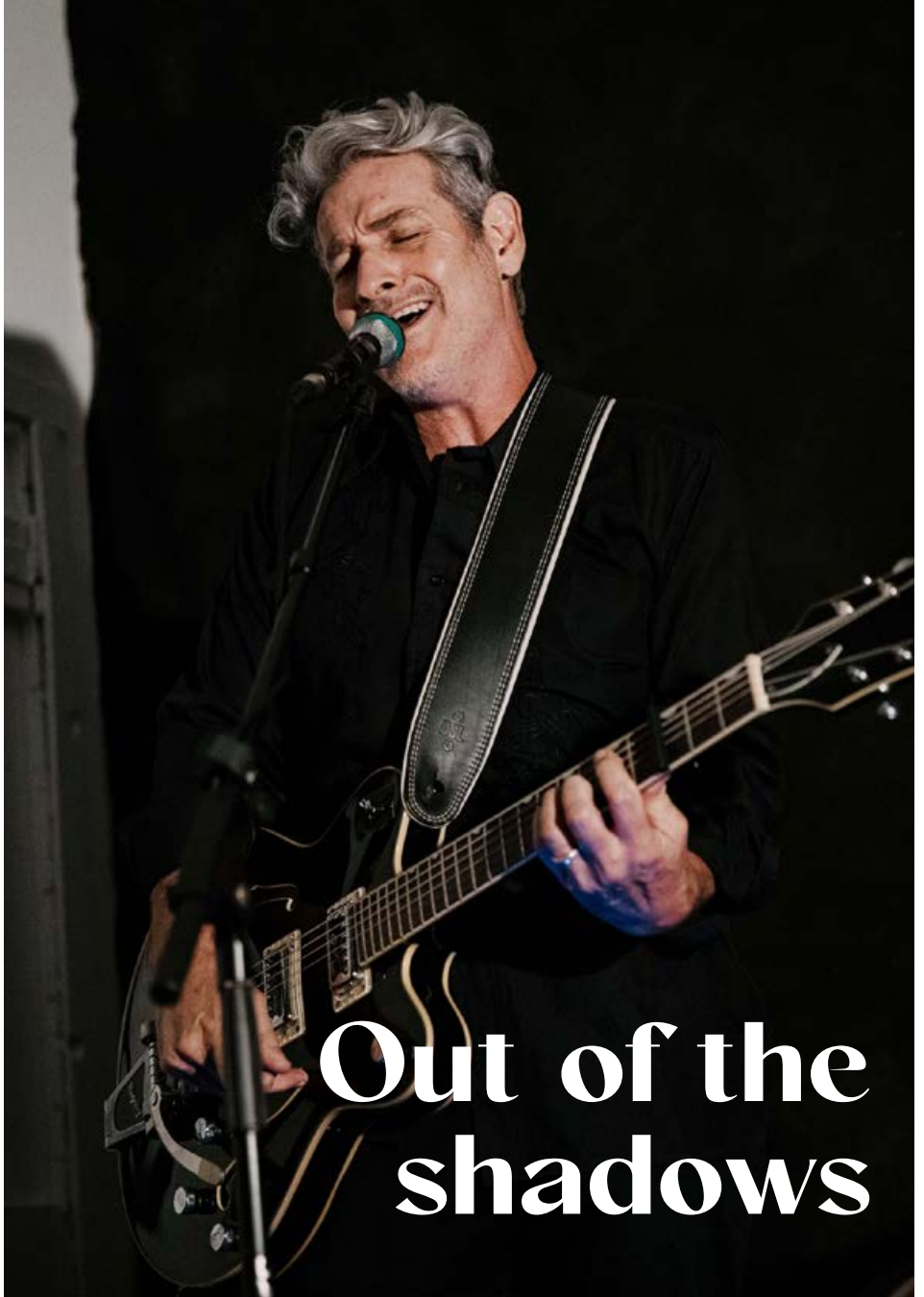
Musician and artist M.E. Baird found his milieu in the dynamic Goth and post-punk scene of 1980s Melbourne. Forty years on, post-cancer, he is more interested than ever in experimenting with sound.

Baird's 2023 EP *Spinning Man* finishes with a softly spoken number whose repeated lyric is "Whatever we do now, it has to be something new". It's in the context of a troubled couple re-committing to stay together, but applies equally to humanity's stepping into the future, and could be a mantra for his own creative ventures.

The long-term Bangalow resident will bring new songs to Pearces Creek Hall this month, along with tracks off *Spinning Man*, and most of its predecessor album, 2019's *Time*. And, in a first for the pastoral venue, a drummer will be part of the band on stage.

Any music played in the hall needs to cater for the acoustics of the small timber room, says venue manager Simon Winfield, and Baird's "dark folk" fits the bill: it's spare, atmospheric, emotionally resonant, the vocals haunting and expressive.

"Matt's music and art create a necessary space – not an emptiness, but a place to rest," says a recent Baird collaborator, Georgi Milln. "And in that quiet, you have time to not just feel the beauty of the sound or image, but to truly engage with it."



Out of the shadows

M.E. Baird - dark as folk Photo Kristen Augeard



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Experience, Expertise, Integrity

The music has certainly evolved over the 40 years since his teenage love of the insouciance and outrage of the Velvet Underground and the New York Dolls and the glam and Goth posturing of the '80s, but the echoes can still be heard in his exploration of the darker reaches of the human condition.

Unusually for a rock performer, in conversation M.E. Baird quotes Holocaust survivor and psychotherapist Viktor Frankl on the connection between suffering and creativity. His own search for meaning has been fuelled by an effort to reconcile the two powerful and conflicting forces in his childhood home, and by the experience of having – and surviving – cancer.

"I had this really strange upbringing, where on my father's side they were virtually Gypsies, and it was all art, music, writing, freedom of thought. On my mother's side was this hardcore Irish Catholicism: violence and alcohol. And guilt. So, I think my whole art career, perhaps my whole life existence, has been trying to reconcile the two.

"I'd say that probably 90% of my songwriting has been a 40-year exorcism of the Catholic."

Such repressiveness meant a boy was destined for one of two things, he says: prison or the priesthood. "I didn't like the idea of either, so there's always that pressure. But it's good fodder (for creativity).

"It's still here now; everything I do with art is that duality; it's either light or dark. There's a battle going on. The same with songs as well.

"My first thought when I got cancer was, I could hear my mother in the background going, 'Sit there, you haven't been a good Catholic boy, so you're being punished', and I carried that for the first 12 months, the thought that I'm being punished for all my past.

"But I soon realised that I had to leave that behind."

That light-dark dichotomy is expressed in the song *Spiritual Prey*, from *Spinning Man*, recorded while Baird was undergoing radiotherapy for prostate cancer. The disease is personified, and expressed directly: "You came to me on a winter's day, to teach me how to live with pain."

It's dark! But M.E. Baird is fully recovered now, with renewed energy, a fresh lease on life. In person he twinkles with warmth and good humour. *Spinning Man* was cathartic, and served to "get it out of my system", bring a new freedom, not just from the sickness, but also from the concern with what others think. He has stopped second-guessing himself: "After the cancer I was like, 'I don't care anymore. I can write what I want to write, you know, have some fun'."

It seems that there was a gift in being ill, he says; a light in the darkness. "I'm actually more interested in experimenting now than I was when I was younger, because there's nothing to lose."

Always a keen collaborator, he is more enthusiastic than ever now to work with others, including making a record with the musicians alongside him at Pearces Creek, performing as The Fold. Among them are Bangalow locals Leroy Who on drums, bass player (and *Bangalow Herald* contributor) Darren Bridge, and guest Ashleigh Bo to handle backing vocals ("a massive, incredible voice", Baird says).

Support act is the hypnotic Orly Raquel from Melbourne: "She plays classical guitar, sings, and is very like a female version of Leonard Cohen, who she cites as her spiritual leader," he says. "And she's very interested in the darker side of things, with song titles such

as *Witch* and *Chaos and Bones*, so she's perfect!"

The theme of darkness will be graphically represented on the night by the work of botanical installation artists Bob and Selena from Immortal Soils, who are creating a Gothic garden on stage. "We're really making a night of it!" Baird laughs.

Along with everything else, M.E. Baird has an impressive history in teaching: architecture, design and the visual arts. He walked away from academia after 25 years but is now drawing upon the teaching material he developed to deliver regular lectures at Pack Gallery in Byron Bay.

The talks combine philosophy and history, all centred on visual art and literature. Baird feared there would be little interest but the sessions have proven popular. As Pack Gallery owner Paula Bannon explained to him: "People want that interaction; they want to be in a room with other people."

This "classroom" represents a whole microcosm of creativity and community, and reveals a brightness in the young people attending that fills Baird with hope for the future, helping to keep the darkness at bay.

Digby Hildreth

A Night of Dark Folk
Pearces Creek Hall
Saturday 4 July from 6pm

BANGALOW KOALAS

Koala Tree Planting
Sat 4th July 2026
Coraki
Time: 10.00am start
Trees: 1045

Koala Tree Planting
Wed 29th July 2026
Byron Bay
Time: 9.00am start
Trees: 2000

RSVP: Bookings are essential, email to book your place today at: president@bangalowkoalas.com.au

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veritree WWF koala ONE TREE PLANTED KILNG Australia Post Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife



The Bobby D fan club presenting an artist's impression of the beloved Bobby Bus Photos Brett Stephens

Bobby's Bus comes home



Twins Betty and Bobby Dudgeon

What began as a conversation over a few beers has become a community rescue mission. The return of **Bobby Dudgeon's** old courtesy bus is a reminder of the generosity, volunteer spirit and local pride that have long defined Bangalow, writes **Brett Stephens**.

While the Bangalow community continues its fight to bring back the Bowlo, an important piece of its history has been rescued and given a new life.

The Bangalow Bowlo courtesy bus, a 1996 minivan that carried generations of locals home safely, has been saved, not as a relic of the past, but as a symbol of the community spirit that created it.

Twenty years ago, the bus was purchased and donated to the Bangalow Bowlo by local legend Bobby Dudgeon. It became a familiar sight around town, transporting residents to and from social events, sporting fixtures and community gatherings.

For more than 45 years, Bobby gave his time and energy to Bangalow through the Lions Club. In recognition of his extraordinary contribution, he was awarded the highest honour offered by Lions International, the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award, in 2023.

Over a few beers, colourful Bangalow identities Niall Carty and Simon Evans found themselves wondering what had happened to the beloved courtesy bus.

Two days later, while Niall was working at Tyagarah, he spotted something familiar sitting behind Wards Byron Shire Truck & Machinery Centre.

"There was the courtesy bus," Niall recalls. "It was a little bit dilapidated. There was a lot of dirt on it. It had been sitting there for a couple of months and I rang Simon straight away. I said, 'You're not going to believe this.'"

The pair made sure the bus was safely stored, and Simon contacted Norths Collective to explain the history behind it.

Norths agreed to sell it back for a symbolic dollar, and Lions Club President John Singh stepped forward to take responsibility for its future.

"Bobby donated it to the Bangalow community, and now it's coming home," John says.

"This bus doesn't belong to Norths. It belongs to the people of Bangalow," says

Lions Club champion Nashy. "The original donation came from Bobby for the benefit of the whole community, and the idea is simple, return it to the people."

The mission has become more than restoring an old vehicle. It's about honouring Bobby and the generosity that defines him.

"You drove us around for years," locals reminded Bobby during the project reveal at Wollongbar Tavern, close to where Bobby now lives. "You donated it to Bangalow, and it should stay with the community."

The restoration has been a true community effort.

Shaune Davy from Panel Pro Northern Rivers stepped in with significant repair work, donating his labour to help bring the vehicle back.

"He's a legend," says Niall. "A new member of the community, but a community-minded person."

The bus required rust repairs, electrical work and mechanical repairs, but the next chapter is now taking shape. A new vinyl wrap and interior liner are being prepared, transforming the old courtesy bus into something fresh.

Soon to be parked at the Bangalow Men's Shed, and ready for service, Bobby D's Community Bus will once again belong where it always belonged, with the people of Bangalow.

Here's hoping Norths will now be inspired by Bobby and return our beloved Bangalow Bowlo back to the community, where it rightfully belongs.

Final villas now selling opposite Yamba Marina

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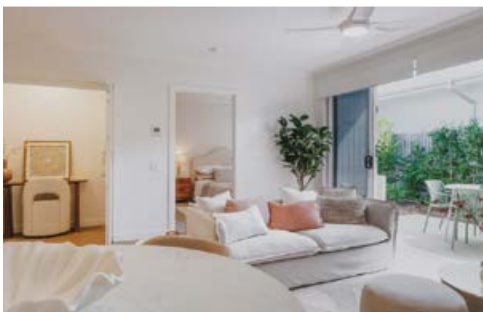
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Uniting

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Venice hails art from the heart



Protection Photo supplied

Indefatigable artist and gallerist **Caitlin Reilly** was preparing the latest multi-artist exhibition at her Station Street gallery when she learned she'd been accepted into one of the world's top contemporary art competitions, 'almost hyperventilating' at the news. **Digby Hildreth** reports.

The prestigious Arte Laguna Prize has been welcoming and exhibiting emerging artists from all over the world since 2006, with the finalists' work exhibited at the Arsenale Nord in Venice for three weeks in November – overlapping with the final weeks of the Venice Biennale.

Caitlin's entry, an oil on canvas work titled *Protection*, is a larger version of a painting she made as part of a series named *The Streets of this Town* which was shown at Byron Bay's Lone Goat Gallery in 2022. The series was an unflinching examination of the lives of rough sleepers in Byron Bay, and an attempt by her to make sense of the disturbing phenomenon.

More broadly, Caitlin says, *Protection* reflects her ongoing inquiry into home, belonging, and the fragile nature of place.

It is part of a new body of work called *Taking Cover* – the result of Caitlin's returning to the paintings in the 2022 series, to give them a bigger treatment, and to explore the subject in greater depth.

Although she says that having finished the *Streets* series, it felt complete, she was forced to reconsider. Most of the works were not for sale and as she lived with them over time she struggled to understand what

it was that she'd actually achieved. "I didn't feel I had any idea what I was really inquiring about. It felt important to go back into that series. Those smaller works have turned out to be studies for these larger works."

Anonymity was a guiding principle and no one's face was shown in the paintings. But, after regularly seeing the same people in the same locations, she got to know a few of them, and showed them the work. "The reaction was 'Oh, that's amazing, that's great, you can paint as many as you want,'" Caitlin says – perhaps a response from the rough sleepers to being seen by someone, and valued, rather than being routinely ignored.

The project challenged her to not shut down to what she was seeing, to resist becoming desensitized. As a result, it was not an easy experience: "It's pretty harrowing, as every part of the painting became this kind of sorrowful experience." It was also during COVID, and Caitlin felt acutely isolated, "away from my family, my kids weren't here. And the experience of painting people sleeping on the street amplified that emotion".

For a time the paintings were hanging on the walls of her Station Street gallery, in Bangalow, but she took them down after a while: "We're all trying to make sense of what it is that we see in this or that picture, and it became this really big consuming conversation during the day that was really heavy" – and became heavier after the 2022 floods devastated parts of the region, and worsened the homelessness crisis.

The contrast between comfort and exclusion is stark in our region, nowhere more so than in Byron Bay, where natural beauty can mask the presence of deep social inequity, Caitlin says. "*Protection* aims to hold that tension – to make visible what is so often erased."

Painting allowed her to slow down and stay with the image, to explore stillness, sorrow, and resilience in equal measure, giving weight to a subject so frequently overlooked, offering space for reflection rather than judgement, and insisting on the humanity of every subject. The same experience is offered the viewer, alongside an undeniable aesthetic enjoyment – the composition, the fall of light, the soft folds of the bedding material. In *Protection* it's the contrast of the figure covered in a ghostly white sheet between a vibrant purple blanket on one side and a bright blue plastic milk crate. But the artistry does not take away from or disguise the raw reality of life on the street. The sleeper is curled around the crate, their only 'furniture', both a symbol of impoverishment and a frail barrier against a cold world.

It's a tribute to the Arte Laguna that they should accept a painting with such a challenging subject.

The fact that it has been is "incredible", Caitlin says. "A lucky dip. It's not a healthy mental landscape to go into them with any expectation. I'm super excited and can't quite believe it."

It coinciding with the Venice Biennale is a bonus: "I'll get to see some of my favourite artists." And not only in Venice. Caitlin hasn't been to Italy before so after Arte she will head to Florence and Rome.

A former finalist from the region, Mullumbimby interdisciplinary artist Karma Barnes, says she too is excited about Caitlin's acceptance "and this significant recognition of her work... As a finalist in the 2024 edition, I can personally attest to the impact the opportunity can have on an artist's career. The connections, visibility and international exposure I gained through Arte Laguna



Caitlin in her Station Street gallery Photo Bella Reimer

have led to ongoing exhibition opportunities and professional relationships that continue to shape my practice today.”

Karma is currently in China serving as an Arte Laguna Ambassador for a Shanghai exhibition, a reflection of the lasting value of the platform and its global network. “For contemporary artists, Venice remains one of the most important places in the world to present work and Arte Laguna provides an enriching and transformative experience that extends far beyond the exhibition itself. I’m delighted to see Caitlin joining that international community and look forward to seeing where the opportunity takes her.”

Only one other Australian artist, Lucy Humphrey from Sydney, is a finalist at the Venice competition.

For Caitlin, the international acknowledgement of the painting is deeply rewarding: “I’m really proud of this work, because for me it’s got such a human and heartfelt connection. It’s really close to my heart.”

And the empathy continues to ripple out.

“*Protection* offers a reflection of the contemporary world – one dark aspect of it anyway,” Caitlin says, “and it’s a kind of microcosm that is really hard to digest. Everyone I speak to feels overwhelmed by this, by the gap between the billionaires and the person on the street, and they’re trying to make sense of it. And, yeah, I get overwhelmed by it too. It makes me feel powerless.

“But the connection that comes from this work is just astounding; the stories that people tell me about their own experiences. As a result of this series, people feel like they can actually trust me with them.”

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37 Byron st. Bangalow



Bella enjoying the buzz of locally made mead Photo Darren Bridge



Mead maker Louis Costa Photo Ella Dice

The buzz about mead

French-born winemaker Louis Costa has spent more than a decade reinventing one of the world's oldest alcoholic drinks.

Darren Bridge visits **Aurum Mead** to discover how Northern Rivers honey, scientific curiosity and a passion for fine wine are combining to create something entirely new.

"*Aurum* means 'gold' in Latin, so everything we do here is with honey, no grapes," says Louis. Long before grapes were cultivated for wine, people were fermenting honey and water to make mead.

These locally made wines are not sweet, simple medieval swill. They are, by some accounts, world-class varieties with a complexity and sophistication to rival anything on the Australian market.

The concept for Aurum Mead was born 12 years ago when Louis Costa was working for

Stone & Wood Brewery as one of their main brewers and recipe creators.

Louis was born and bred in Bordeaux and began making wine at the tender age of 11 with his grandfather. He still has his own vineyard back home in France and manages it from Australia, returning annually to harvest the grapes and prepare the wine.

Now settled in the Northern Rivers, Louis says he began to miss the process of bottling and ageing wine, and the magic of making something that gets better in the bottle.



Contact Anna at
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 Cost: \$30 for the term

MEDITATION IN BANGALOW

Interested in learning to meditate? Or if you are an experienced meditator looking for a sitting group, join us on Thursday evenings at the Men's Shed. Groups run for 6 or 8 weeks. The evening includes:

- Guided meditation practice
- Teachings drawn from the early Buddhist texts
- Group discussion & reflection
- Support for bringing mindfulness into daily life



The Newrybar cellar door offers canapés and matched meads Photo Ella Dice

He soon discovered the Northern Rivers' capacity for honey production.

"The wider Byron Bay area has amazing potential. The honey here is probably amongst the best in the world for complexity, purity and volume. The bees here have access to flowers all year round, so they are producing honey late in the year."

The very nature of honey production is sustainable and beneficial to local pollination, so it's a great fit for this area.

Making quality wines from honey is a new frontier and Louis refers to science through research, trial and error, and his extensive body of knowledge. It has taken over a decade for this process to evolve, experimenting with different yeast and fermentation protocols. Louis has developed his own strain of yeast which works hand in hand with the honey for perfect fermentation, resulting in a complex refined wine that complements the honey without the sweetness of old-fashioned mead.

Louis says his favourite honey is Manuka, well known for its health benefits and antibacterial medicinal properties, and it features prominently in most of his products (see *The Bangalow Herald* June 2026 edition for our story on our local Australian Manuka Honey).

But what do they taste like?

Louis treated my lunch companion and I to a tasting of his flagship wines, masterfully paired with gourmet hors d'oeuvres, which is available for you to enjoy on a Saturday at their pop-up cellar door in Newrybar Hall.

First up was the sparkling white, paired wonderfully with smoked salmon, chive and lemon with crème fraîche on rye bread. This wonderful crisp sparkling wine drank like a prosecco, but not a sweet prosecco. It had a crisp, fresh finish more akin to a dry champagne style. There are notes of honey, yes, but if you told me this was a traditional grape wine, I would believe you. Such is Louis' dedication and mastery of his craft.

Louis' enthusiasm and volume of experience is evident and, as we progressed through the tastings, it became abundantly clear that this range can hold its own on any menu or wine list.

Next on the list was a summery sparkling rosé, followed by the flagship white (voted one of the Top 20 Drinks of the Year in the *Australian Financial Review*), another wonderful dry rosé, a Beaujolais-style wine, a very interesting guava wine, and the list went on.

Cheers to Aurum Mead and Louis Costa, an amazing host and inventor of a whole new direction in local winemaking.

aurummead.com

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futuraediamonds.com

Local news

First exhibit for 87-year-old local artist

Rina Genis has lived in Possum Creek for more than 20 years, but her journey began in Amsterdam during World War II. At just five years old, she was placed in an orphanage and lived through the German occupation of Holland. Despite those difficult beginnings, she went on to build a rich and adventurous life centred on family, creativity and art.

Rina and her late husband, Fred Genis, were married for 63 years. After travelling to Australia on an immigration ship bound for Melbourne, Fred famously decided he had other plans. Rather than disembark into an immigration camp, he hid aboard the ship and continued on to Sydney.

Fred later established himself as one of Australia's most respected lithographers, collaborating with renowned artists including Brett Whiteley, John Olsen, Tim Storrier and Lloyd Rees. Having already built a successful career in America and Europe, Fred quickly found work in Australia's vibrant art scene when the family permanently migrated to Sydney in 1979 with their three daughters.

Rina's own artistic journey spans a lifetime. Her father was a restorer of classical paintings in Holland, and art was always part of her world. For 17 years she worked as a ceramic artist, creating pottery on a wheel in a cave studio on the family's bushland property in Sydney.

After retiring to Possum Creek, Rina developed an interest in watercolour painting. She was encouraged and mentored by the late Carol Cook, a founder of *Bangalow's Heartbeat* (precursor to this publication), who painted alongside her for two years.

Later, Rina discovered the art of mandalas. She found the process inspiring, challenging and deeply meditative. For the past seven years she has dedicated herself to creating intricate mandala artworks, exploring colour, symmetry and mindfulness through her practice.

Although Rina attended countless exhibitions throughout Fred's lithography career and met artists from around the world, this will be her first exhibition as an exhibiting artist.

True to her collaborative spirit, Rina chose not to hold a solo exhibition. Instead, she has invited fellow mandala artists to join her in a group exhibition celebrating creativity, connection and the shared joy of artistic expression.

At 87, Rina's exhibition is a testament to the idea that creativity has no age limit and that new chapters can begin at any stage of life.

The Mandala Collaboration Exhibition will open at Coorabell Hall on Friday 24 July at 5pm and continue through Saturday 25 July and Sunday 26 July.

You Beauty embraces its inner pub for winter

Bangalow's acclaimed You Beauty restaurant is taking a more relaxed approach this winter with a seasonal pop-up dubbed The You Beauty Inn. The 'hatted' restaurant will transform into a traditional neighbourhood pub-style designed to appeal to both locals and visitors.

While still delivering high quality service, the venue will adopt a more casual atmosphere, with daily trading, regular live music, footy on the big screen, additional beers on tap and a menu built around elevated pub favourites.

The winter menu features creative takes on pub classics, including fish pie, beer-battered pickles, a kangaroo scotch egg and a venison Big Mac. Signature You Beauty dishes, including the much-loved croc toast, will still be available.

Seasonal drinks include Kilkeny, Grifter and XXXX Gold on tap along with new house wines from Jilly Wines.

Bewdy, mate.

A new thread in our retail tapestry

There's a new yarn making its way around town, and this time it's quite literal. The Bangalow Yarn Shop is set to open on the main street, bringing yarns of colours, weights and textures, knitting supplies and plenty of inspiration to local makers. Judging by the excitement among knitters, crocheters and crafters, the venture is already spinning up plenty of interest.

Occupying the former home of Manu's Alimentari, the shop adds a niche and warmly welcomed offering to Bangalow's retail mix. The store will weave another colourful thread into the fabric of village life and offers the perfect opportunity to 'shop local' following the closure of big craft chain Lincraft.

Bangalow Pharmacy changes hands

Purveyors of pills, potions and high-end cosmetics, candles and ceramics - Bangalow Pharmacy - has recently changed hands. The store at 23 Byron Street, Bangalow has been continuously occupied by a pharmacy since the early 1900s and the new owners are excited to continue this legacy.

We wish Angela Wertheim all the best for her next adventure and welcome Jacqueline, Wesley and family to our village. Pop in and say hi.



Welcome Jacqueline, Wesley, Fallon and Grayson to the Bangalow Pharmacy. We respect the service this pharmacy has given to the community for over 100 years and we are committed to maintaining the charm and tradition that this pharmacy upholds within the Bangalow village.

We hope to build upon its strong boutique foundations, preserving the aesthetic charm and community spirit that make Bangalow unique while continuing to deliver exceptional healthcare, personalised service, and wellness support for local families

Please come and introduce yourselves as we get to know our local residents and families.



www.bangalowpharmacy.com.au

A woman of many talents

In this profile of another member of *The Bangalow Herald* volunteer team, **Christobel Munson** delves into garden columnist **Carole Gamble's** past to explore the many facets of this wise and very capable woman.

What is it about gardens that turns you on, Carole?

Gardening, and particularly the planning and planting of gardens, is a creative outlet for me and a source of great pleasure. It is also hard work, but the joy of working beautiful, sweet-smelling soil is unbeatable.

Have you only worked with plants, or in gardens, all your life?

No, but it's been a theme over the years. For five years, in Perth where I grew up, I trained at Royal Perth Hospital to become a Registered Nurse, followed by two years as an air hostess with TAA. (We weren't 'flight attendants' or 'cabin crew' in those days.) For a couple of years, as a pilot project for a local council, I ran a day-care centre for older people in Hawthorn, Melbourne. And with a friend, I had a shop and landscaping business and later completed a two-year course in horticulture at Alexandra Hills TAFE in Brisbane, as I had dipped my toe into Burnley Horticultural College at that time.

Didn't you sink your teeth into hospitality, too, at one point?

Yes. In 1982, with my then husband, we went to the NSW Hunter region and bought a restaurant in East Maitland and a convict-built coach house called the Red Lion Inn, dating from the 1860s. We hired a chef and half the town as we went there for 'lifestyle! We were so naïve. We had wanted a regional experience for our three sons. It was an incredible time, but like many others in hospitality, our marriage didn't survive and neither did the restaurant. Never take restaurants for granted!

Your interest in the food and beverage industry didn't end there, did it?

Not at all. In Brisbane, for five years I worked for a man who had five hotels. For him I set up and ran a wine club in the hotels, including hosting winemakers' dinners, advertising and training staff. Next, I was persuaded to join the wholesale side of wines so became a sales rep for a large company and later ran a wholesale wine company in Queensland. Who wouldn't love that job! Travelling quite widely, including to island resorts, setting up wine and food appreciation courses. It was well paid and fun, with fabulous products, food, wine and hospitality.

Once your boys had finished school, in what direction did your diverse skills take you then?

After doing a registration upgrade, I became an oncology nurse, working for six years at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and then the Mater Private Hospital. I loved it! Everything

from acute oncology to palliative care. I had to learn fast as it was really challenging, no room for hesitation or error but great to be part of the medical treating teams.

So when did you become interested in plants and gardens?

When we bought our first house in Hawthorn in 1973, the Victorian villa was divided into three flats and it was very dilapidated. It had no garden, only uncut grass which had been neglected for years. The bonus was that year in, year out weeds had grown and fallen, leaving a marvellous legacy of high-quality humus-rich topsoil. Inspired by a neighbour's lovely garden, I created an informal cottage garden. My interest in gardens hasn't waned since then.

At what point did you move to the Byron Shire?

A couple of years before Christopher and I moved to the area, we bought 45 acres at Mullumbimby Creek. Once we moved down here, managing the land was a steep learning curve. It was my nirvana, really, with cattle, dams, a creek and even a waterfall.

We've now moved onto a quarter acre on a hill just outside Mullumbimby (and I have a happier, more relaxed husband). It still feels like the country, and I've added to the lovely garden created by Belinda and Clive Jeffery. My favourites? The weeping melaleuca and lots of grevilleas, and perennials for flowers. I can't understand that people can be alive



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Carole Gamble in her natural habitat Photo Christobel Munson

and not garden. They are missing the joys of hands in the dirt and watching the evolution of their plantings. It is inspiring and a sort of therapy too; the connection with nature is not to be surpassed!

When did you join *The Herald* team?

I am so grateful to Judy Baker who invited me to join the team in 2019. I love having the opportunity to share plants, writing, photography and a little bit of knowledge in this special publication.

Goes with the terroir-istry

As it happened, while this story was being prepared, Carole was in bottle shop The Cellar, Bangalow, when a bottle of fine wine fell from her hands and, sadly, smashed.

On duty that day was Pippa Vickery, *The Bangalow Herald's* Advertising manager. As Carole made her apologies, the two discovered that both came from Western Australia. And both had a love of wine. Putting two and two together, they came up with the idea that there may be other Sandgropers out there living in our area who would be interested in a wine tasting, specifically for those who enjoy W.A. wines. This could be followed by wine celebrations from other States, and New Zealand.

If the idea of a specific wine-tasting from those parts appeals to you, then please directly contact either Pippa at advertising@bangalowherald.com.au or Carole at cazzabul@bigpond.net.au

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Megan Kearney, vet nurse Ashley Garratt, Jodi Ruckley, Kim Simpson, with Ernie Photos Digby Hildreth

Vet clinic revitalised

One year on from the official opening of the Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital, co-founder **Dr Megan Kearney** has returned to revitalise her original veterinary clinic in Bangalow. **Digby Hildreth** reports.

Vitality Vetcare, which Megan founded in 2010, is again operating as a five-day-a-week primary care general practice, as well as providing a service for clients seeking an integrated approach to treatment – a blend of ‘alternative’ and the mainstream.

“We were three days a week, acting as more of a secondary referral for holistic therapies, but clients really wanted us to also be there

as a primary care vet,” says practice manager Kim Simpson.

Megan returns to the Bangalow clinic having spent much of the past year focussed on establishing the Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital in Wollongbar, an enterprise that she and Kim once dreamed about, laughing that anyone would have to be crazy to undertake such a venture.

Now it’s a reality, and its services are in big demand. Since its official opening in July 2025, the hospital has treated some 2,000 animals, among them, miraculously, a rare spotted-tailed quoll.

Megan’s connection with Bangalow goes back a long way. As a veterinary student in the 1980s she did ‘prac work’ with 2479’s sole and

much-loved vet Greg Plummer in Newrybar. After graduating, she worked in Alice Springs and spent many years in the UK, diversifying her skill set. When she returned to Australia in 2005, she remembered thinking how ideal Bangalow would be to live and have a practice, so she bought a lot in Ballina Road and had the Vitality Vetcare clinic custom-built.

Kim arrived in 2013, with an extensive background as a vet nurse caring for wildlife at the Healesville Sanctuary in Victoria, and then at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital. The value of that experience – and the acute need for specialised wildlife care demanded by the drought of 2019, and fires and floods in the region – persuaded Megan to broaden her veterinary capabilities even further. “I realised that I needed more skills than I had,” she says.

She embarked upon a Masters of Veterinary Studies in Conservation Medicine, where the focus is on the interrelationship between human, animal and ecological health. Prophetically, her final project for that degree was on the feasibility of opening a wildlife hospital in the Northern Rivers.

Megan’s interest in the complementary approach, including nutrition, began during her early vet training, stimulated by the work of English herbalist and veterinarian Juliette de Bairacli Levy, often called the ‘grandmother of holistic veterinary medicine’.

Another influence was Dr Ian Billingham, a veterinary surgeon and Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner regarded as ‘the father of raw feeding’, who wrote the book *Give Your Dog a Bone*.

Wanting to learn more, Megan travelled to England to study Western herbal medicine “where the plants grew”, and ended up at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, living in a bender in the woods, about the time the US Air Force was moving its nuclear missiles from the site.

“I spent a lot of time walking in the woods, between hedgerows, getting to learn and feel the plants where they grow, the environments they like to be in,” she says. She studied veterinary acupuncture and worked with one of the first vets in the UK to use it. There was also training at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital, and a two-year course at the related Faculty of Homeopathy, qualifying as a human herbalist. For her qualification she had to complete 500 clinical hours with human patients, which led to a revelation: “I discovered, after that time, that actually I quite like people after all,” she says, laughing.

She still works with humans, offering Brennan healing, a combination of body-based psychotherapy and energy healing, and integrates it into her day-to-day work with animals.

The demand for the alternative approach extends far beyond Bangalow, with clients from Coffs Harbour, the Gold Coast and even Brisbane.

"People often want to minimise the amount of drugs used, or if their pets are on chemotherapy, for example, learn ways to support their immune system and their gut and overall health and wellbeing at the same time."

As part of the re-boost at Vitality Vetcare, Dr Jodi Ruckley has come on board. Skilled in the use of Western herbs and Australian Bush Flower Essences, she is also one of the few vets in Australia who's qualified as a veterinary osteopath. The hands-on technique works with the body, adjusting soft tissue, and helping elderly pets with their mobility and quality of life.

"Osteopathy can address some of the mental and emotional issues too," Megan says. "A lot of these therapies have some sort of energetic component. They're all about stimulating the body's own homeostatic mechanism so that the body can heal itself."

Kim's faith in the integrative approach was strengthened by the experience of treating her own old Devon Rex cat, Yoko, which had serious kidney disease. "We did Chinese herbs and acupuncture in her last year. I've never seen a cat with such terrible kidney disease live such a good life. For me, that was a really incredible experience. Megan was able to support Yoko's body in a way that gave her a good quality of life, until the moment she was ready to go."

It's not only pets and wildlife that benefit from Dr Megan's broad approach to healing: her staff report that her care and compassion have helped them too.

"What Megan's created has such a beautiful feel that changed my life in a lot of ways," Kim says. "She's helped me grow a lot as a person, and I think it's reflected in how our patients walk through the door."

Megan is happy to be back focussing on the Bangalow clinic. "Vitality has always been part of the Bangalow community, and we love being part of that community," she says.

That engagement ranges from setting up a hospital for horses in the Showground during the 2022 floods to having a Vitality team regularly competing in the Billy Cart Derby.

"We took it in turns to drive," Megan says. Nowadays, though she can accomplish many miraculous things for many species, she's given up steering a fragile wheeled contraption along a road at high speed. "I'm not sure I can fling myself down the hill anymore," she says.



Megan mixes tonics and tinctures to treat animals at her Bangalow clinic



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.

Flashlight by Susan Choi

The Byron Bay Writers Festival recently sponsored a conversation with Susan Choi, the author of my book for this month. I didn't attend, but it piqued my interest in reading the book.

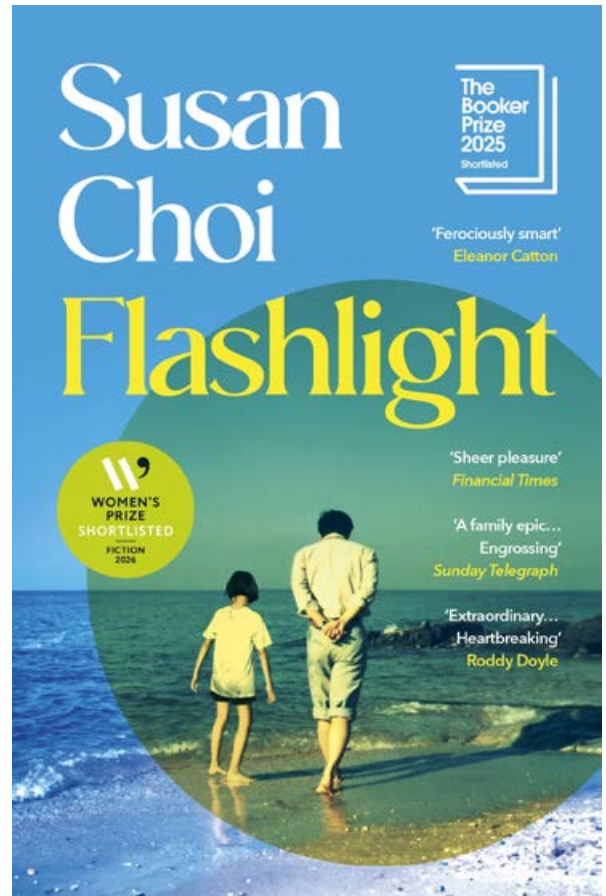
The heart of this story is driven by the father of this dysfunctional small family. He is known by several names: Seok, Serk and Hiroshi. His place of birth is Jeju Island, but his parents move the family to Japan when he is very young to escape the poverty of South Korea. They are dirt-poor in Japan also and, after World War II, the Japanese refused to give citizenship to Koreans.

By the time Serk is a student in his late teens, there is a lot of propaganda circulating in Japan encouraging Koreans to come to North Korea for a better life. His mother and father decide to return and take the youngest of his brothers and sisters with them. Serk pleads with them not to leave and they plead with him to come with them. He and his sister remain in Japan as Resident Aliens and, from that point on, Serk does not acknowledge his family.

After graduating with high distinction from technical college, he successfully applies to study in the US, where they are looking for scientists, engineers and mathematicians with good English. His American wife, Anne, is also estranged from her family because of a teenage relationship with a married man which had resulted in a pregnancy and adoption.

Anne meets Hiroshi several days after he has arrived in the US. Their only child, Louisa, is born after they marry and is the source of much angst in their relationship. Serk is an overprotective father, and Anne wants her child to have a normal childhood. There is an underlying competition for the child's affection.

When Louisa is 10 years old, Serk returns to Japan for a few months on a job exchange program. He takes the family with him, but the marriage is not good and Anne is suffering from a mysterious illness which restricts her movement. They decide to take a holiday house at the beach and, one evening as the sun is setting, Serk and Louisa take a walk on the breakwater opposite the holiday house. Several hours later, Louisa is found on the sand barely alive, but Serk's body has been swallowed by the sea.



This book is an excellent family saga spanning many decades, with some great characters, complex relationships and some interesting material about the history of Japan, Korea and China after the end of World War II. It was shortlisted for the 2025 Booker Prize and I really enjoyed the depth of it.

Goodreads rating: 3.9 stars

Publisher: Penguin Random House

Carolyn Adams



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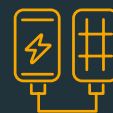
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French Onion Soup

As the weather turns colder, there is nothing more comforting than soup served in a bread bowl.

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large Dutch oven or pot, heat the butter and olive oil over medium heat.

Cook the onions and thyme in the butter and oil mixture for 15 minutes. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon.

Reduce the heat and add the minced garlic, cooking for an extra 10 minutes. Stir consistently until the onions are soft and caramelised.

Add the flour, vinegar and Worcestershire sauce. Stir well and cook for 5 minutes more.

Add the broth and seasonings and cook for a further 10 minutes.

Increase the heat to medium-high and simmer the soup for 8–10 minutes. Check the seasoning.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 6 medium yellow onions (*julienned*)
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tsp all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp red wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 6 cups broth of your choice (*I used beef*)
- 1 tsp salt (*to taste*)
- 1/2 tsp pepper (*to taste*)

For serving

- 4 bread bowls (*see note*)
- 4 slices Mozzarella cheese (*optional*)
- 3/4 cup Gruyere or Mozzarella, shredded
- Fresh thyme or herbs of your choice

Note

To serve in bread bowls: Preheat the oven to 180°C. Using a serrated knife, slice the tops off four bread rolls and set aside. Scoop out some of the soft bread from the centre of each roll, leaving a sturdy shell to hold the soup. Place a slice of Mozzarella cheese in the base of each bread bowl and bake for 3–5 minutes, or until the cheese begins to melt. Ladle the hot soup into the bread bowls, top with grated cheese and return to the oven for 2–3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbling. Garnish with fresh thyme or herbs of your choice and serve immediately.

Illustration and recipe by Lyn Hand

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The wonderfully fragrant boronia Photo Carole Gamble

Many boronias are prized for their scent. The fragrance is often described as sweet, citrusy and spicy, with hints of violet, honey and fruit. Some species are so aromatic that simply brushing past them releases their perfume. The Western Australian species brown boronia (*Boronia megastigma*) is cultivated commercially for the perfume industry. Its extract, known as boronia absolute, is one of Australia's most valuable fragrance ingredients and is used in high-end perfumes around the world.

Taming the diva

This month **Carole Gamble** turns her attention to one of Australia's most beautiful – and demanding – native plants, the pink boronia.

Sometimes described by defeated growers as 'the Diva', *Boronia muelleri*, also known as *Boronia pinnata* var. *muelleri*, is a flowering bush native to parts of Victoria and southern NSW.

Naturally found in woodlands and forests, it is best attempted in containers when cultivated out of its preferred environment.

Boronia has pinnate foliage (arranged either side of each stem) and pink and white five-petaled flowers that appear on peduncles (small terminal branches with

the flowers at the tips), flowering profusely during spring and summer.

Usually offered for sale when flowering, it should be pruned back (it is great as a vase specimen) before planting in a potting mix suitable for native plants, mixed with sand and perlite to provide a light and very well-drained medium. They hate 'wet feet', so the pot must be elevated to allow free drainage.

Boronia tend to be shallow-rooted and the soil mix should be topped with either gravel or sand to a thickness of about five centimetres. Watering must be consistent and the plant should never be allowed to completely dry out. Position it in dappled shade or morning sun.

The top dressing will keep the shallow roots cool and, in dappled shade or with only morning sun, help prevent scorching of the foliage, which could cause stress.

If all of this hasn't put you off, this lovely plant will reward you with profuse flowering and beautifully perfumed foliage. The challenge of nurturing plants out of their usual environment can be really worthwhile, especially if you do your best to reproduce the original conditions, which is why container growing is preferred in this case.

So, perhaps this can be our gardeners' challenge when they appear in good nurseries in the spring!

Arts and about

HSBC Spanish & Latin American Film Festival 2026

The HSBC Spanish & Latin American Film Festival returns for its 29th year with a vibrant program of more than 30 films from Spain, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Brazil and beyond. This year's line-up includes acclaimed dramas, thrillers, romantic comedies, documentaries and inspiring true stories. Audiences can journey from the culinary worlds of Peru and São Paulo to the dance halls that gave rise to salsa in New York, all without leaving their cinema seat. A celebration of contemporary Spanish and Latin American storytelling, culture and cinema.

When until 12 July, various sessions

Where Palace Cinema, Byron Bay

Tickets/info spanishfilmfestival.com

The Still Point

This collaborative exhibition between local photographers Bijou Lilly and Kojiro Oishi present a series of images that invite viewers to pause and reconsider the landscape of the Northern Rivers that we so often move through without noticing. In an age saturated with digital imagery, the exhibition offers a quiet counterpoint – a meditation on seeing, presence, and the depth that exists beyond surface beauty. Working with 8mm, 35mm, and 120mm film cameras, one artist in black and white and the other in colour, each has a distinct way of perceiving and recording place. Free entry.

When Opening 5pm Friday 17 July, on exhibition 18 July – 15 August

Where Lone Goat Gallery, Byron Bay

Info lonegoatgallery.com/exhibitions/the-still-point



Abuela Tremenda (My Amazing Grandma) part of the Spanish and Latin American Film Festival

Bad Romance – dance theatre

Inspired by the music, masks and mayhem of Lady Gaga, *Bad Romance* is a high-energy dance theatre production from Naidu Theatre Company in collaboration with Woolgoolga Performing Arts Studio. Eight performers take audiences into a world of alter egos, where identities collide and the line between performance and reality begins to blur. Featuring reimagined versions of Gaga's biggest hits, striking visuals and powerful choreography, the production explores self-expression, transformation and authenticity with plenty of attitude and theatrical flair. Suitable for all ages.

When Saturday 25 July, 7.30-9.15pm

Where Byron Theatre

Tickets/info byroncentre.com.au

Michael Sharmon and Sally Schofield

The Diary of Anne Frank

One of the most powerful and enduring stories of the twentieth century comes to the stage as Lismore Theatre Company presents *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Adapted from Anne Frank's world-famous diary, the play follows Anne, her family and four others as they hide from the Nazis in a secret annex during World War II. Through Anne's wit, courage and optimism, this moving production offers a deeply personal insight into one of history's darkest periods while celebrating the resilience of the human spirit.

When 24 July – 2 August

Where Rochdale Theatre, Lismore

Tickets/info lismoretheatrecompany.org.au

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Songs for one night

Local singer-songwriter and guitarist Luke Bennett Photo supplied

Sometimes the biggest opportunities arrive looking exactly like junk mail.

When singer-songwriter and guitarist Luke Bennett spotted an unexpected email from someone called Jamie Birrell buried in his spam folder, he nearly ignored it. The sender's address didn't exactly scream theatre producer or creative visionary.

"I remember his email address was something like Birrell Brothers Micro Packaging," Luke laughs. "It was the sort of thing you would normally ignore."

Fortunately, curiosity got the better of him.

The email had come via a recommendation from local musician Mark Ridout and invited Luke to consider joining a new NORPA production called *Love for One Night*. At the time, Luke wasn't even sure he was interested.

"I was kind of on the fence about it, to be honest," he says. "I thought there could be other people better suited to the role."

Like many musicians hearing the words "theatre production", Luke imagined sitting in an orchestra pit, largely hidden from view while accompanying the action on stage.

What he couldn't have known was that the invitation would lead not only to one of the most memorable productions in recent Northern Rivers theatre history, but also to creative partnerships that continue more than four years later.

The original *Love for One Night* production was unlike anything audiences had seen before. Premiering at the Eltham Hotel from 8–24 September 2022, it transformed the familiar country pub into a living theatre set where stories unfolded across balconies, rooms and courtyards beneath the stars. The production arrived at a time when the Northern Rivers was still recovering from the devastating floods and NORPA itself was rebuilding after losing access to its home at Lismore City Hall. The wider community was starting to feel its way into a 'new normal' following the pandemic lockdowns.

Luke joined drummer Ben Cox and musical director Jamie Birrell in what was initially a hastily assembled band created specifically for the show.

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Formed for NORPA's *Love for One Night* in 2022, the Birrell Bros Band (here at the Newrybar Hall) has taken on a life of its own. Photo Sally Schofield

The first rehearsal took place at SAE Creative Media Institute while NORPA was still operating from temporary facilities post-flood.

"That was when I met Ben and Jamie properly," Luke recalls. "We played through some songs and I realised, 'Yeah, I can do this'."

What emerged wasn't simply a backing band. The musicians became part of the storytelling itself.

Love for One Night centres around a series of intertwined love stories unfolding inside a country pub. The band provided not only the soundtrack but also much of the atmosphere, performing classic pub songs and weaving themselves into the fabric of the show.

"It was the idea that what's an Aussie pub scene without a pub band?" says Luke. The musicians occupied the stage, interacted with the actors and, in Luke's case, even stepped into speaking parts. "I ended up doing some acting in the show, which I'd never done before."

For audiences, the combination proved magical. The pub itself became a character. Stories unfolded in multiple directions. Music drifted through the venue while actors appeared in windows, doorways and balconies.

Looking back, Luke believes the site-specific nature of the production was central to its success. "Being under the stars and being at that pub was such a novelty for people. They didn't really know what to expect."

One musical moment remains particularly memorable for many audience members: the band's rendition of Neil Young's *Harvest Moon*. The song became closely associated with the production, drifting through the hotel as actor Claire Atkins' character moved through the story. "It was based on this Poolside version," Luke explains. "A more loungey, lo-fi interpretation."

For many locals, it became one of those rare theatrical moments where music, place and story aligned perfectly.

What none of the cast could have predicted was the scale of the response. By the end of the run, almost 4,000 people had experienced the show either in person or through an online streaming event. What began as an ambitious piece of site-specific theatre became one of NORPA's most successful productions.

The chemistry between Luke, Ben and Jamie was immediately obvious. On stage they looked and sounded like a seasoned pub band. The audiences didn't know that the musicians had barely played together before rehearsals began.

The collaboration could easily have ended when the production closed but instead, it became the foundation for something new and just as inspiring.

When pop-up pub choir Shire Choir, led by Melia Naughton and Jamie Birrell, was looking for a live band to support its hugely popular community singing events, the choice felt obvious. The musicians who had convincingly portrayed a pub band in *Love for One Night* became an actual pub band.

Over the following years, the Birrell Brothers Band became a familiar presence at Shire Choir events at the Bangalow Hotel, helping hundreds of people discover the joy of singing together.

Their role extended beyond Bangalow. Following the 2022 floods, the band accompanied Shire Choir on a tour of regional halls, bringing communities together through music at a time when many people needed it most.

The connections formed during *Love for One Night* continued well beyond the production. Ben and Jamie later played on tracks for one of Luke's EPs. Luke, Jamie and Melia performed together in other formats. Ben and Melia, along with Elodie Crowe, went on to form kids' music group The Gumboots. New creative collaborations emerged organically in every direction.

Now, as *Love for One Night* returns, Luke finds himself back where it all began, with Ben on the drums and a new musical director leading the band.

Sometimes opportunity arrives as almost unnoticed, sent by a micro packaging company you've never heard of, inviting you to take a chance on something you can't quite imagine.

In this case, a much-loved theatre production and a musical partnerships that have taken on a creative life of their own. "You just never know where something is going to lead," says Luke.

Love for One Night
27 August to 12 September
Eltham Hotel
norpa.org.au/events/love-for-one-night

Sally Schofield



Launching *Raised by Wolves* at the Book Room Byron Bay Photo Amber Melody

Raised by Wolves

As Byron Writers Festival approaches, local author **Tristan Bancks** shares with *Herald* readers an extract of his latest book for readers aged 10 years+, *Raised by Wolves*, a story inspired by adventure, resilience and the complexities of growing up.

Mr Wolf 3.07pm

Olive knows the man is watching her even before she wipes the foggy classroom window. Cars and buses build up out front for the end of school; a van passes, splashing through a puddle, and as water sprays in a high arc, her eyes are drawn to the shape of him, leaning against a power pole. Her breath hitches and she leans in, wiping the window again, fingers squeaking on cold glass. He looks skinny with a scraggly beard and a shaved head. He wears black jeans and a black t-shirt. He stands in the rain with no umbrella and he stares directly at her.

A bus goes by, obscuring her view for a moment. Another bus passes right on the tail of the first, then another as the bell rings and kids start to pack up.

'Chairs on tables, please,' Ms Ridgeway calls over the clatter. 'Please read the intro to chapter seventeen by second period tomorrow. Have a good afternoon.'

By the time the third bus is gone, he's gone, too. Olive feels a hot rush from her chest to her throat, making it hard to swallow. She

wants to call her brother, Ben, but he won't believe her.

'Hey,' says a voice from the desk behind.

Olive turns. It's Arya, who seems to want to be friends with her, though Olive can't understand why.

'Do you want to come over to my place this afternoon? Some of us are gonna hang out.'

Olive looks out the window again. He's nowhere to be seen.

Say yes, she thinks. Don't go home alone. But the words are out before she can talk herself around.

'Nah, thanks. I'm okay. I've got something I need to do.'

Arya looks deflated. 'O-kay.'

It's not the first time this has happened. Arya must think Olive has a really busy social life. Or that she has heaps of other friends.

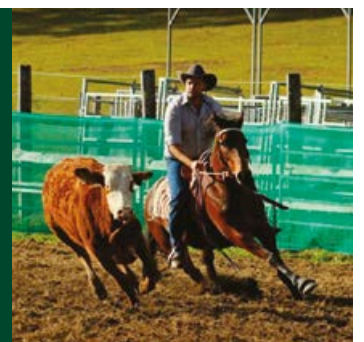
Arya and the rest of the class head for the door but Olive stays, scanning the street for her dad.



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'Are you okay?' a faraway voice asks. 'Huh?'

'You look like you've seen a ghost,' Ms Ridgeway says, approaching Olive's desk. She has dark curly hair, lots of necklaces and a worried smile.

Maybe I have, Olive thinks. 'Are you okay?' the teacher asks again.

'Thriving,' Olive says, scrunching her maths exam paper into her bag on top of her library books. The paper has a green A in a circle and a smiley face.

'Have you had a think about Extension yet?'

Olive takes a last look out the window. Students pour out the doors below, flooding the gate. Cars are at a standstill in the street, wipers swishing, waiting for kids to cross. But no Dad.

'I'm all good,' Olive says, heading for the door. Ben'll know what to do, she thinks.

'You could be very good,' Ms Ridgeway says. 'I don't want to pressure you, but if you don't do the foundational work now . . .'

Or should I call Mum? Olive wonders. No. She'll freak.

'Olive?'

'Huh?' She stops in the doorway. Kids swarm by in the corridor, chatting, laughing, loud.

'Did you hear any of what I just said?' the teacher asks, tilting her head to the side, necklaces rattling.

'Yeah. I'm sorry. I'll think about it. Thank you.'

She heads out into the corridor, taking the stairs down two at a time, dodging a thousand kids who tower over her and act like the world hasn't just been tipped on its side. She bursts through the double doors of E Block and pulls her hood up against wind and rain, half expecting him to jump out and grab her.

Or hug her. Was it him? After all this time?

Olive pulls out her ancient, hand-me-down phone and calls Ben. It rings and rings. Cold rain trickles from her hand into the arm of her hoodie and down to her elbow, but she barely notices.

Maybe Dad just wants to say sorry, she thinks. She has dreamed that he would show up one day and be so sorry for what he's done that he would, somehow, make it up to her and Ben and Mum. This dream feels a bit like when Nan used to talk about winning twenty million in Lotto and buying a house on the harbour.

She ends the call and dials again, spilling out the gate onto the wide footpath in front of Parent Pickup – a service Olive has never needed to use. She scans faces in cars, but it's hard with rain pouring and wipers thrashing. The phone goes to voicemail. 'You've called Ben. Leave a –'

She hits end. It's impossible to get hold of him at the academy.

Five years. Why would Dad come back now? Maybe I'm seeing things again.

She used to see Dad around all the time. Or think she did. For the first two years after he took off from the cops, Olive thought she saw him every few days. Ben and Mum never believed her.

Olive bustles along, wiping rain from her eyes, scouring the street for him. He looks different now with his head shaved, but she's sure it was him. She hated Dad when she was little. She used to call him Maugrim, the evil wolf from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. She was small and white-blond and tough back then. She is still small but her hair's darker and she's nowhere near as tough.

Buses and cars amble past as she rushes along the footpath toward the intersection. One of her fears is walking home and Dad snatching her off the street, pulling her into a car. Another fear is that he wouldn't care enough to bother. She also worries that she will come home after school and find him in the apartment, which is why she checks every room with a knife.

At the intersection of School Road and the old highway, cars splash through the lights, even after they turn red. Olive searches for Dad's face in the cars and on the street. She tries Ben again and he picks up first ring.

'What?!' he snaps. 'Sorry.' 'What do you need?' Now that he's angry, Olive is afraid to say it.

'You know I'm not supposed to use my phone,' he says. 'What do you need?'

'I . . .'

The words are stuck somewhere between her brain and her mouth. She doesn't want to upset him. Or hear that note in his voice that shows he doesn't believe her, that he thinks it's just like before when she was an annoying little sister, desperate to see her dad no matter who he was or what he'd done.

If she tells him, Ben will ask, Where is he now? and Olive won't know. And Ben's an hour-and-a-half away, so what's the point? It's not like he'll just come home.

'Olive?' Ben says, frustrated. 'Are you all right?' 'Yeah,' she says.

'I gotta go.' His voice is a whisper now. 'They're calling us. Love you, kid.'

And he's gone. 'Love you,' she says to no one.

Cars rip by on the old highway. A siren wails. Olive searches for signs of Dad but sees nothing. She knows she should drop this. No good can come from finding him. But once Olive gets an idea in her head, it's hard for her not to follow through. She edges from foot to foot, wondering whether to go home or back to school and wait it out in the library. Or to Mum's work.

She looks behind, then up ahead, then diagonally across the old highway. That's when she sees him.

***Raised by Wolves* by Tristan Bancks is out now through Penguin.**

Established in 2019, Kindred Women Together continues to connect women within our community through social gatherings and events. Join one of our KWT Clubs to meet other like-minded women. Visit our website to see what is coming up. New women are always welcome!

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Farewell to 'Mr Big Scrub'

The Northern Rivers has lost one of its most passionate environmental champions with the passing of Dr Tony Parkes AO on 11 June.

Known to many simply as 'Mr Big Scrub', Tony devoted more than three decades to restoring and protecting the region's precious rainforest. Through his vision, determination and ability to bring people together, he helped inspire one of Australia's most successful community conservation movements.

The Big Scrub Foundation, which Tony founded and later chaired, described his contribution as an extraordinary legacy that "will continue to shape rainforest restoration and conservation for generations to come".

While his environmental achievements were substantial, Tony never presented himself as a lone crusader. Throughout his life he spoke warmly of the many volunteers, scientists, landholders and community members who shared the work.

After a successful international career in science, business and investment banking, Tony and his late wife Rowena returned to a scrubby 105-acre property on Friday Hut Road at Binna Burra. What followed became the defining chapter of his life.

Concerned by the continued loss of the Big Scrub rainforest, Tony helped organise a public meeting at Clunes in 1993.

"We held a public meeting at Clunes in 1993, and 120 people showed up," he told *The Bangalow Herald* in 2023. "We formed the Big Scrub Rainforest Landcare Group. I was elected President, and we adopted the mission to help save the Big Scrub and its magnificent biodiversity."

From those beginnings, the organisation grew into what is now the Big Scrub Rainforest Conservancy and later the Big Scrub

Foundation. Over the following decades, more than 2.5 million trees were planted and hundreds of hectares of rainforest restored across the region.

In recognition of his contribution, Tony was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2019 for distinguished service to the environment through the restoration of endangered rainforest in northern New South Wales.

Yet accolades were never what seemed to motivate him. When asked about the most important lesson life had taught him, his answer was characteristically simple: "To be optimistic."

That optimism was grounded in a lifelong love of the natural world. Growing up at Sandy Bay, Hobart, he spent his childhood exploring bushland, sailing and fishing on the Derwent estuary. "I was a biophile and always had an immense connection with the environment," he said.

Friends and colleagues often spoke of Tony's ability to inspire others through enthusiasm rather than instruction. He had a gift for helping people see what could be achieved if enough individuals worked towards a common goal.

Even in his later years, his focus remained firmly on the future. He was particularly excited by emerging scientific approaches to rainforest conservation and the possibility of preventing threatened species from disappearing forever.

"How many people, after a career in business and investment banking, can turn around and have the opportunity to help save a beautiful and endangered rainforest?" he reflected. "Plus the joy and satisfaction of what we've achieved."



The late Tony Parkes in front of a painting by his wife of 67 years, Rowena. Photo supplied

For all his environmental work, Tony often spoke most fondly about family, particularly his relationship with his wife Rowena. "My marriage with Rowena was based on love, mutual respect and great communications," he said. "As a result, our relationship was made in heaven. I adored her, till the day she died."

In one of his final reflections shared with *The Herald*, Tony spoke about the rainforest surrounding his home at Binna Burra, much of it regenerated through decades of careful work. "It's incredibly beautiful," he said. "I feel connected, at one with the natural world. That has a favourable impact on your health and outlook on life."

Tony leaves behind his children Richard, Katrina and Abigail, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild, a grateful community and the ancient rainforest he spent more than three decades helping return to life. Few people are fortunate enough to leave the world greener than they found it. Tony Parkes was one of them.

The Bangalow Herald

A public farewell and celebration of the life of Dr Tony Parkes AO will be held Friday 10 July, 1.30pm at the A & I Hall, Station Street, Bangalow.

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Ruth Ryan: A champion of artists and community

For nearly a quarter of a century, **Ruth Ryan** and Barebones Art Space were at the heart of Bangalow's creative life. **Michael Sharmon** pays tribute to a woman whose encouragement, honesty and generosity helped shape a generation of Northern Rivers creatives.

For 24 years, Ruth Ryan was a familiar and much-loved presence in Bangalow. As founder of Barebones Art Space, she provided a platform for countless artists, helped shape the town's cultural life and became a valued member of the community.

Established in 1994, Barebones Art Space quickly became one of the Northern Rivers' most respected galleries. Although trained and employed in radiology, Ruth devoted much of her life to supporting artists and fostering creativity. Together with her daughter Karen, she created a welcoming gallery that became both a cultural hub and a meeting place for locals and visitors alike.

Northern Rivers artist Karena Wynn-Moylan remembers Ruth as someone who instinctively understood the creative life. "When you walked into Barebones, you knew you were dealing with people who had lived and breathed art for years," she says. "They came from an art family and knew what artists needed."

Over the years, Barebones exhibited the work of many established and emerging artists, offering encouragement, opportunities and informed guidance. For many creatives, Ruth's support came at a pivotal stage in their careers.

That support was accompanied by a sharp wit and a clear artistic vision. Karena recalls that while Ruth was generous with her encouragement, she was never afraid to express an opinion. One of her favourite sayings was, "Don't bring me any foetus art," a tongue-in-cheek reference to artistic trends she felt had become overdone. The remark became part of Barebones folklore and reflected Ruth's belief that artists should strive for originality rather than follow fashions.

Despite her strong opinions, artists valued Ruth's honesty. They knew her feedback came from decades of experience and a genuine desire to see creative work flourish.

Beyond the gallery, Ruth was deeply involved in community life, serving as President of the Bangalow CWA and contributing to numerous local organisations and events. Alongside Karen, she became a well-known and respected figure whose generosity and commitment helped strengthen the fabric of the town. Many will remember the pair's involvement in community initiatives, including the much-loved Cabaret da Desh, where they worked tirelessly behind the scenes to help bring people together.

In 2018, after 24 years in Bangalow, Ruth and Karen relocated Barebones to Swansea, Tasmania, where they established a new gallery and rejoined family, including her son, artist Robert Ryan. While the move marked the end of an era for many in the Northern Rivers arts community, it also began a successful new chapter for the family.

Ruth's influence extended far beyond the walls of her gallery. In 2013, artist Caitlin Franzmann painted her portrait, later exhibiting the work as a finalist in the Black Swan Prize for Portraiture. The portrait serves as a fitting tribute to a woman whose encouragement and support left a lasting impression on so many.

News of Ruth's passing prompted an outpouring of tributes from artists, former exhibitors and community members, reflecting the profound impact she had on



Bare to the bone (Ruth Ryan), 2013 by Robyn Sweaney, acrylic on linen
Photo Linda Cunningham, courtesy of the artist

the lives of those around her.

Asked what Ruth would be remembered for, Karena points to her generosity and unwavering support of others. "She was a great role model, particularly for younger women artists. She gave so much encouragement and advice."

Through Barebones, Ruth Ryan created far more than a gallery. She created opportunities, friendships and a sense of community. Her legacy lives on in the artists she championed, the cultural life she helped foster and the many people whose lives were enriched by her kindness and belief in the value of art.

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Have your say

Bangalow A&I Hall

Byron Shire Council is seeking community feedback on the future of Bangalow's historic A&I Hall, with a consultation focused on the venue's sound and lighting infrastructure.

For generations, the hall has been at the heart of village life. Built in 1911 as the pavilion for the annual Agriculture and Industry Show, it has served as a picture theatre, dance hall, wedding venue, community gathering place and even an emergency hospital during the 1919 influenza epidemic.

Today it hosts concerts, theatre productions, film screenings, festivals, school performances, public meetings and community celebrations. It is also home to many of the much-loved indoor attractions of the Bangalow Show, including the arts and crafts, flowers, cakes and preserves sections.

The consultation follows Council's decision in August 2025 to retire the volunteer-run Section 355 management model for nine community halls across the Shire, including the A&I Hall. The venue is now managed directly by Council, which is reviewing its facilities and equipment as part of the transition.

Community members can complete the online survey via the Byron Shire Council website. Consultation closes on 30 July.

Feedback can be submitted via an online form on the Byron Shire Council website. byron.nsw.gov.au/Recreation-Culture/Events-Venues/Feedback-on-Bangalow-A-I-Hall

Bangalow Palms development

Have your say on a proposed 23 townhouse development at 21 Ballina Road, Bangalow. A preliminary consultation process is being undertaken to inform the community about the proposed development and provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share their views before a development application is lodged. Feedback received during this process will be carefully considered and may assist in refining the proposal prior to submission to Byron Shire Council. The consultation seeks to foster early and transparent engagement, ensuring local knowledge and community perspectives are understood as part of the project planning process.

Find out more or make a submission at bangalowpalms.com.au
Submissions close 10 July.

Community

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

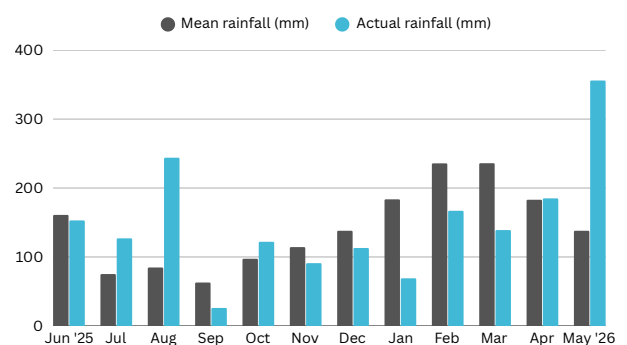
Sport

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

Venues

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

Bangalow Rainfall



Source: BOM daily rainfall data Nashua (Wilsons River) station 58162



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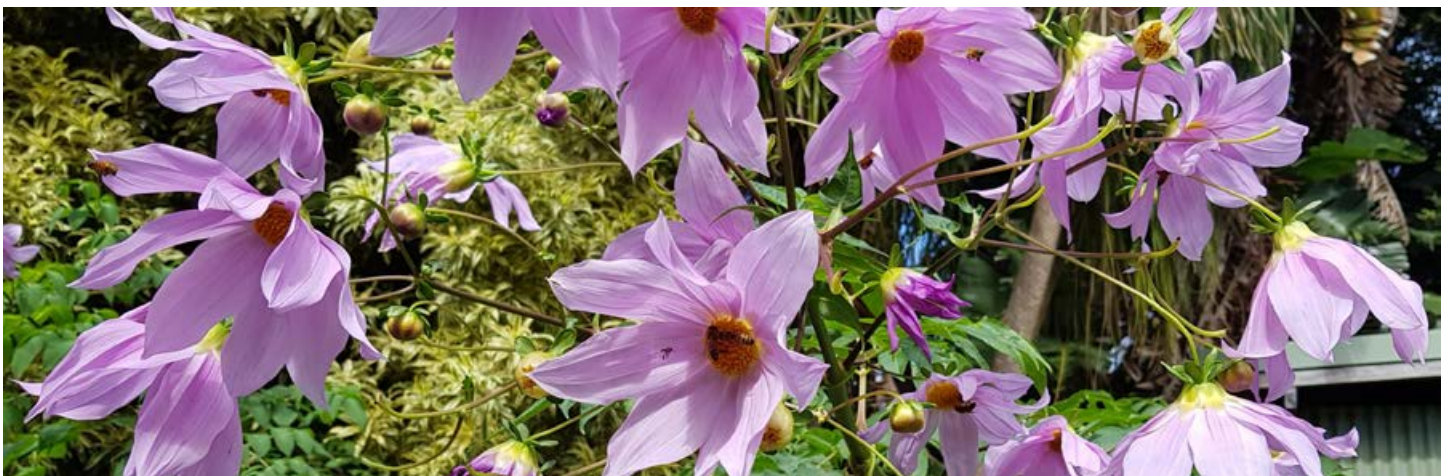
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Chips



Dr Airdre Grant reflects on modern café culture, activated breakfasts and the enduring appeal of a simple serve of chippies.

The man in the café asked for a croissant with Vegemite. When I remarked about this to my friend, he told me he had heard a request for toast with lamington and chilli sauce on top. Then the vegan at the table next door asked for broad beans in a plant-based sauce of coconut oil and organic greens, with sauerkraut for extra zing. Those vegans must have very zesty colons.

I overheard one of them ask if the café served ceremonial grade cacao. Oh boy. I looked at my choice. So ordinary. I'd asked for porridge and it came with a festive topping of bright blue and pink petals and a gay smattering of micro greens, all of which I had to painstakingly remove. The porridge was in a low flat bowl, so it became tepid very quickly.

My table mate requested the Rustic Breakfast of eggs, bacon and tomatoes. This came in an unreconstructed form, looking a little bit like sick, along with some sourdough that needed a wee chainsaw to cut through. His plate had a lip which meant he had to approach his dish vertically.

My plate of porridge (called Old Fashioned Overnight Oats) had gone cold and was no longer appetising. Clearly it was time for me to find a place that just did food. Regular food that had not been deconstructed or activated or rearranged to represent something. The best places, I knew, were where the tradies ate. There would be straightforward, reasonably priced food, served quickly and without fuss.

We left, my friend and I, and walked down the hill, past the shops selling Tibetan rugs and artisanal hemp-coloured clothing.

'Next time,' I said, 'let's go to the bakery. They make a terrific egg salad sandwich, and (I played an ace card) on white bread. Scones or lovely banana bread, that's hard to mess with. I think they do milkshakes as well.'

'You are a low-brow snob,' said my friend. 'You won't get tasty dumplings or delicious coffee there.'

'I know. Last time I went there, there was a picture of Queen Elizabeth wearing a tiara, a satin dress with a blue sash matched with a star brooch. I wonder if it's been replaced by a portrait of the King, looking sombre as he ponders the fate of the Commonwealth?'

'Mate,' said my friend. 'Get over yourself. Just go to places that serve food you like. Eat what's in front of you, without what you fancy is witty social commentary. Drop the attitude. Makes for a much easier life. Let's get some salty hot chips, lashings of tomato sauce, some beers and go and look at the waves.'

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What's on

Bangalow Garden Club

When Wednesday 1 July, 1.30pm
Where Moller Pavilion, Bangalow Showground
Tickets Annual membership \$25. Guests welcome.
Info bangalowgardenclub@outlook.com |
 Diana Harden 0418 288 428

Bangalow Garden Club welcomes gardeners of all experience levels to its monthly gathering. Members share their knowledge and enthusiasm for plants through regular activities including Flower of the Month, a plant auction, gardening Q&A and afternoon tea. The July meeting will feature guest speaker El from Wards Nursery, Mullumbimby. New members and visitors are welcome to attend and meet fellow garden enthusiasts. Please bring your own mug.

Coorabell Hall Film Club

When Wednesday 1 July, food and drinks from 6pm, film 7.30pm
Where Coorabell Hall,
 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell
Tickets Contact venue
Info coorabellhall.net | 0407 848 054

Coorabell Hall Film Club presents Pedro Almodóvar's acclaimed comedy-drama *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. Released in 1988, the film follows a television actress whose life spirals into a series of increasingly chaotic encounters after her lover unexpectedly leaves her. Known for its vibrant visual style, sharp humour and memorable characters, the film helped establish Almodóvar as one of Spain's most celebrated filmmakers. Food, drinks and a licensed bar will be available before the screening.

Mullumbimby Folk Orchestra

When Friday 3 July, from 6pm
Where Newrybar Hall
Tickets \$20
Info Facebook @ TheMullumFolk

The Mullumbimby Folk Orchestra will bring warmth to winter with a lively concert of folk tunes from around the world, directed and arranged by guitarist Mark Bromley. Audience members are invited to join in guided circle dances led by Anna Parker, making for an evening of music, movement, joy and connection. Amma Kitchen will be serving vegetarian meals from 6pm before the music begins at 7pm. A relaxed and welcoming way to start the weekend.

Friends of Libraries Byron Shire Book Fair

When Friday 10 July to Monday 13 July, 9am-4pm
Where Byron Bay Surf Club
Tickets Free admission
Info www.byronbayfol.com

The Friends of Libraries Byron Shire annual Book Fair returns with thousands of quality second-hand books available across four days. Run by the not-for-profit organisation supporting the libraries at Byron Bay, Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby, the popular event has been raising funds for local library services for more than a decade. Proceeds help fund new books, specialised programs and other resources that support local librarians and library users. Visitors can also take part in the fair's much-loved raffle.

Candlelit Winter Solstice at Pearce's Creek

When Sunday 12 July, 5pm
Where Pearce's Creek Hall
Tickets \$39.80
Info pearcescreekhall.com.au |
 @pearcescreekhall | 0458 801 941

Pearce's Creek Hall marks the winter solstice with an intimate evening of improvised music by candlelight. Harpist Lake Kelly joins cellist Lily Innis and clarinetist Katy L Bedford for a performance exploring atmosphere, texture and spontaneity. Between them, the trio has performed at major venues including GOMA, the MCA and the ARIA Awards, and alongside artists such as Delta Goodrem, Andy Shauf and Folk Bitch Trio. Tea and cake will be served as part of the evening.

Mandala Exhibition

When Friday 24 - Sunday 26 July
Where Coorabell Hall,
 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive, Coorabell
Tickets Free entry
Info coorabellhall.net | 0407 848 054

Artists Bina Genis, Zimmi Forest and Sonja Davies come together for a weekend exhibition exploring the beauty and symbolism of the mandala. Featuring works inspired by pattern, geometry and the natural world, the exhibition showcases three distinct artistic interpretations of this ancient form. Visitors can attend the opening event on Friday evening at 5pm or view the exhibition across the weekend at Coorabell Hall, 10am - 3pm.



The Mullumbimby Folk Orchestra bring their world music vibes and good times to the Newrybar Hall, Friday 3 July Photo supplied

A Midwinter Night of Folk Singin' with Mandy Hawkes and Friends

When Saturday 25 July, 5pm

Where Pearces Creek Hall

Tickets \$35 adults, \$25 concession/student, children under 12 free

Info pearcescreekhall.com.au

Pearces Creek Hall hosts an evening of folk music, storytelling and song featuring Mandy Hawkes and a gathering of musicians from across the region and beyond. The line-up includes Brodie Buttons, Christina Webster, Jono B Smith and Ksea Mudge, each bringing their own take on traditional and contemporary folk traditions. The event will also mark the launch of Jono B Smith's new album Discount Season.

Newrybar Bonfire and Fireworks

When Saturday 1 August

Where Newrybar Public School, 10 Broken Head Road, Newrybar

Tickets \$5 each or \$20 per family, at the gate

Info @newrybarfireworks

Join us for the 38th year of the Newrybar Public School's Bonfire & Fireworks - one of the Northern Rivers' most loved community traditions. Meet us at the school for a giant bonfire, spectacular fireworks, fairground rides, disco, food and pure winter magic. *Local Sponsors still needed*

Newrybar Art Collective

When Monday-Saturday, 10am-4pm

Where 12 Old Pacific Highway, Newrybar

Tickets Free entry

Info @newrybarartcollective

The Newrybar Art Collective showcases the work of local contemporary artists in a gallery space at the heart of Newrybar Village. Operating as a collaborative artist-run initiative, the gallery features a rotating selection of paintings, mixed media works, ceramics and sculpture, ensuring there is always something new to discover. Visitors can also meet artists working in the

Diary

July 2026

1	Bangalow Garden Club Coorabell Hall Film Club
3	Mullumbimby Folk Orchestra
10	Friends of Libraries Byron Shire Book Fair
12	Candlelit Winter Solstice at Pearces Creek
24-26	Mandala Exhibition
25	A Midwinter Night of Folk Singin' with Mandy Hawkes and Friends



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August edition deadlines

What's on	13 July
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Love all

The greatest hits - Bangalow's women tennis Photo Nina Leslie

If you've wandered past the Bangalow Tennis Club recently, you may have noticed something a bit different. The courts are increasingly being filled by women of all ages, from first-time players picking up a racquet for the first time to experienced competitors returning to a sport they may not have played for years.

According to head coach, Jack Cox, women's participation has become one of the club's strongest growth areas.

"Over the past few years, participation in women's tennis has continued to grow, with players of all ages and abilities embracing the sport through social tennis, coaching programs, competitions and community events," says Jack.

While elite players and major tournaments continue to keep tennis in the public eye, the attraction for many local women is much closer to home. Fitness, friendship, fresh air and the opportunity to learn a new skill all appear to be drawing people back to the courts.

Unlike many sports, tennis can be started at almost any age. Some players arrive with decades of experience, while others are complete beginners looking for a fun and social way to stay active.

"The club has become a place where women can stay active, build friendships, improve their skills and enjoy being part of a supportive and inclusive sporting environment," says Jack.

The growing participation reflects a broader shift in community sport, where social connection is becoming just as important as competition. Weekly social games, coaching sessions and organised competitions provide opportunities for women to play at a level that suits them, whether they are looking for a gentle hit or a more competitive challenge.

The strength of the local program was recently recognised when Jack received a Parliamentary Certificate of Appreciation for his contribution to the development and promotion of women's tennis in the Northern Rivers.

While grateful for the recognition, Jack is quick to share the credit.

"It reflects the collective efforts of the many players, volunteers, committee members and supporters who continue to help grow the game locally."

The club is continuing to welcome new players and expand opportunities for women and girls to get involved.

"Bangalow Tennis Club remains committed to providing opportunities for women to participate in tennis at all levels, from beginners picking up a racquet for the first time through to experienced competition players," says Jack.

For many of the women now filling the courts each week, the appeal is simple. It's a chance to exercise, meet people and have fun. Judging by the growing numbers, it really is a hit.

Sally Schofield