

The Bangalow

HERALD

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A howling success

The singing dingo choir

From little things

Preschool art show

Padel twins, activate

Local teens go global

Little
hands,
big
ideas



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From the Editor

One of the pleasures of putting together *The Herald* each month is seeing just how many different stories can find a home in one small community publication. This edition feels particularly diverse, not only in the topics tackled but in the ways in which those stories are told.

There's a thread running through this issue that focuses on the written word. Ahead of her Bangalow appearance, we speak exclusively with acclaimed Australian author Kate Grenville about *The Country Schoolmaster*, a book built around a remarkable collection of 150-year-old letters. Meanwhile, Carolyn Adams' book review takes a different approach altogether, reviewing Virginia Evans' *The Correspondent*, a novel told through letters, by writing her own review as a letter. And perhaps some future correspondents will emerge from the Written Word section of this year's Bangalow Show? Better practise your handwriting!

Stories are also carried through food, music and language. Jenny Bird takes us into Palestinian culture through food, dabke, music and hospitality, while the Singing Dingo Choir celebrates Widjabul/Wia-bal language through song. Local farmer Johnny Singh's recognition at the Australian Sikh Awards for Excellence brings us another feel-good story connecting culture, family, farming and community.

Art appears in all sorts of places in this edition too. Children's work spills into Bangalow's main street shop windows for the Little Hands Art Trail, an annual tradition from the local community childcare centre. On the big screen, local filmmaker Nick George explores the potentials of storytelling with AI-animation in his short film premiering at the Byron Bay International Film Festival.

Perhaps that diversity is the real theme of this edition. Stories can arrive as a letter, a song, a meal, a painting, a film or a conversation. What matters is that we continue to make them, share them and make space for others to tell theirs.

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: Bangalow Community Children Centre staff, parents and young people preparing for the annual Art Week art show Photo Vanessa Reed

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The Singing Dingo choir will sing in Widjabul/Wia-bal language at the DINGO Festival this month Photos Yutaro Fukuhara

Dingo singers embrace an ancient language

For the past several weeks a diverse group of people has been gathering to rehearse songs in Widjabul/Wia-bal language, one of the many dialects spoken within the Bundjalung nation of Northern New South Wales, writes **Digby Hildreth**.

The group – the Singing Dingo Choir – is preparing for two performances at the DINGO Music & Arts Festival which is set to enliven Bangalow this month.

Widjabul/Wia-bal man Benja Roberts is the choir leader and the principal lyricist and musician behind the songs, which celebrate country and *nyubanii* – family, or community. Benja's late aunt, the creative powerhouse Rhoda Roberts, inspired and encouraged his composing and performing songs in language, he says.

Rhoda passed away this year, and while First Nations custom means Benja cannot say her name, he is emphatic about where the credit

lies: "Auntie who passed was a big push. One of her last wishes was that these songs get written, and I was happy to take her idea and make it a reality."

The creation of a language-based choir – in which all people are welcome – is perhaps unprecedented, and the First Nations context was a key consideration when the Festival was being planned, says its director of arts, Stuart Grant, who founded DINGO with director Si Jay Gould.

"On the opening night we have Auntie Delta Kay doing the Welcome to Country, followed by Mindy Woods (The Bundjalung Bush Food Alliance) and The Returning Indigenous Corporation offering a banquet, and then some Indigenous performances, including from Benja's group," Stuart says. "The Singing Dingo Choir will perform again at the very end on the Sunday, so we begin with Bundjalung people and we end with Bundjalung people."

Between those events comes a plethora of entertainments and activities, spread right across the town.

"There's 10 venues in Bangalow where there will be music: at sites around the Showground, various ones in the town, smaller venues, all of them running for the whole three days. Sunday is the big community day for Bangalow, when everything will be free: Brazilian bands, Latin bands and the Lismore Con Youth Jazz Orchestra. Funky, soulful, jazzy. It's kind of chill and cool. There's dancey music, but it's not big techno stuff."

Venue-size considerations mean two major concerts will be in Byron Bay, but Bangalow will be the star of the show, Stuart says. "We want to create as much dynamic community combustion as we can on the Sunday," uniting the local community in a celebration of the region's unique "grassroots kind of cultural and creative activity [which is] happening all the time, everywhere, through a really geographically dispersed area".

He has commissioned "a whole bunch" of site-specific performance and art installations, which he hopes will ask – and provide answers to – questions such as



Benja Roberts leads the choir through his own composition that celebrates Wia-bal

‘what is it that makes this place what it is? What are these layers of cultural histories that create this incredible dynamism that keeps attracting new people here?’

Throughout the Festival, there will also be a number of small pop-up performances everywhere around the town, including something surprising from the Bangalow Theatre Company in the form of impromptu street plays.

Then there’s the choirs: throughout Sunday in the Showground, a number of local singing groups will be doing cameo spots and will then join up to form a giant choir and walk together to the A&I Hall – a parade, led by a brass band and a percussion group. They will be singing a song prepared by Cat Empire founder Harry James Angus, whose gospel show *Gloryland* follows – with a full band and the massed choir. Then it is Singing Dingo’s turn, closing the festival.

For Benja Roberts, in his debut as a choir leader, it’s an opportunity he was born for. Personally, it’s a new experience, he says, and something “uncanny” and unique, hearing non-Indigenous people singing in language. “Especially my language, my father’s language, because while we still have some fluent speakers, it was kept secret for a very long time, you know, out of necessity”.

Music and song goes back as far as you can within his family, any First Nations family, many thousands of years, he says. “Songlines are really the base of what we value in terms of passing on the oral traditions and the core values of what it is to be a family. We hold knowledge through songlines, and songlines pertain to country, and country can pertain to health, education, agriculture, all these things. Yeah, but it’s through the land.

“I couldn’t tell you for sure, but from what I’ve been told and what I’ve been taught through my old people is that our language hasn’t changed. We are multilingual artists and travellers, and we just happen to have been here for centuries upon centuries.

“Widjabul means the knowledge keepers, keepers of the flame,” he says, and he sees the choir as part of the reigniting of language that is taking place more broadly: “It’s a great thing to be able to just be here, and be a part of something that’s only going to grow.”

The songs celebrate Wia-bal, the land, or *jagun*, and also *nyubanii*, which is the focus of one song; it means coming together as a mob, as a family, and that includes everyone, Benja says, including the Singing Dingo Choir, a new mob in its own right. “We all live here now, you know? There are many communities that live here, and I’m just part of one of those communities.

“As an artist, I want to be able to share and make sure that everybody’s able to understand what I’m saying and how I say it. If it’s in language, please learn. Like, please learn with me, and we’ll take this journey together.” He insists that the process be fun for everyone involved, and judging by the laughter echoing through the RSL Hall rehearsal space, it is proving to be.

The significance of such learning is felt deeply by those signing up to sing.

One Singing Dingo Choir member, Jessie Vintila, herself a musician and choir leader, says: “I found myself in tears during my first singing session with Benja. What a long-awaited and profound moment, for those of us who long for connection, with First Peoples and with this Bundjalung Country which we are so privileged to call home, as settlers, colonists, visitors, invaders, immigrants.

“Because we are all these things. And one of the layers of that, as well as the great injustices we have to work to repair, we ourselves are disconnected, and long for connection. To come together with this generous, loving First Nations person, to be welcomed to sing words from this place. Welcomed to sing, play, relax, and harmonise. What an honour. What an opportunity!”

DINGO Festival runs from October 8-11 at venues around Bangalow.
Tickets at dingofestival.com/tickets



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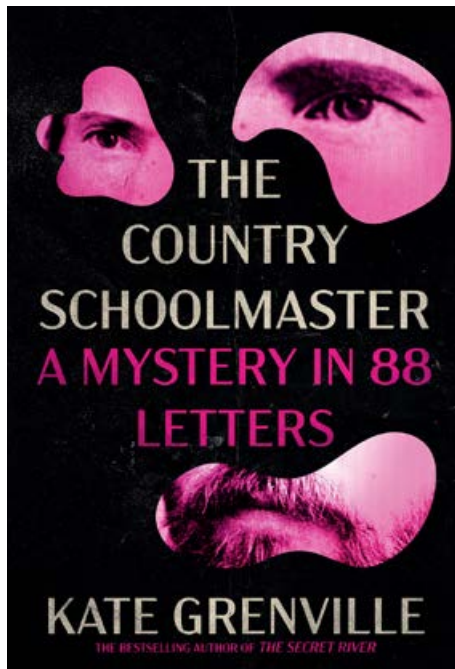
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Kate Grenville photo supplied



History, she wrote

Ahead of her appearance at the Bangalow A&I Hall this October, **Sally Schofield** speaks with acclaimed Australian author **Kate Grenville** about her latest work *The Country Schoolmaster*. Built around a collection of 150-year-old letters, Kate's new historical fiction explores the story of Joseph Connor, a schoolmaster in the tiny NSW town of Currabubula, and a community divided over whether he was a dedicated teacher doing his best or a brutal disciplinarian. Combining the original letters with imagined scenes, Grenville asks how well we can ever really know another person.

You've said you began this project thinking you understood Joseph Connor, but as you worked, you found yourself 'flip-flopping'. What was it like to write about a person who resisted being easily understood?

Trying to work out Joseph Connor was a kind of speed dating, trying to work out a person you've just met and don't know anything about. From one minute to the next you hear something or notice something that makes you adjust your first impression. When you're writing fiction you can adjust the person you're inventing, but Joseph Connor was a

real person, so I was the one having to do the adjusting. I found it totally engrossing. He really was a mystery. If it had been easy to make up my mind about him it wouldn't have drawn me in as deeply as it did.

You've spoken about how quickly we form judgements about people from incomplete information. Did working with these 150-year-old letters make you think differently about the way we construct stories about people from incomplete or perhaps unreliable sources in our own time?

Watching myself make up my mind, and then re-make it, got me thinking about the whole business of how we arrive at our opinions. I could see that my judgements about Connor, negative and positive, were because of stereotypes and biases I had, and events from my own life that I brought to my picture of him. It made me realise we have to be cautious about what we think we know. Our opinions are just the result of everything we've been exposed to, and they might be wrong. The algorithms of social media amplify extremes and erase nuance in a way that makes polarisation and division greater than ever.

There must be a fascinating tension between the historian in you, who wants to stay faithful to the evidence, and the novelist, who wants to enter the spaces where the evidence doesn't go. How do you decide how far your imagination interprets the gaps?

The tension between staying faithful to the history, and imagining beyond the evidence, is a fascinating challenge. We have to try to

understand the past, because it's why we have the present that we live in. Current problems didn't happen in a vacuum, but in a long-term context, and I'm passionate about trying to tell stories that bring that context to readers in an accessible way. But there's no point in drifting too far from the reality of the past if we want to understand it.

The Country Schoolmaster is a hybrid, part real, part invented. The letters in the book are the actual letters written in the 1890s. They speak with the actual voice of the past and paint a vivid picture of the nuts-and-bolts of life as a schoolmaster in a one-room school in tiny Currabubula, NSW. What lies between the letters is a writer trying to understand why that little community was so divided. Was the schoolmaster a good man doing his best, or was he a brutal beater of the children in his care? In trying to work out the puzzle of the man I speculated, I imagined, and I invented scenes that are pure fiction. Readers don't have to agree with me. They can read the letters for themselves and make up their own minds.

You've described archival research as addictive, with every discovery opening up another question. Was there a particular discovery during the research that completely changed the direction of your thinking, without giving away where the story ultimately leads?

One of the men who complained about Connor was only semi-literate. His laborious letters are almost impossible to read. But he's determined that his children will get the education he didn't. I suddenly saw that the 1880 Education Act was a revolution that utterly transformed the world of these ordinary people virtually overnight. This man could barely write, barely read, but his children would be fully literate, with choices he didn't have. Providing free education for every child was a massively expensive, massively intrusive, and controversial step for a government to take. I'd taken public education for granted. Reading that man's letters, I realised what an extraordinary gift it is.

Excavating these letters brings ordinary people from 150 years ago close to us. What did you discover about everyday life, relationships or human nature that is still relevant in 2026?

One thing that seems to endure about human nature is the way we take sides. Connor's critics couldn't see anything good about him (although there was plenty). His champions couldn't see his faults (which were many). The little community split down the middle like a football crowd, where of course the reality was somewhere in between. 150 years later, unfortunately, we're still not very good at seeing the other point of view.

Kate Grenville in conversation with Mick O'Regan
Monday October 12, 6pm
Bangalow A&I Hall
events.humanitix.com/kate-grenville-in-conversation

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Madeleine West as Blanche in the iconic *A Streetcar Named Desire* Photo Joel Cooper

Desire comes to town

The opportunity to see outstanding theatre close to home has never been more welcome. From Thursday 29 October, Tennessee Williams' timeless masterpiece *A Streetcar Named Desire* comes to Byron Theatre in Bangalow Theatre Company's most ambitious production to date, writes **Michael Sharmon**.

I recently sat down with acclaimed Australian actors Madeleine West and Peter Cook, together with director Amy Skene, to discuss the production and why Williams' play remains so powerful almost 80 years after it was written.

Amy previously directed Bangalow Theatre Company's *Into the Woods*, which won Best Musical Theatre Production at the 2024 Gold Palm Theatre Awards. She now turns her attention to one of the most celebrated plays of the 20th century.

When Blanche DuBois arrives in New Orleans seeking refuge with her sister Stella, she

becomes caught in a volatile struggle with Stella's husband, Stanley Kowalski. As long-buried secrets emerge, Blanche's carefully constructed world begins to fracture.

Raw, haunting and intensely human, the play explores desire, identity, power, domestic violence and the fragile line between illusion and reality.

"The themes Tennessee Williams wrote about 80 years ago are still current, but we can shed a different light on them now," Amy said. "Madeleine and I have spoken at great length about domestic violence and abuse, and about looking at Blanche as a woman and shedding a different light on women of that age."

Celebrated actor, author and director Madeleine West has found great compassion for Blanche. Rather than judging her choices, Madeleine sees a woman trapped by a society that has taught her that beauty and desirability are her only sources of value.

Madeleine spoke candidly about the serious accident she experienced at 21, at the height of her *Neighbours* fame. The accident caused significant injuries to her face and left her wondering whether her acting career was over. Ultimately, it led her to reconsider what being an actor truly meant.

"I'm a storyteller," she said, explaining that the experience encouraged her to pursue complex characters and tell the stories of people whose voices are often overlooked.

Her experience has given her a profound connection to Blanche.

"I absolutely understand Blanche and what it is to live within the cage of your appearance being the only thing you have," Madeleine said. "I cannot look at her with judgement. I look at her with love."

She believes theatre can help audiences understand complex social issues in a way that headlines and statistics cannot.

"To see a story and understand the nuance of domestic violence — why women go back, and the combination of shame and entitlement — we don't see that in a headline," she said. "This play amplifies that story in a way that makes you walk home from the theatre and go, 'I get it.'"

The production does not present Stanley simply as a monster, nor does it excuse his behaviour. Instead, the cast examines the complexities beneath the characters' actions and relationships.

Peter Cook is passionate about honouring Williams' text while finding the humanity within Stanley, a character capable of charm and tenderness as well as appalling violence.

"It's popular because it resonates on a deeply human level," Peter said. "It's from Williams' soul, and you can feel that in the writing. The language is lyrical, poetic and beautiful — even within Stanley's brutality, there is a rhythm."



Peter Cook and Madeleine West star in the Bangalow Theatre Company production at the Byron Theatre in October. Photo Joel Cooper

Peter describes Stanley's home as his kingdom. Blanche's arrival threatens both his authority and his relationship with Stella.

"A lot of what he does is reprehensible and completely unforgivable," Peter said. "But it's also about playing the complexity of the man. Human beings are complex."

The production remains grounded in the heat and atmosphere of New Orleans while incorporating subtle Byron Bay undertones through music, sound and its streetscape. As Peter neatly describes it, the production has "Byron in its blood, but New Orleans in its bones."

Bangalow producer Bobbie Field says the scale of the production marks an important milestone for the company.

"This is the biggest play Bangalow Theatre Company has undertaken, so it's a significant production for us," Bobbie said. "Having

Madeleine West and Peter Cook involved takes it to another level. They bring a wealth of professional experience and insight, and you can really feel that influence throughout the cast and rehearsal room.

"What makes it even more special is that they're both giving their time to this production. I think that says a great deal about their commitment to bringing outstanding theatre to the community."

Bobbie says the rehearsal room is "electric", with a growing intensity as the cast inhabits Williams' extraordinary characters.

"This production is for everyone — those who already know and love the play, as well as people discovering Tennessee Williams for the first time," she said.

The cast also features many local artists including Danni Dwyer as Stella Kowalski and Jason Murray as Harold 'Mitch' Mitchell.

Madeleine believes teenagers would also benefit from seeing the production. She describes live theatre as "the antidote to the algorithm" — an opportunity for young people to put down their phones, concentrate on a story and explore challenging subjects together.

Peter agrees, particularly valuing the opportunity for young people to hear great writing spoken aloud.

"I think hearing language like this — the poetry, lyricism and beauty of it — is so important," he said. "I feel like we're losing our connection to great language, great writing and simply hearing beautiful words."

For Peter, attending *A Streetcar Named Desire* is more than a night's entertainment.

"You're seeing something written by one of the greatest playwrights of the 20th century, and you're seeing actors bare their souls," he said. "It's a beautiful thing."

As access to major professional productions becomes increasingly expensive, Bangalow Theatre Company is proving that ambitious, high-quality storytelling can flourish right here in the Northern Rivers.

A Streetcar Named Desire plays at Byron Theatre for eight performances only:

Thursday 29 October 7pm

Friday 30 October 7pm

Saturday 31 October 1pm and 7pm

Sunday 1 November 3pm

Saturday 7 November 1pm and 7pm

Sunday 8 November 3pm

Tickets are on sale at Byron Theatre

byroncentre.com.au/theatre-events/a-streetcar-named-desire

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Spring means one thing for Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital: more animals on the move and more risk on our roads. As native wildlife becomes more active heading into the busy season, the hospital is asking Bangalow and the wider region to slow down.

The 'Slow Down for Wildlife' campaign is a simple idea with a big goal: get 1,000 stickers onto local car bumpers as a rolling reminder to ease off the accelerator in wildlife hotspots. Stickers can be purchased for \$5 on the website or picked up for free at Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital in Lennox Head.

It's a small sticker with a big message: every car that slows down is a life that might be saved.

For information about the stickers or volunteering at Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital, email volunteer@byronbaywildlifehospital.org or call 1300 945 354.

Local news

DINGO brings artisan market to Station Street

Station Street will join the action when DINGO Music & Arts Festival spills into the streets of Bangalow for its free Community Day on Sunday 11 October hosting a curated artisan market in the open-air space behind the gallery building.

Around 15 stallholders will showcase handmade pieces, work by local artists, makers and independent designers, vintage finds and collectables. The focus is firmly on creativity and original or thoughtfully sourced pieces, with commercially produced and mass-resale products not accepted.

The broader Sunday program, runs from 12pm–6pm, while the Station Street market will get an earlier start and trade throughout the day.

Expression of interest are now open for stallholders, with sites curated by Station Street Co-op. Standard sites are 3m x 3m and cost \$75. Stallholders need to provide their own gazebo and display equipment and meet insurance requirements.

Station Street Co-op Artisan Market

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Bangalow Fire and Rescue seeks on-call firefighters

On-call firefighters support their local community by responding to emergency incidents from home or other workplaces. When the pager goes off, they answer the call by responding directly from their place of work or home. For this reason, and to ensure they can respond promptly, applicants need to live and/or work within a reasonable distance of their local fire station.

The work is paid, varied, challenging and rewarding, and can involve confronting and stressful situations. Firefighting involves day, night and weekend work and can be physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. Resources are provided to support firefighters' health, safety and wellbeing.

Ideal candidates will work from home or close to Bangalow Fire Station, with flexible hours and the ability to leave work during the day if a call comes in.

Bangalow Fire and Rescue will host an information night on Tuesday 6 October at the Fire Station, 56 Byron Street, Bangalow, from 6pm. Come and meet the team, learn about what they do and find out how you can get involved.

Applications close 21 October. For more information or to apply, visit careers.fire.nsw.gov.au/jobs/search/search-page-regional-north

Grow it, mo it, pluck it, parade it

For Bangalow barber Paula Kutzner, the idea for a Beard Fest began with the loss of someone very close to her to suicide. One of six children, including four boys, she thought she well understood 'men' and the 'male world'. This unforeseen death triggered a change of focus in the life of this Bangalow barber, and a question about what we do with the things that are difficult to talk about.

Paula opened bijou barber shop Stubble and Pluck on Deacon Street two months ago, underneath the Yogalates studio in Bangalow. Before moving to Bangalow in 2024, she had worked as a barber on the Sunshine Coast for nearly eight years. She's also worked in project management in the building industry, aged care and interior design.

"As a barber, every day I see how the chair can become a place where men talk, sometimes about football, work and family. But

sometimes about things that are much harder to say elsewhere," Paula said.

That got her thinking: how can I give this new business more purpose? Her own experience has reinforced how important connection, conversation and community can be, particularly when people are going through difficult times.

So she decided to create a novel event: the Bangalow Beard Fest, to be held at Bangalow's Heritage House on the morning of Saturday 7 November. It's a fundraising event for Movember, the annual Australia-wide charity event supporting men's mental health and suicide prevention during November.

She's now looking for 20 entrants who are prepared to take part in two beard and moustache parades, to be judged by those present, happening alongside the Saturday morning Farmers Market.

There are four categories open to entrants: Best Beard ("Let your DNA do the talking"); Mo'ment of Glory ("For the mo that makes people stop mid-conversation"); Who Plucked Whom ("Best owner and pet match"); and The Farno Duo ("Any intergenerational mix"). Entry is free.

"I hope to create something that feels distinctly 'Bangalow': inclusive, relaxed, a little cheeky and fun, with a meaningful purpose underneath it."

Bangalow Beard Fest: Beyond the Chair
Saturday 7 November, 9.30am–12.30pm
Bangalow Historical Museum,
alongside the Bangalow Farmers Market

For more information or to find out how to participate, drop into Stubble and Pluck under the Yogalates building, enter via Deacon Street, or email hello@stubbleandpluck.com.au

Bowlo Rally a massive success

Over 1000 people attended the September 19 Rally and Fundraiser for Save Bangalow Bowlo. They came with open wallets and open hearts, uniting as one community in search of answers and a fair outcome for the return of the Bowlo to the Bangalow Community. Close to \$50000 was raised to continue funding legal advice relating to the closure of the club in October 2025.



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Wonder twins Ollie and Miles Field are naturals on the court Photo Bobbie Field

Padel twin power

Charlotte Burns, fellow Bangalow teen, talks to local identical twins **Ollie and Miles Field** about swapping the tennis court for padel, earning two of just three places on Australia's Under 14 boys' team and preparing to represent their country at the Asia Cup in Jakarta.

How old are you both, and who is the older twin?

Ollie: We're 14. Miles is two minutes older. So technically he's the oldest, but I don't think two minutes gives him that much authority!

How did you first get into padel, and when did you realise you were actually pretty good at it?

Miles: We've played competitive tennis for years and have always loved doubles, so when we heard they were looking for Under 14 tennis players for the Australian Padel Team, we thought we'd give it a go. There aren't heaps of junior padel players in Australia yet, so they were looking at tennis players to see who could make the switch.

We went through the selection process and ended up getting two of the three Under 14 boys' spots. That was probably when we thought, 'Okay, maybe we're actually pretty good at this!'

Ollie: Now we're training a lot and learning how to transfer our tennis skills, especially doubles, into padel. Every session with our coach we work on something new. He also came from tennis, so he knows what we need to work on.

Padel is huge in Asia and Europe, so most of the teams we'll be competing against in the Asia Cup will have grown up playing padel. Our coach says our doubles tennis experience gives us an advantage, and being tall helps too. We're excited to see how our tennis skills stack up against players who have grown up playing padel.

Miles: Our school has also been really supportive. We've been able to adjust our school schedule while we're doing intensive training and travelling to the Gold Coast for full training days.



What's the best thing about having your twin beside you on court?

Ollie: The best thing is that Miles is my best friend as well as my team partner. We've played together for so long that we know what the other one is going to do without even having to say anything. We just know.

Miles: The best thing about having Ollie as my partner is that we really trust each other on court. We know each other's strengths and can support each other when things get tough. We can also change our game depending on who we're playing, because we know what each other can do. And it's just fun playing with your best mate.

If you had to describe each other's playing style in three words, what would you say?

Ollie: Miles is controlled, smart and fast.

Miles: Ollie is creative, calm and competitive.

If you played a singles match against each other, who would win?

Ollie and Miles: Me. Definitely me.

What was your path to qualifying for Nationals?

Miles: We basically went from being tennis players who wanted to try padel to being two of the three Under 14 boys selected for the Australian team. We went through the national selection process and were pretty stoked when we found out we'd both made it.

Ollie: Now the training has really stepped up. We're taking what we know from tennis, especially doubles, and learning how to adapt it to padel. It's really fast and tactical, which we love, and the fact that it's a doubles sport is perfect for us."

What are you most looking forward to about the trip to Jakarta?

Miles: I'm probably most excited about hanging out with the other Australian teammates. We've all got the same goal, so it will be really cool to experience it together. Getting to wear the green and gold is pretty special too. It's not every day you get to represent Australia in another country.

Ollie: I'm really looking forward to travelling with the team and having a bit of independence. Dad is coming with us, but the parents aren't staying with the team, so that's exciting and probably a little bit scary too!

I'm also really looking forward to watching and learning from some of the best players in the world. It's going to be pretty cool seeing how they play.

Between school, training and other sports, how do you fit it all in?

Miles: It's pretty busy, especially at the moment because we're doing intensive training, but we're used to having a lot going on. Our school has been really supportive and we've been able to work our schoolwork around training and travel.

And if we're not at school or training, you'll probably find us in the ocean. We love surfing, so we're pretty lucky that our way of relaxing also counts as fitness!

Do you dream of becoming professional players?

Ollie: Definitely. We'd love to become professional players one day. It would be pretty amazing to travel the world playing a sport we love. For now, we're just taking it step-by-step, training hard, enjoying it and seeing where it takes us.

As a community, this is an achievement we should be extremely proud of. With no government funding available to them at just 14 years old, community support will be vital in helping the boys reach their financial goal. For a group taking on such a significant challenge, every contribution can make a difference.

Now, it is up to the community to get behind them and help them reach their target. Please consider donating to their GoFundMe fundraiser gofund.me/5ff193ca3

What is Padel?

Padel is a fast-growing racquet sport that combines elements of tennis and squash. Usually played as doubles on a smaller court, players use solid racquets and a low-compression ball similar to a tennis ball. Scoring is the same as tennis, but serving is underarm. Padel is relatively easy for beginners to pick up while still offering plenty of challenge for experienced players, helping fuel its rapid growth in Australia.

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The flavours of Ghurba, Palestinian homecooking at the Coorabell Hall Photo Jenny Bird

Ahlan wa sahlam (you are among family)

Jenny Bird recently attended two packed-house events in 2479 that celebrated the music, dance and food of Palestine and the Levant, and the role they play in sustaining culture and identity for diasporic communities.

Until recently I had never listened to Palestinian folk music, danced the *dabke* or eaten Palestinian food. By happy coincidence a catered concert by folk music ensemble Dabke and Tatreez at the A&I Hall, followed a few nights later by the launch of pop-up restaurant Ghurba at the Coorabell Hall brought glorious glimpses of Palestinian culture to the Byron hinterland.

The A&I Hall was packed. The seven musicians in the Dabke and Tatreez ensemble introduced themselves, and there on the stage was the rich mix of cultures and ethnicities of the Levant of the Eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine.

Most of them are graduates of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Gaza City and now live in Australia, part of the growing diaspora of Palestinians living around the world. The Conservatory is now rubble, but music lessons continue. One musician told a story of sharing her grief with her mother, who said to her 'keep playing music, it connects all of humanity.' Another asked if anyone knew just how heavy is an accordion, because he had lugged his through the rubble of Gaza to Australia. Playing traditional instruments like the oud, the *qanun* (flat zither) and the *daf* (frame drum), and led by the extraordinary voice of Aysa Goknur Shanal, this group of fine musicians sang of love and sorrow and joy. We danced the *Dabke* – a traditional Levantine folk dance. A big circle formed at the front of the hall. Holding hands, we co-ordinated our steps and danced in joyful celebration and a sense of togetherness.

Then I went to Coorabell Hall to the launch of new pop-up Ghurba. I went early - five o'clock – and the hall was already jumping, the queue heading out the door. It was still packed when we left at seven. The food was fabulous - chicken with sumac, chickpeas with eggplant, roasted cashews and tahini yoghurt, lamb and rice filled vine leaves.

Later I asked owner Laura Ayyoub what Ghurba meant, and our conversation turned to a reflection on the meaning of food, and what has brought her to choose this moment to share Palestinian food with the Byron community.



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An authentic spread with dips and bread

"*Ghurba* is a word for the feeling of being away from home, uprooted and somewhere foreign" explains Laura. "My grandmother, my *teta*, was a refugee from the 1948 Nakba. My mother is from Palestine and my father from Jordan. We grew up between New York and Amman in Jordan. I grew up in the kitchen beside my *teta* whilst my parents ran a catering business. My whole family revolved around cooking, catering and hospitality."

"Food is a way of remembering where we come from. I'm a third culture kid and food was the main way I felt my culture and my identity."

"I've been dreaming up *Ghurba* since 2022, but I've been quite crippled by events in Palestine. Now I've found the courage to share Palestinian joy not just the suffering and the grief. Cooking is my way of resisting and not being erased."



The Dabke and Tatreez ensemble recently performed an evening of traditional song and dance at the Bangalow A&I Hall Photo supplied

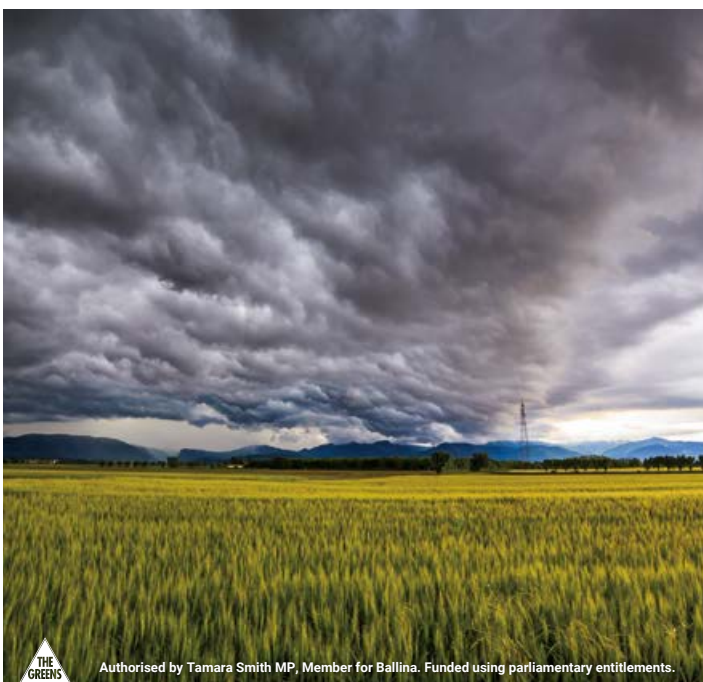
"The other reason I'm launching *Ghurba* now is because of the debates here at the moment about migrants, and returning Australia to the myth of a monoculture. I grew up ashamed of being an Arab. Now I am the mother of a two-year-old and I don't want him to feel ashamed. I want to hold a proud space for the Arabic community on the Northern Rivers, and invite everyone to share our food and culture."

I remember seeing a photograph some time ago of a great long table laid out through the streets of Gaza with people gathered to share the fast-breaking meal of *Iftar* at the end of Ramadan. I thought then how vital is the need to share, to celebrate together, to maintain culture, no matter what.

Ghurba will offer a rotating menu of home-cooked seasonal Palestinian food every second Tuesday night at Coorabell Hall. Follow on Instagram @eat_ghurba. Also available for private catering.

The Dabke and Tatreez concert was organised by Northern Rivers Friends of Palestine who you can find @facebook.com/groups/749587239834211

Profits from the concert went to The Palestinian Australian New Zealand Medical Association (PANZMA) @panzma.org/mission-vision



PREPARING FOR STORM SEASON

In NSW Storm Season falls between September and April, although storms can happen at any time. Storms can vary in intensity and may sometimes create hazardous conditions.

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MEMBER FOR BALLINA

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Left to right: Lucy Hernandez, Office Manager, former student (daughter of Trish and mother of Mateo), Fiona Smith, Centre Educator, Trish Gannon, Former Office Manager, and Mateo Edward Hernandez, current preschool student.

More than just a tree

Bangalow Community Children's Centre's annual Little Hands Art Trail returns in October, bringing children's creativity out of the Centre and into the heart of the village, writes **Michael Sharmon**.

Creativity is part of daily life at the Centre, with children encouraged to experiment with different materials, explore their ideas and express themselves freely. The Little Hands Art Trail gives families and the wider Bangalow community a chance to see the results.

Individual and group artworks will appear in the windows of shops and businesses along Bangalow's main street, with the art show continuing a tradition that has become an important part of the Centre's calendar.

Centre Director Kerry Valensteen, who has led Bangalow Community Children's Centre since 2007 and has more than 40 years' experience working with children, believes publicly exhibiting their work sends an important message.

"Displaying children's art in an exhibition provides a meaningful opportunity to show children that their work, thoughts, ideas and creativity are valued and respected," Kerry says.

"Sharing their work with the wider community also helps to build an understanding of children's capability, resourcefulness and unique perspectives."

This year's Little Hands Art Trail will also celebrate a connection spanning three generations of one Bangalow family.

Trish worked as the Centre's office manager, while her daughter, Lucy, attended the Centre as a child and participated in one of its earliest art shows. As she grew older, Lucy continued her connection with the Centre by helping with the after-school program that operated there at the time.

Lucy later returned as the Centre's office manager. Now her two sons attend the Centre and will contribute their own creations to the 2026 Little Hands Art Trail.

The children themselves have plenty to say about why art matters.

Four-year-old Banksy said creating art makes him happy, while Leo from the Garrimaa Room explained that making art requires concentration.

"I do lots of concentrating when I do art," Leo says.

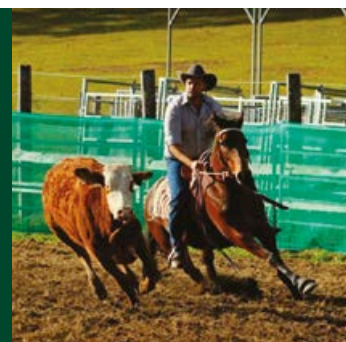
Four-year-old Mila has a slightly different perspective: she thinks art can be funny. For Father's Day, she created a card for her dad featuring a drawing of a toilet. Her artistic instincts proved correct. He laughed when she gave it to him.

Five-year-old Elle simply loves to paint, enjoying the freedom of colour, movement and imagination.



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Educator Nina believes art can help children process their experiences and make sense of the world around them, giving them another language through which to explore feelings, relationships and events in their lives.

Breanna Braby also sees art as an important form of communication. "Art is a form of expression," she says. "It is another way for children to express their ideas."

For Fiona Smith, art begins with the act of noticing.

"Everyone sees things differently," Fiona says. "One person sees the tree, while another person focuses on the moss growing on it. A tree is always more than just a tree."

For Kerry, listening to children means paying

attention not only to what they say, but also to what they communicate through their play and creativity.

"When we take the time to truly listen to children, whether through their words, their ideas, their play or their art, we are often reminded of ways of seeing the world that we may have overlooked, forgotten or never considered," she says.

"Children have much to teach us, and their creative expression provides a powerful window into their thinking, experiences and understanding of the world around them."

This October, the Little Hands Art Trail will once again bring those ideas out into the village, giving the rest of Bangalow a chance to see the world through younger eyes.

And, as Fiona reminds us, a tree is always more than just a tree.

Little Hands Art Trail appears in shopfronts on Byron Street from **19-25 October**. See the map to plan your journey.

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AI film passes heart test



Stills from the AI animated film *Extra Time* Photos supplied

While the arguments about AI continue to swirl all around us, one Bangalow creative has used the technology to make a very humane animated film that will screen at this year's Byron Bay Film Festival (BBFF).

Multimedia designer Nick George has a long background in animation and visual storytelling, and he has always embraced and utilised new technologies as they emerge. But the collaboration with AI to make *Extra Time* is a first, and the result is a heart-warming short film – a tale of a father and son bonding through sport. It is loosely based on the figure of Nick's late grandfather, a keen rugby league and rugby union player.

"Pop coached my dad's football team for a while and I know that talking about football was how they bonded," Nick says. While the limited nature of such bonds might seem sad from one perspective, there's also a kind of beauty in it, Nick says, and it's something the film examines and celebrates.

Having twin boys of his own means Nick now finds himself frequently reflecting upon fatherhood and the men in his life, "trying to understand masculinity through that lens and through now being a dad".

Pop was predeceased by his wife, and ageing and loneliness are also themes in the film, but Nick also sought to bring some lightness into it – "to find a bit of balance, to have some humour and some emotion".

He and his wife, Annie, have been Bangalow residents for 10 or 11 years, but Nick grew up in Sydney and studied at Billy Blue College of Design in North Sydney.

He's been a motion designer and animator for advertising agencies, on the TV show *The Hungry Beast*, made music videos and short 'explainer' films, and worked alongside his filmmaker brother in post-production. *Extra Time* is his first solo stand-alone film.

In the last two years, Nick has used AI increasingly and enjoys the extra capacity it provides to do more. He is also somewhat conflicted about its threats to jobs and creative freedom, but says "at the end of the day, it's a new tool, and you have to adopt it to be at the front of the market".

"It's an interesting process understanding it and *Extra Time* was a good way to really sink in. The whole film was generated with AI but it was all at my direction. It was interesting to put in my ideas and try and work the AI to get the results I wanted. It's not click and forget, there's a lot of back and forth, a lot of massaging, and you hit a lot of walls."

The process was very creative, he says: "You're editing, art directing, designing, animating and rewriting." He storyboarded each scene just as he would using a traditional approach.

"What the process gave me wasn't the story," he says. "That part was always mine. What it gave me was the ability to finally finish something I would have conceived either way, but never had the resources to complete before."

"It wasn't simple. Getting a single shot right sometimes took 20 attempts. But every one of those attempts was in service of a story I cared about getting right, not just technically, but emotionally."

He used Claude to help with the script, and the Higgsfield motion designer for the video work. It was a Higgsfield competition that made the film possible: through a global competition which gave him access to unlimited credits for a certain period.

Altogether he spent six weeks on the film, with plenty of late nights in his studio in Station Street.

The story of *Extra Time* is timeless, and the design aesthetic surprisingly old school –

free of the hyper colour and slickness of much AI product.

"Basically, it's a claymation style but I wanted it to still feel gritty and a bit rough, and unique. I was trying to avoid the generic sort of outputs that AI can create," Nick says.

There's a local feel to it that makes it right for the Byron Bay Film Festival: it features a slightly mystical magpie, a python, a rural, subtropical setting – and a humanity that won over BBFF director J'aimee Skippon-Volke.

The speed with which AI is disrupting almost every area of filmmaking has felt surreal, J'aimee says. "It has allowed filmmakers with no budget to create scenes they couldn't afford in the past, and enabled many people to try their hand at animation. But just because you can doesn't mean you should, and expensive-looking content doesn't always equate to something that speaks to the people watching it."

"AI in the hands of someone like Nick George is an entirely different beast. He brings years of skill, experience and creative instinct to the technology, using AI to extend what he can already do, keeping his career relevant in a fast-changing world, and pushing his work in new directions."

Nick says of the rapidly moving technology: "It's so hard to know where everything's going. It's crazy. And as a creative, initially, it's pretty scary. But then the flip side of that is it's kind of exciting too."

The experience has left him "pretty inspired" to try and create some more.

Extra Time is among scores of films screening at BBFF this month, many of them equally quirky and engaging, beginning with the Opening Night feature, *The Fox*, a darkly comic Australian folktale featuring the voices of Olivia Colman (as the Fox) and the late



Nick in the studio Photo supplied

Sam Neill (as a very swearsy magpie).

The film is “funny, beautifully made and unmistakably Australian”, says J’aimee, and has been hugely popular on the Australian festival circuit, winning the Audience Award for Best Australian Feature at the 2026 Sydney Film Festival.

The Fox felt like the right Opening Night choice, she says. “It’s strange, surprising and hugely enjoyable, while still having plenty going on beneath the surface. It’s also a distinctly Australian film with a really diverse cast. For our 20th edition, we wanted to start with something bold, wildly entertaining and made to be experienced with a crowd.

“Opening Night is always special, but there’s an added sense of celebration this year as we mark 20 editions of bringing filmmakers and audiences together,” says J’aimee, who for many of those years organised the

festival from her crowded family home in Bangalow.

“The 20th edition feels like a milestone shared by everyone who has helped shape BBFF.”

Byron Bay International Film Festival
October 16-25, various locations
bbff.com.au

Animals, culture and connection

Two Australian documentaries at this year’s Byron Bay International Film Festival explore the deep connections between animals, culture and community.

Guided by Horses travels to the Kimberley, where pioneering Aboriginal researcher Professor Juli Coffin has developed an equine-assisted learning program working with young First Nations people. The program uses relationships with horses to create opportunities for reconnection, healing and hope.

Australian short documentary *Ganibarra*, co-directed by Jirrbal woman and cultural knowledge-holder Sonya Takau and Alix Livingstone, turns its attention to dingoes. Through Sonya and her family, the film explores the longstanding relationship between First Nations people and dingoes.



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.

Johnny Singh: silver medallist in annual Sikh Excellence Awards



Johnny Singh has been recognised at the Australian Sikh Awards in Sydney Photo supplied

John Singh, proprietor of Punjab Stud & Byron Bay Pork at Coorabell, travelled to Sydney on the last weekend of August to attend the Australian Sikh Awards for Excellence 2026, having been nominated as a finalist in the Agriculture category.

Farming and growing pigs in the Byron Shire and Northern NSW for 50 years now, John is an unwavering advocate in this field and was

last year recognised by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW as a 50 Year Champion in the Pig Industry. So, yes, Johnny grows good pigs!

The Australian Sikh Awards for Excellence 2026 was conducted at the Grand Ballroom of the prestigious Shangri-La Hotel at The Rocks, Sydney. Hosted by Sikh Youth Australia and sponsored by SBS Australia, the awards aim to identify and acknowledge leaders in a wide range of categories including Arts, Culture and Music, Community Service, Sports, Professional Fields (Science & Commerce) and Agriculture. With 300 attendees, the awards also included Sikh Woman of the Year, Young Sikh of the Year and a Lifetime Achievement Award. The event was attended by a number of Federal and State politicians representing the Prime Minister of Australia and the Premier of NSW, including the Federal Attorney-General, Hon. Michelle Rowland MP.

Johnny was accompanied by his personal bodyguard (and referee for the award) Greg 'Nashy' Nash of Bangalow, along with fellow referee and nephew Ran Singh and his great mate 'Billy Barber the Brilliant Barrister'. Keen for some information about this prestigious event, I asked Nashy for his personal observations.

"I couldn't have been more impressed with the occasion and the high-powered attendees. Quite apart from the magnificent attire and striking presence of the delegates, every guest speaker and all the other award nominees and guests I met at the function were high profile and the quality of the event was truly breathtaking. It was simply a wonderful cultural exchange for somebody like myself. I'm so pleased that Johnny invited me. I was reminded of the Sikh culture of Seva, that is, the concept of performing selfless community service without any

expectation of reward. That rings so true with Johnny Singh and his own beautiful wife Kamal and the extended Singh family. They have been living Seva for the last 48 years. Johnny was also recognised, with his late father Manga, for establishing Bangalow's Gurdwara (Sikh Temple on old Bangalow Road) back in the early 2000s so Sikh families could worship there. The Awards night was a superb occasion, however there was a twist in this glorious tale. Twas a dry event! I drank in Sikhism instead and it tasted much sweeter. Be sure we made up for it afterwards. What a wonderful example of great cultural integration, hard work, success and happiness," says Nashy.

Sikh culture in Australia dates back to the 1830s, with some 300,000 Sikhs now living all around the country. The Gold Medal winners in the Agriculture category were a wheat farming and milling operation out of Renmark, South Australia. During the big SA drought 10 years ago and needing to quickly pivot and diversify, they unbelievably shipped a stone mill from the Punjab region in Northern India and now it's used to mill thousands of tonnes of wheat for flour and stockfeed every month.

Ironically, Johnny Singh buys their wheat grain to feed his prize-winning pigs right here in Bangalow. The world really is a small place sometimes.

Congratulations John Singh, a true Bangalownian.

PS: Johnny was too humble to be interviewed for this article.

Danielle Mathie



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Council matters

A rate rise?

It may not be a question anyone wants to consider, let alone say yes to, but Byron Shire Council is asking the community for feedback on a rate rise. Rising costs, ageing infrastructure and impacts from disasters are creating financial challenges for councils across NSW.

Council is proposing an incremental Special Rate Variation (SRV) over three years, starting in July 2027 – 12 percent, then 10 percent, then 9.6 percent – to a compounded total of 35.03 percent over the three years.

To see what that would look like for your property, go to the Rates Calculator at yoursay.byron.nsw.gov.au/srv/rates-calculator

Caught between a rock and a hard place, General Manager Mark Arnold explains: "We know people are frustrated by the state of our roads, the lack of footpaths and the need for better drainage ... but Council's ability to provide essential services for the community in the long-term is severely constrained by high costs, and our limited ability to raise extra revenue," Mr Arnold said.

Have your say online before 30 October at yoursay.byron.nsw.gov.au/srv or at one of the Hinterland information sessions where you can chat with Councillors and Council staff:

- Tuesday 20 October, 5pm–7pm at Bangalow A&I Hall.
- Thursday 22 October, 5pm–7pm at Federal Hall.

Draft economic action plans ready for feedback

How can Council best support the local economy and local businesses? The new Economic Activation Group has been working with business leaders across the Shire to develop three draft plans that are ready for community feedback. The three focus areas are business and industry, destination management and visitors, and events.

Complete the online survey at yoursay.byron.nsw.gov.au/economic-action-plans

Byron Shire Council Community Initiatives Program 2026/27 funding recipients

A big congratulations to these Hinterland-based initiatives that have been successful in receiving funding from Council.

HIYA 2479, Bangalow Lions Club - \$1,000

Purchasing food vouchers and pantry food for people sleeping rough around Bangalow.

Storytime, Bangalow Byron Uniting Church - \$2,605

A structured play space for families with children to share in songs and stories.

Camphor to Rainforest Conversion Stage 3, Federal Landcare Group Inc - \$4,500

Conversion of a Crown land site to rainforest.

Bangalow-raised Councillor now Deputy Mayor of Byron

Congratulations to Councillor Elia Hauge who has been voted in as Byron Shire's Deputy Mayor. She says: "I will continue to work collaboratively with my fellow councillors and our community on the things that matter to Byron Shire. My focus is on delivering the housing we so desperately need, and urgently addressing the impacts of the climate crisis on communities and the environment."

Draft Bangalow Flood Study



Thank you for your feedback Bangalow.

Your feedback is now being reviewed and will be presented to Council at a meeting later this year.

The Bangalow Flood Study will be used to inform the development of the Bangalow Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan which will include more consultation with the community.

More information

- 🌐 yoursay.byron.nsw.gov.au/draft-bangalow-flood-study
- ☎ 02 6626 7000



The Correspondent

by Virginia Evans

Dear Reader,

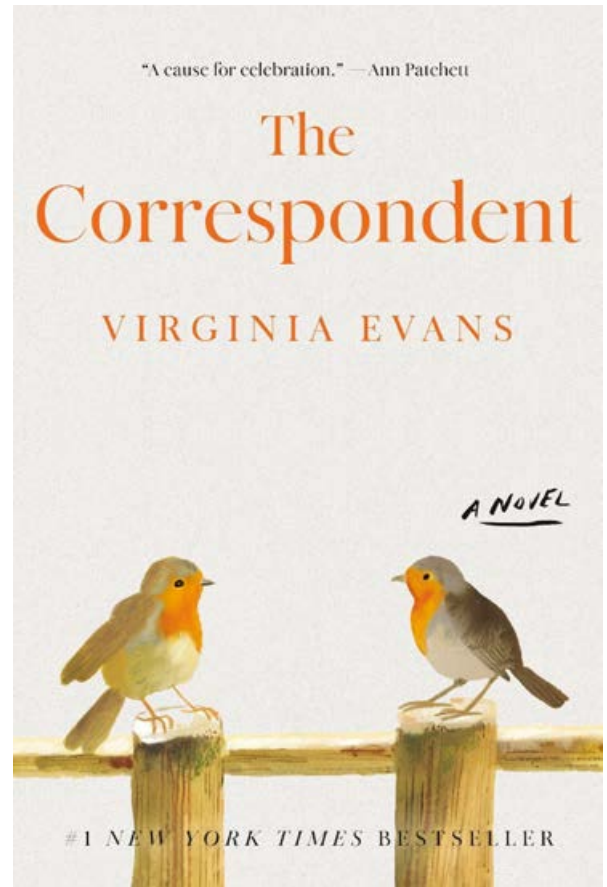
I write to you this month in the format of the book which I would like to tell you about. So, why don't you pretend that we are old friends and enjoy the correspondence...

Dear Friend,

I was gifted this book, *The Correspondent*, and I was excited to see on the front cover, "A warm, funny gem of a novel" *The Times*, Book of the Year". Yay! I thought to myself, something uplifting in these days of doom and gloom. And just by the by, Friend, I've decided to disengage from the news. It's just too damn depressing! Anyway, I have to say that in terms of "warm and funny" it was a bit of a letdown. Sure, there were a couple of laugh-out-loud moments but on the whole I thought the story tackled some pretty deep and heavy topics.

I'm not sure if you'll enjoy the format; the story is written entirely as correspondence from and to the main protagonist, Sybil Van Antwerp, who is a retired lawyer from the American District Court circuit. She's a divorcee with three children but we learn early on in the book that one of her children has died at a young age. She's a very practical, black and white sort of character. I liked her, probably because she reminded me a bit of me, hahaha! She's struggling with her relationship with her daughter, hahaha again, who does that remind you of? Her correspondence is to a number of recipients and it spans a period of ten years. She's writing to her brother who has moved to France with his partner, her best friend who is married to the brother of her ex-husband, a Dean at a university who won't let her attend a class that she desperately wants to take, and she is receiving some deeply disturbing correspondence from someone who signs 'DM' and she thinks it might be related to a case that she once heard in the court.

I'll be honest, I did find the correspondence format a bit frustrating to start with but ultimately the story was great and the format allowed for a slow reveal of some hidden truths. I'd recommend it.



Hey! Just heard that daughter number two is coming home for Christmas. Yay, something to look forward to.

Must away, I've got some shopping to do this afternoon and then we're going out for dinner. Look forward to hearing from you.

Love Carolyn xx

Goodreads rating 4.44 stars (Wow)

Publisher Penguin

Carolyn Adams



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Mango Coconut Tart

With warmer weather rapidly approaching and long, hot summer days to look forward to, so too is the Bangalow Show. The program for this community event and the hotly contested 'Tart of the Show' has been revealed. Now is the time to start perfecting your entry. Even if you are not participating, this recipe will certainly be a crowd pleaser.

I have combined certain flavours to emphasise the coconut aspect of the tart. The addition of coconut flour makes a really crispy crust.

INGREDIENTS

for the pastry

- 150g chilled unsalted butter
- 115g plain flour
- 100g coconut flour
- 75g self-raising flour
- 55g icing sugar
- 1 free-range egg yolk
- 2½ tbsp iced water
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt

for the filling

Coconut white chocolate pastry crème

- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1 cup whole milk
- ½ vanilla bean, scraped
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅓ cup sugar, divided
- ¼ cup cornflour
- 3 egg yolks
- ¼ cup white chocolate chunks
- 1 tbsp butter

Assembly

- 4 ripe mangoes

METHOD

1. In a mixer bowl, combine butter, sugar and salt. Beat on medium speed until pale and fluffy.
2. Add vanilla extract and egg yolk and mix well.
3. On low speed, add flour, two tablespoons at a time, until just incorporated. Do not overmix.
4. Shape dough into a round. Cover in plastic wrap and chill overnight.
5. Let dough sit for about 10 minutes before using.
6. Roll out dough to about 3–4mm thick and fill a greased 25 x 6cm tart pan. Chill before baking.
7. Prick the bottom or blind bake at 160°C for 20–30 minutes, or until slightly golden.
8. While the pastry shell cools, melt ¼ cup white chocolate chunks and 1 tbsp butter, and using a pastry brush, seal the tart shell with melted white chocolate to keep it crisp.
9. In a medium saucepan, heat milk, coconut milk, vanilla bean, salt and half the sugar over medium heat until it starts to simmer.
10. In a bowl, whisk egg yolks, the rest of the sugar and cornflour until pale in colour.
11. Temper the mixture by slowly adding the hot milk and whisking well. Pour back into the saucepan, whisking slowly as it heats. Cook until a few bubbles break the surface.
12. Remove from the heat and strain into a container. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface. Chill overnight.

To assemble

1. Fill the tart with pastry cream. Pipe in or level off.
2. Garnish with mango slices, starting from the outside and working in to form a rose. Overlap each slice a little.

Tips

Gelatine, sugar and water will provide an excellent glaze for the fruit, preventing browning. Alternatively, use warm apricot jam.

Lyn Hand

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The bee's knees

Not a fringe-dweller, *Loropetalum chinense rubrum* is in bloom now around the Shire Photo Carole Gamble

Carole Gamble celebrates the spring colour of Chinese fringeflower and reflects on the important role our gardens can play in supporting bees, insects and local biodiversity.

'China Pink' or Chinese Fringeflower, as it is known, is a stunning shrub in flower around the Shire. Perfect conditions have brought forth huge numbers of blooms and the wonderful pink, mauve and fuchsia colours look amazing amongst the glossy foliage. When the blooms start to fade, the new foliage emerges and it's soft and delicate and usually bronze. The stems and trunk also reward being without bark, revealing a pale, creamy, streaky colour. Quite a feature in itself, rather like the *Lagerstroemias* (Crepe Myrtles), and like them, the natural form is vase-shaped, so wherever possible, please

don't prune these lovely shrubs except lightly, but allow them room to show their best shapes.

One of only five in the *Hamamelidaceae* family of witch-hazels, it grows to about two metres tall and wide and does well in part shade or full sun and makes a lovely backdrop to smaller plants.

It usually flowers from mid-spring to mid-summer but this year I have had blooms for the past month.

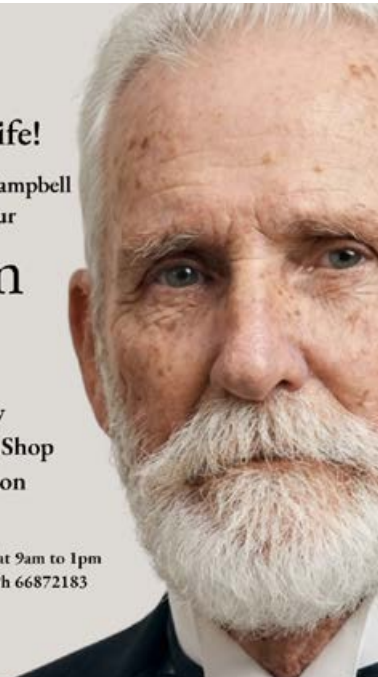
Native to various parts of South-East Asia, it also occurs naturally with white blooms but is not commonly available in Australia.

The roots tend to be shallow so mulching helps keep them healthy and, for more blooms, liquid potash is a great product, especially when combined with one of the good soil improvers such as Seasol, which can be sprayed on during the whole year.

The blooms make great additions to bouquets picked from your garden, providing structure and colour, and what could be nicer than the gift of your garden flowers? Bees love the flowers and it is increasingly important to provide year-round flowers for these important little insects. During the past couple of years their numbers have dropped dramatically and this is a huge worry.

They will use shallow water containers in your garden but the varroa mite has been devastating numbers and this is serious – just ask your local beekeeper!

Gardens not only provide beauty but are necessary for the health of the biodiversity that makes our region so very special. Of course, all insect species are diminishing as insecticides continue to be used in agriculture and gardening, so minimising their use is really important.



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Preserving tradition

A homegrown tradition at Pearces Creek Hall Photo Craig Patch-Taylor

It's a Saturday evening at the start of spring and the little community hall in Pearces Creek is buzzing. The timber stage is packed high with fresh produce: a forest of cut flowers, boxes of fruit, cartons of eggs, still-warm baked goods and preserves. The Harvest Produce Auction and it's all that remains of a tradition that was once common across the region.

Many church congregations used to celebrate the arrival of spring with a Sunday Harvest Festival. Pearces Creek Hall became the local church on Sundays and so was smartly kitted out with God's plentiful bounty: corn stalks lining the walls, boxes of stone fruit and winter veg, buckets of dairy produce and pork. On the Monday, rather than a tiresome cleanup, an auction was held. Everyone showed up, shared supper and then playfully bid for the right to take home each other's stuff. It got the hall cleaned up, gave folks a fun evening out and raised funds for maintenance.

Now held on a more secular Saturday, little else about this long-held tradition has changed. Farmers, families and local businesses still donate everything, a community supper is prepared and shared, followed by a noisy, action-packed and fiercely competitive auction.

With three auctioneers (three!), including lead spruiker Matt Savins, young gun Flynn Formaggin and old hand Ron Chittick (cautiously letting the new kids have a crack after 'twenty-something' years of Pearces Creek auctions) — there was plenty of action on the stage. Matt's local roots go deep, part of the Savins family from Nashua, and he started auctioneering young. "I think I was about 13 years old when I had my first go at a Bangalow poultry auction with Jim Hanley, who has now passed away," he said.

Pearces Creek presents a rather different challenge for an auctioneer, with everything from plants and produce to jars of lemon curd and pickles going under the hammer.

"It's a pretty different style of auctioneering compared to cattle, that's for sure," Matt said.

Bruce McKechnie (another local legend) was out on the floor, showcasing and hand delivering sale items, and unwittingly stealing the show, whooping and pointing to each live bid whilst balancing whatever was on sale in his free hand. Bidding was feverish, frequently reckless and occasionally outrageous — kids throwing in sneaky last minute firecracker bids with or without parental go-ahead — but everyone knows where the money ends up and it doesn't trouble a soul.

We're taking home the things our neighbours have grown and made, benefitting from each other's excess. It feels complete and cyclical, a million miles from the 'convenience' of supermarket shopping. We took home a bootload and enjoyed a Sunday breakfast rich with the spoils of a night well spent.

Craig Patch-Taylor



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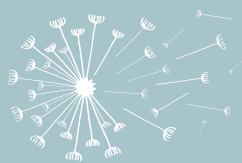
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Show news

The Bangalow Show is BACK – and it's bigger and better than ever

Is it really the Bangalow Show without a storm? What will it be this year? Time will soon tell.

Whether you like to view the iconic events from the safety of the roof of the Lions bar or choose to make the most of the wet conditions, none of the events, year after year, ever disappoint.

Make sure you head into the Bangalow Post Office or Show Office to check out the Pavilion and Ring Schedules and start planning your entries and your day at the Show.

At last year's auction, all proceeds went to the committee's chosen charities: the Westpac Rescue Helicopter and Brunswick Rescue Squad. Bangalow Public School had the top-selling banner at auction, making \$300. If you would love to support your local school, make sure you show up at the auction. Who do you think will have the highest-selling banner this year? The theme is celebrating 125 years of the Bangalow Show. An announcement of proceeds recipients for 2026 will be released soon.

There's nothing quite like a good old-fashioned country show – community, competition, tradition and plenty of fun for the whole family. 125 years. One big celebration. Don't miss it! We can't wait to see you there! It's going to be huge!

Rain, hail or shine ... we'll see you at the Show!

Danielle Mathie

Show Secretary

The Bangalow Show Committee is seeking a passionate individual to take on the role of Show Secretary.

After years of fantastic service, our wonderful Show Secretary, Anne McClelland, has decided to step down to spend more time travelling and making memories with her grandchildren.

This is a dynamic and fulfilling position that keeps our Show running smoothly. The workload is light from December to July, building up steadily from August through to the very busy weeks leading into the Show in November.

The volunteer-based role comes with a generous honorarium and enjoys the support of a fantastic and friendly team, including our President, Treasurer, three Vice Presidents and a dedicated committee.

Anne is looking forward to mentoring her successor leading up to the next Show and we are hoping to have someone start as soon as possible to ensure a smooth transition.

If you have strong admin and organisational skills, good availability (especially in the second half of the year) and the time to support our local community show, we'd love to hear from you.

Donna Jenner (President) 0438 871 698 or
Lois East (Treasurer) 0401 077 720

Bangalow Show Committee

Sponsoring ... The Bangalow Show

The Bangalow Herald is always delighted to be involved with our annual Bangalow Show. In fact – of course – we are happy to sponsor the second-last section within the program: The Written Word.

About 87% of the entries for this section are from people under 18 years old, and it's particularly popular with kids who submit entries in the five-to-eight years age group, then the nine-to-12 years group and finally the 13-to-18 years group. Often smart local schoolteachers use the competition, so their pupils have the experience of preparing and submitting entries into the popular Bangalow Show – then get to show their friends and families when it's up on display. (Also makes a great Facebook post for the relties!)

How it works is like this: categories cover Limerick, Poem, Short Story, Sign Writing, Comics and Comic Story, and Best Handwriting and Illustration. Entrants need to carefully read the instructions, as there have been times when wonderful illustrations or contributions have had to be tossed out because the entrant didn't follow the rules. Each section is open to the four age groups.

Full details of the Written Word section can be found towards the back of the Show's 125th year program, always available at the Post Office and other key spots around town. As a sneak preview, for the Best Handwriting and Illustration section this year, the 2023 Grand Champion Exhibitor, Dave Copeland, has composed this perfect poem. All you need to do is handwrite the words on page 29, with illustrations. (Make sure to submit your entry to the Show Office before 9am, Wednesday 11 November.)

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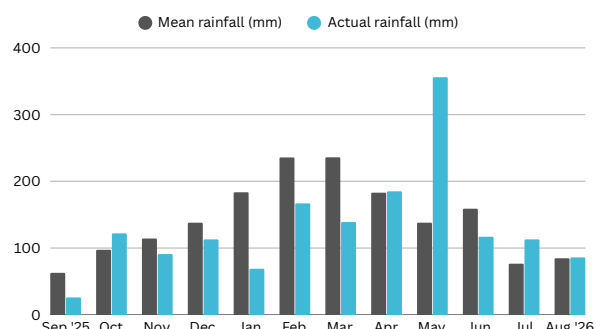


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Source: BOM daily rainfall data Nashua (Wilsons River) station 58162

The Show Pony

by Dave Copeland

As the weather warms up it's that time of the year
 The Showgrounds spruced up, and the sky's looking clear
 I've been waiting all year, and I can't wait to go
 Roll on up! Come on in! It's the Bangalow Show!
 It's been going for yonks, well whilst I've been alive
 For a century and twenty and then you add five
 That's One-Twenty-Five with a capital 'O'
 It might go on forever The Bangalow Show

Through the A and I Hall full of photos and flowers
 Jammed with jams, cakes and pickles, I could've spent hours
 It was making me hungry and no-one said "No!"
 So, I had a quick bite from the Tart of the Show

The poultry then next and the winner (no luck!)
 Was a new kind of breed – yes a hybrid chook-duck
 It was entered unnamed so they just called it 'Chuck'
 And it couldn't quite quack but could certainly cluck

Then to the ring, there was lawnmower racing
 The Ironmen were ironing from the view I was facing
 And just over there were the dogs jumping high
 The winner this year, well, its nose scraped the sky

A showbag or two, geez I gobbled them up
 A Dagwood Dog then, and a quick Pluto Pup
 Some fairy floss too and a quick ginger beer
 The Bush Poets next, you don't know what you'll hear
 Then onto the rides, the Dodgems, The Zipper
 A Carousel then, and geez – that was a ripper!
 And lastly the Cha Cha, it just can't be beaten
 I recommend though, not to ride if you've eaten!
 To round out the day, and it's always on last
 The fireworks show and it's always a blast
 The booms and the bangs as it lights up the sky
 And sends us all home on a guaranteed high!



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What's on

Walk On The Wild Side – Vintage Markets

When Saturday 3 October, 8am–3pm
Where Byron Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
Tickets Free
Info byronbaywildlifesanctuary.com.au/
events-coming-up/walk-on-the-wild-
side-vintage-fair

Enjoy a relaxed day exploring local stalls, live music and the Sanctuary atmosphere. Browse local makers, wellness products and fine foods in the front car park, with free parking and markets running rain or shine. Sanctuary admission and wildlife experiences are available separately.

At the Gates of Summer

When Sunday 4 October, 3pm–4.30pm
Where Bangalow A&I Hall
Tickets \$30/\$25
Bookings events.humanitix.com/at-the-gates-of-
summer

Vox Caldera Chamber Choir welcomes spring with songs of birds, bees and flowers. English madrigals rub shoulders with Vaughan Williams' three Shakespeare songs, Debussy's Hiver and Monteverdi's Zefiro torna. Abby Parkes will also sing the lament of the abandoned nymph in a program exploring the beauty, promise and occasional heartbreak of spring.

Bangalow Garden Club

When Tuesday 6 October, 1.30pm
Where Moller Pavilion, Bangalow Showground
Membership \$25 annually
Info bangalowgardenclub.com or
Diana Harden 0418 288 428

Meet like-minded garden lovers at the Bangalow Garden Club's regular meeting, followed by a garden visit the following Saturday. Regular features include flower of the month, Q&A, a guest speaker and a hotly contested plant auction. New members and visitors are welcome. Afternoon tea is provided. Bring your own mug.

Coorabell Hall Film Club: Beasts of the Southern Wild

When Wednesday 7 October, 7pm
Where Coorabell Hall, 565 Coolamon Scenic Drive
Tickets \$10 at the door
Info coorabellhall.net

Coorabell Hall Film Club presents *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, Benh Zeitlin's visually striking 2012 debut set in an isolated Louisiana bayou community threatened by rising floodwaters. At its heart is six-year-old Hushpuppy, played by Quvenzhané Wallis, living with her ailing father Wink as a devastating storm closes in. Blending magical realism, Southern Gothic and environmental themes, the film explores poverty, family, resilience and a fiercely independent community determined to survive on its own terms.

Shot on 16mm film and made on a modest budget, Quvenzhané Wallis became the youngest Best Actress nominee in Academy Awards history and the film received four Academy Award nominations.

DINGO Music & Arts Festival

When Thursday 8–Sunday 11 October
Where Venues throughout Bangalow and Byron Bay
Tickets From \$79, with free community events on Sunday
Info dingofestival.com

The inaugural DINGO Music & Arts Festival brings four days of music, art and food to Bangalow and Byron Bay. Anchored in jazz but ranging across soul, hip hop, electronic and experimental music, the program features Kokoroko, Hiatus Kaiyote, Miss Kaninna, Nai Palm, Harry James Angus, Rich Medina and dozens more. Bangalow's halls, record stores, galleries and other spaces become festival venues, culminating in The Big Bang, a free community celebration across the village on Sunday from 12pm–6pm.

Coorabell Hall Open Mic

When Friday 9 October, from 5pm, open mic 7pm
Where Coorabell Hall
Tickets \$10

Share your talent at Dr Baz Open Mic, held on the second Friday of each month at Coorabell Hall. The curry menu and bar are available from 5pm–7pm, with the open mic kicking off at 7pm.

Kate Grenville in Conversation

When Monday 12 October, 6pm
Where Bangalow A&I Hall
Bookings events.humanitix.com/kate-grenville-in-
conversation
Info byronwritersfestival.com

Join Kate Grenville, author of *The Secret River* and one of Australia's most celebrated writers, as she brings her new book *A Country Schoolmaster: A Mystery in 88 Letters to the Northern Rivers*. Grenville will be joined in conversation by Mick O'Regan for this special Bangalow event.

Spring Fever at Coorabell Hall

When Friday 16 October, doors 7pm;
Saturday 17 October, 9am-3pm
Where Coorabell Hall
Tickets Friday night \$10
Info Dee 0427 169 098, text only

Coorabell Hall catches Spring Fever with two days of fashion, markets and fun, raising funds for Coorabell Hall Arts. Friday night features a funky fashion parade and Spring Fever raffle, followed on Saturday by a market featuring funky clothing, cards, craft, face painting, wand making, cakes and tea.

Bangalow Tennis Club Championships Finals

When Sunday 18 October, 9am
Where Bangalow Tennis Club
Tickets Free
Info bangalowtennisclub.com.au

The Bangalow Tennis Club Championships are in full swing, with the finals of the adult and junior events to be held on Sunday 18 October. Come along to watch some great singles and doubles tennis.

Opium, Seduction, Greed, Art

When Monday 19 October, doors 6pm for 6.30pm start
Where Bangalow A&I Hall, Station Street
Tickets \$30, including presentation, drinks and nibbles

Bookings TryBooking, code DGEBN
The addictive and beguiling qualities of opium led to its use to quieten and calm agitated minds, while greed drove its widespread introduction. But opium also inspired great works of art. ArtsNational Northern Rivers presents a fascinating talk by Amanda Herries, who studied Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge and was Curator at the Museum of London, specialising in decorative arts, before moving to Japan where she lectured and wrote on Eastern and Western cross-cultural and artistic influences.

Little Hands Art Trail

When 19-25 October, all day
Where Shopfronts in Byron Street, Bangalow
Info qrly.org/vB3Jgh

The Little Hands Art Trail brings the creativity of children from Bangalow Community Children's Centre to the main street. During Art Week, their artworks will be displayed in the windows of participating local businesses. Families and visitors can follow the trail through town, using the map and QR code to discover the children's work along the way.

Full Moon Ceremony

When Saturday 24 October, 7pm-8.30pm
Where Bangalow Uniting Church
Bookings goodvibesgang.com.au
Info goodvibesgang.com.au/
moonceremonies/moonceremonies

Gather in a circle with the full moon for deep rest, guided meditation, journalling and Reiki. The evening offers a space to pause, release, reconnect and restore.



Nai Palm appearing at DINGO Festival
Photo Prue Stent

MICRO 20 x 20

When Friday 23 October-Sunday 29 November
Where The Front Room, Station Street Co-op, Bangalow

What happens when artists are given just 20cm x 20cm to express an idea, emotion, memory or observation? MICRO 20 x 20 is the sixth exhibition in the MICRO series, which began at Gallery 3 in Byron Bay in 2024. Following MICRO 10 x 10, the new exhibition expands the scale while continuing the challenge of exploring how much creativity can be contained within a small space.

BTC presents:
A Streetcar Named Desire

When From Thursday 29 October, 7pm
Where Byron Theatre
Bookings byroncentre.com.au/theatre-events/
a-streetcar-named-desire
Info bangalowtheatre.com.au

Blanche DuBois arrives in New Orleans seeking refuge with her sister Stella and brother-in-law Stanley. As desire, class and conflicting worlds collide, Blanche's carefully constructed illusions begin to unravel. Tennessee Williams' iconic drama explores love, power, vulnerability and the fragile line between fantasy and reality.

We Mavericks play Pearces Creek Hall

When Sunday 1 November, 4.30pm
Where Pearces Creek Hall
Bookings events.humanitix.com/we-mavericks-pearces-creek-hall
Info pearcescreekhall.com.au, 0458 801 941
or info@pearcescreekhall.com.au

Glorious harmonies meet mandolin, violin and two cellos when We Mavericks come to Pearces Creek Hall. Moving from 'wild folk' to country, the duo has earned rave reviews across the UK, Europe and Australia. Victoria Vigenser will also offer a vocal confidence workshop before the show.

Diary

August 2026

3	Walk On The Wild Side – Vintage Markets
4	At the Gates of Summer
6	Bangalow Garden Club
7	Coorabell Hall Film Club: <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i>
9	Coorabell Hall Open Mic
11	DINGO Music & Arts Festival
12	Kate Grenville in Conversation
16	Spring Fever at Coorabell Hall
18	Bangalow Tennis Club Championships Finals
19	Opium, Seduction, Greed, Art
19-25	Little Hands Art Trail
23-29	MICRO 20 x 20
24	Full Moon Ceremony
29	BTC presents: A Streetcar Named Desire

October edition deadlines

What's on	13 September
Copy	13 September
Advertising	13 September





My heart snapped

Dr Airdre Grant reflects on ageing, attitude and an encounter that made her think about the stories we tell ourselves as we grow older, and whether looking towards the light can make the journey a little easier.

A stranger came up to me at the airport, as I waited to board a flight.

'Isn't it awful getting old?' she said cosily.

'I'm coping,' I said, slightly startled.

'But the pain! The stiffness!' she tried again.

'Hmm,' I said, as I sidled away.

'I hate getting old!' she announced to everybody in the line. Then huffed off to get onto the plane.

I was surprised at the woman's need to discuss her pain with strangers. While I see that there is a widespread desire to enrol others in misery conversations, the stranger at the airport made me think about attitude. What role it plays in health, in life. At the gym I had been told to think of my body as a machine. Surely, that's very reductionist, I thought. There's more to wellbeing than that.

A friend who works in aged care told me this. 'It's the most rewarding job I've ever had,' he said. He's in his 50s and he's had a few. 'Older people are fantastic,' he went on. 'They have great stories to tell. One woman I care for, she told me a story that snapped my heart. She has early onset dementia and she talked to me about the slippage that's happening to her. She says she knows things, but finds it hard to locate them when she

wants to. She can feel them slipping away from her.'

'I know they're there,' she had told him. 'It's just they are getting harder to grasp.' She had paused. 'There is one thing about forgetfulness,' she went on to say. 'My daughter died 30 years ago in a car accident. I won't mind forgetting that. The relief from 30 years of sorrow. When that disappears, my heart will finally ease. So,' she added, 'maybe there are shafts of light in the gathering darkness.'

My friend said that his heart snapped at that moment. It's all in the attitude, he says. Some of the people are wedded to gloom, overcome by sadness or pain. Or they love a good disaster story. Others take another path and relish what they have, not what they've lost.

He told me he sees and hears lots of stories about bravery, humour, insights and the gifts of painfully acquired wisdom.

'So, is life about attitude? Choices?' I asked.

'Absolutely!' he said. 'The choices are less obvious when you are young and think you have time on your side, along with the physical robustness of youth. But yes, I see it all the time. Those who embraced joy and those who took a sadder, darker path or got overwhelmed, or stuck.'

It made me think. I don't know what drives people's life choices. I can barely figure out my own. But I have a hunch that a positive outlook serves me better than an attachment to misery. This is not to say gloom isn't very satisfying for some. Some people seem to really enjoy it. I think at heart, that attitude scares me. I am afraid an attachment to everything that's wrong in the world or failing in the body will speed up inevitable decline. And so, I press on, resolutely facing the light, determinedly looking upwards, finding ways to lift my spirits and spending time with those that have the same outlook.

As for the woman at the airport, later I saw her in deep conversation with another person, so maybe she had found a comrade with whom she could discuss pain and decrepitude. I mentally wished her well, as I gave them a wide berth.

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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