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Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

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Tony Gordon took this photo in the early '70s off the Bangalow Road near Hayters Hill. (www.tonygordonprintcounsel.com) This view no longer exists because it's overgrown. The white gable roof cottage in the foreground is still there. There is a large house in the center behind the cottage which is likely the old Fagan house. The Fagans operated the sanitary run. The bald hill is where Oodgeroo Gardens is now.

If you can tell us what the sign says you'll win a prize. Email: rustym@iinet.net.au

Cover quote: Gough Whitlam, 12 Nov 2010.

## RUSTYS BYRON GUIDE

# 2015

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*Rusty Miller & Tricia Shantz*

## IT'S TIME - AGAIN



The passing of Australia's former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in October 2014 recalls for me the political/cultural renaissance he instigated in this nation state.

When Whitlam became Prime Minister in 1972, I had just arrived here from America where three of my favourite, progressive national heroes, John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, had all recently been shot dead.

I was publishing a local, free newspaper called the Byron Express, and just weeks after Whitlam won I went up to Murwillumbah to cover the Labor Party 'thank you' dinner at the public hall. After visiting the court house Gough and his wife Margaret decided not to take the limo to the hall but rather walk the few blocks. I was strolling parallel with the entourage and realized at one point it was just Gough and me. We started chatting, just like you would engage with someone on the street heading in the same direction. It was all very casual, and intimate. This is when I decided we were going the same way and I wanted to become a citizen of this country.

Gough was the right man at the right time for change. He woke this country up to self-empowerment. His humanitarian, life-supporting government was philosophically positive and contributed to the building of a just, egalitarian society. Gough, in his short and furious term in office, 1972 to 1975, launched and symbolized more change than any Australian prime minister ever has before or since.

Today, we face a tsunami of social and political issues in Byron that are directly connected to our national interest, while at the same time we

are suffering mission/passion fatigue because there are so many challenges. But, boiling it all down to basics, it's time we do what Byron does so well, again; turn the tide.

Over the last year this community has fought to keep coal seam gas (CSG) out of the Northern Rivers, and this successful campaign has also resulted in CSG becoming a major issue in the state election due next March. However, Byron Bay is now under the most development pressure it has ever faced. There is a major residential development gazetted at West Byron, a proposed seniors living accommodation at Ewingsdale next to the new hospital, and a Gold Coast style shopping centre approved in the centre of town that exceeds height limits. One of these would be big, and combined they will bring massive changes to the town of Byron Bay. Yes, we've seen development happen over the past 35 years, but this is on a whole new scale.

What do the three immensely popular international holiday destinations of Waikiki, Kuta and Byron Bay have in common? They were all built on swamps next to the ocean. Both Waikiki and Kuta now have high levels of density, and in Kuta this has resulted in seriously reduced amenity. We are about to go this way with the proposal to put as many as 1100 houses into the swamp at West Byron. Both Bali and Hawaii have strong cultures that keep visitors coming and people wanting to live there. What is the magnet to Byron? What is it in Byron's culture that will keep people living here and visiting here? Interestingly, the three pillars that Bali society proclaims - Spirituality, Humanity and



When Winston Churchill was asked to cut arts funding in favour of the war effort, he simply replied, "then what are we fighting for?"



Photo: Rusty Miller

Environment - also underpin much of what Byron stands for. The reason people come here is that life in our community is what they want theirs to be like: lives built upon the spirit and feeling of humanity, the sense that people are worth more than how much they have in the bank, and that ideas that are unconventional and not dominant can be strong and worth striving for.

In Byron Bay, a sustainable and creative economy has steered our success in culture and tourism, and we have to keep this heritage, remain culturally rich, and draw together ever more creative minds. One of the many concerns about the developments happening in Byron currently is that they really don't create the types of jobs that will build that kind of future.

Australia is in one of the most fortunate places in the world. We are the only country to have our own continent, currently a very peaceful one, which happens to be full of vast natural resources,

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*inspired by nature*



Photo: Tao Jones

a small population and to date not extensively polluted. Many international corporations and investors quietly call Australia "Treasure Island", for the spoils they're trying to get their hands on. We say it is a treasure island, with a bountiful natural environment for all, and opportunities for local initiatives. Every year, to finance the Byron Guide, we go out around this town selling advertising. The Guide always celebrates the spirit and bravery of locally owned businesses, of which, thankfully, we still have quite a few, and it's always a warm feeling to walk into a business and be greeted by the owner, who lives in town.

The Hawaiians have a saying that they stand firmly in the present, back to the future, eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas (Carlos Andrade's book: *Haena* 2009. Page 2).

This brings us back to Gough. Looking at all the reforms his government enacted, we see that he had a vision of what Australia needed to do in the 1970s, and his boldness tore aside the blanket of

fear and timidity that the entrenched rulers of the day had thrown over us: Don't ask for anything more, they said, we're in charge of business here, including yours – just leave it to us.

We need vision and boldness here in Byron today, to tear away the stifling blanket of helplessness thrown over us by today's miners and developers and their enablers in local, state and federal government. We need serious reforms for the long-term to beat back these people who dress selfishness up as a virtuous ideology when it is actually poisonous to the essence of our community. 🌊

### **WHITLAM'S MEMORIAL SPEECH BY CATE BLANCHETT**

I am the beneficiary of good, free healthcare, and that meant the little I earned after tax and rent could go towards seeing shows, bands, and living inside my generation's expression. I am a product of the Australia Council.

I am the beneficiary of a foreign policy that put

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do more of it. If it doesn't, do  
something else.*

FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT



us on the world stage and on the front foot in our region. I am the product of an Australia that engages with the globe and engages honestly with its history and its indigenous peoples.

I am a small part of Australia's coming of age, and so many of those initiatives were enacted when I was three.

He said of his government:

"In any civilised community, the arts and associated amenities must occupy a central place. Their enjoyment should not be seen as remote from everyday life. Of all the objectives

of my government, none had a higher priority than the encouragement of the arts - the preservation and enrichment of our cultural and intellectual heritage. Indeed I would argue that all other objectives of a Labor government - social reform, justice and equity in the provision of welfare services and educational opportunities - have as their goal the creation of a society in which the arts and the appreciation of spiritual and intellectual values can flourish. Our other objectives are all means to an end. The enjoyment of the arts is an end in itself."

Source: [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)

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*Chris Masters*

# THE GLOBAL VILLAGER



I blame my optimism about the survival of civilization on a country town upbringing...and my mum.

Being raised by the village has its flaws. The villagers can be overbearing and intrusive, but they will look out for you. The invisible social controls that weave a web of belonging hold tightly enough for you to feel them all your days.

My mother, another captive of this upbringing, further believed in the innate decency of people. This is particularly important to journalists and all who are commonly exposed to the darker side of humanity. You have to believe your reporting can make things better, otherwise why would you do it?

When I moved from Lismore to Sydney at the age of 15 I was swiftly in trouble. Walking past extravagance and destitution was a routine torment to the pastoral psyche. It has always felt like it was partly my fault.

Then not long into adulthood, well before Orlando Bloom and James Packer made it fashionable I married a Gunnedah girl and fled back to the country. Following in my mother's footsteps and working in regional newsrooms I was soon imbued by her tradecraft.

Mum would say the important stories are not best found in riots and revolutions but in the human heart. When you wake up in small communities, where again nothing has happened, you have to get out there and explore.

Social responsibility is more keenly felt, so

beyond attending to the news industry staples of what, when and where, you pay a touch more attention to the how and the why. Sociology becoming a subset of so many stories, and ever so slyly the moral compass is calibrated.

It is harder to be unfair to people you run into every day.

Out there on the beat between reporting stock sales and checking river levels, you could not miss the war memorials sometimes with barely a community left in silent contemplation. Stopping to read the faded inscriptions you could not help take on some consciousness of the toll when civilization breaks down. Born as I was soon after the Second World War, the shadow of a massive why has always imposed.

And soon in to adulthood I began to see some of it myself. Against some expectations fate propelling me back to the city and a long career as a Four Corners reporter.

Talk about the darker side... I came to interview so many soulless drug dealers and disgruntled police officers I wondered when I would meet a grunted one. And when not attending to the cracks in civilization at home, I was off to a war zone.

Settings such as Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia deliver an entirely different perspective. It is harder to trust humanity when you pass dead bodies piled above your head, countless, remembering the faces in particular of the children. I can still hear the pleading of children

*When the gods wish to disperse a little favour they first dispense a little disfavour to see how you will take it.*

CHINESE PROVERB



in the wreckage of Phnom Penh, well into the night. 'Monsieur, monsieur j'fai me, j'fai me'.

When I returned from those journeys to the village just beyond the city that is now my home the baggage came with me, as it should.

Australia for all its flaws is largely insulated from the common heartache of war - the smell of death and the terror that accompanies breakdown of rule of law. But we still live in the world and just wishing people would be nice to one another does not cut it.

All those years at Four Corners destroyed any notion that peace is a common state. Veterans are often troubled when approaching the silence that follows tumult, knowing they can no longer regard it as normal.

These experiences have not adjusted my anti war disposition. It is just that I can't see war as something that can be wished away. We can no more ban war as banish plague and pestilence. The more sensible goal is one of being on the right side, protecting the innocent and maintaining moral authority. Or if you like, as our grandparents put it, doing our best to be tough and fair.

For the past decade I have reported the Afghanistan conflict and in contrast to friends and colleagues, have generally defended the mission. I won't deny it may well have been a mistake for Australians to go there in the first place. But that for me was never the most important question.

When Australians did deploy, as is commonly the case the public cheered them on. And once there, as is the way with war, getting out of it with a scorecard that justified the endeavour became tough, perhaps too tough.

But we were on the right side. We were protecting the innocent. By my own observation, notwithstanding the recklessness

and anarchy of armed conflict, Australian service personnel behaved well, demonstrating admirable courage and restraint.

Back in 2010 I saw off a bunch of them from Gallipoli Barracks in Brisbane, to later join them at a combat outpost in Uruzgan. As they marched out a lone pair of demonstrators voiced a protest at the main gate. Even then I found myself admiring the protestors as much as I respected the soldiers.

We can't take peace for granted any more than we can assume the village works without the honest engagement of all its citizens. An enduring lesson for me is that democracy only fully functions when we are all in it. 🌐

*Chris Masters, born in Grafton spent his early years at Lismore where his mother worked at the Northern Star. He became the longest serving reporter on Australia's longest running current affairs show, Four Corners. [www.chrismasters.com.au](http://www.chrismasters.com.au)*

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*Hugh Mackay*

# THE ART OF BELONGING

It's not where you live, it's how you live



Aren't you sick of being told that the deepest truth about human beings is that we are hopelessly selfish by nature? That even acts of apparent altruism are really just intended to make us feel better about ourselves and to look better in the eyes of others? That we are ruthlessly competitive creatures, so intent on satisfying our own needs that we are capable of aggressive and even violent behaviour towards anyone who gets in our way?

Of course those things are true, some of the time. But there's an even deeper truth about us: we are by nature social creatures; co-operative more than competitive. Most of us choose to live in close proximity with each other - in cities, towns and villages - because, for all our claims to independence, we are not good at surviving in isolation.

We need each other. We need communities to sustain us, and if those communities are to survive and prosper, we must engage with them and nurture them. That's the beautiful symmetry of human society: to survive, we need communities and if those communities are to survive, they need us.

So here's the classic human quandary: we are individuals with a strong sense of our independent personal identity and we are members of families, groups and communities with an equally strong sense of social identity, fed by our desire to connect and belong.

We hear a lot about the two sides of human nature: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde; right-brain, left

brain; masculinity, femininity; our rational and emotional sides. Most of those distinctions are fairly meaningless, but perhaps the most useful explanation of our "two sides" lies in this tension between our independence and our interdependence. This explains why we are so often conflicted and confused: we know how best to live, but our internal war distracts us.

It is indeed in our nature to be altruistic, because altruism nurtures the community, but our natural drive to please ourselves sometimes takes over. We know that a civil society depends on our mutual kindness and respect, but sometimes we simply want our own way, regardless of its impact on others. We know the price we must pay for belonging to a community is to curb our self-interest, but our impulses and addictions sometimes get the better of us.

If you want to see the tension between independence and interdependence in action, watch us playing team sports. Yes, most sports are symbolic representations of ancient and primitive urges to hunt and to defend our territory, but they are also a lovely demonstration of how we must co-operate as a team, as well as compete with the opposition.

Most of us find it hard to resolve this tension, which is why we often dream of a place where it would be possible to live as we think we should - where our better nature can shine through. This is what drives the fantasy of "village life", even in our big cities. (Sydney's Lord Mayor is determined to make Sydney a "city of villages" in the manner of New York.)

The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new heartless image in the cult of money and dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly human goal. POPE FRANCIS



Photo: Tao Jones



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That word “village” has such emotional power because it conjures up the idea of a place where the tension between independence and interdependence can be resolved in a harmonious way; where we can write poetry in solitude but also be part of a caring and supportive community; where the neighbours will strike that perfect balance between friendliness and respect for each other’s privacy.

Inside our heads, the fantasy often involves an idyllic rural setting that magically eliminates flies, snakes, drought, grasshopper plagues, and a higher rate of respiratory disease and mental illness compared with the city - to say nothing of poorer access to educational, medical, administrative and commercial services. And yet, regardless of the tough reality, the concept is appealing because it evokes a feeling of physical safety and emotional security; the sense that “I belong here”. The good news is that you can create a village - or at least the life of a village - anywhere at all: it’s not about where you live; it’s about how you live, and the acid test is how you relate to the local neighbourhood. Mostly, our neighbours are accidental - we didn’t choose them, yet we must get along with them. They will become the people who, with or without the extra dimension of friendship, will become part of the fabric of our, and our children’s lives.

Just like any other kind of human relationship, our relationship with a local community requires

some effort on our part if it is to work.

In modern Western societies like Australia, many pressures work against community engagement and involvement: our changing patterns of marriage and divorce demand difficult adjustments for many families and social networks; our low birthrate reduces the role children have traditionally played as a social lubricant; the rise of the two-income household means both partners are often too busy to give much time to the local neighbourhood; the mobility of the population (in Australia, like the US, we move, on average, every six years); universal car ownership reducing local footpath traffic; the IT revolution that makes it so easy for us not to see each other...plus all the normal shadows that fall across the life of any community.

Communities are not self-sustaining. We need to respond to our natural “herd instinct” by joining, associating, congregating, volunteering, talking and listening - engaging. Everything from joining a book club or stopping to chat with a neighbour to greeting a stranger helps to build the social capital that communities rely on.

Part of the magic of communities is that, however imperceptibly, they shape us to fit them. We are the authors of each other’s stories through the influence we have on each other. Each of our stories might be unique, but the sub-text is universal: it is about finding the answer to





**KENYAN PROVERB:**  
*when elephants fight the grass  
gets trampled*



just one question: where do I belong? After all, you don't really know who you are until you know where you belong. 🌐

*Hugh Mackay's new book, The Art of Belonging, is published by Macmillan. Hugh Mackay is a social researcher and the author of 16 books - including the 2013 bestseller, The Good Life, and his sixth novel, Infidelity, also published in 2013. [www.hughmackay.com.au](http://www.hughmackay.com.au)*



Photo: Nelly Le Comte

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Photo: David Young

Lisa Walker

# ARMCHAIR PILGRIM



It all started about fifteen years ago when I moved to this area. Suddenly it seemed like everyone I met had just done, or was about to do, a pilgrimage. Those who had returned talked about it ecstatically – it was life changing. The idea attracted me, and still does – I have become an avid armchair pilgrim. I visualise the experience as a chance to take stock and maybe change direction. Although I am yet to set forth, I have written a book about a pilgrimage and I still have a vague notion that at some stage I will head out – sans husband and kids – on a spiritual journey from which I will return changed for the better.

Some say the modern-day rush of pilgrims began in 1987 after Paulo Coelho's book 'The Pilgrimage'. Since then an abundance of books have hit the market. Shirley Maclaine wrote one, as did Martin Sheen to follow up his movie, 'The Way'. The Camino pilgrimage in Spain now has over 200 000 pilgrims each year, compared to 600 in 1985. But the phenomenon is broader than just the Camino. The Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan, a 60 day trek to 88 temples is also

booming. Over a decade its numbers have tripled to 150,000 pilgrims every year. Given these figures it's no wonder I encounter so many returned pilgrims on the streets of Byron Bay. But what

drives people to head off on a pilgrimage and what happens when they return?

Traditionally, pilgrimages were taken in order to cleanse the pilgrim of their sins. They offered a state of transition which led to transformation in the pilgrim's life. Ian Reader, in his book, 'Making Pilgrimages', notes that bad luck with jobs, health or romance are common reasons for pilgrims to set out on the Shikoku walk. Young Japanese women commonly walk alone to recover after a breakup. But what about our local pilgrims?

Byron Bay local Helen Burns set off on the Camino craving time and space alone and found much, much more. Echoing Ian Reader, she says that many people were there because of crises in their lives and many walked alone as she did. Helen tells me she thinks one of the reasons a pilgrimage is so powerful is because of its sense of community and tradition. 'I felt like I was being carried along on a river of all the people who had trodden there before,' she says. She believes that most people find the experience life changing. For her, among other things, it led to becoming a writer. 'I had never anticipated writing a book or taking writing seriously beforehand,' she says. 'The Way is a River of Stars', Helen's tale of walking the Camino as a Buddhist, came out in 2013. 'The walk changes you,' says Helen. 'All the superfluous baggage

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*We can never hope to conserve nature unless we try to alleviate the poverty of local communities.*

JANE GOODALL



in my life; thoughts, emotions, expectations, simply dropped away.'

Another Byron resident, Penny Leonard, also found her pilgrimage transformative. Penny walked the Camino because she felt her life needed 'recalibrating.' 'I wanted to rediscover the adventurous me after years of motherhood and mortgages,' she says. Everyone she met was there because they had a question that needed answering. 'They were walking in hope,' she says. Some of them found their answer, while others – like the tearful Korean she met on the church steps at the end – didn't. For Penny, the journey led to a profound rethink and major change in her life. Even now, she uses the Camino as a reference point when facing difficulty. 'I know if I can do that, then I can do this,' she says. While the pilgrimage itself may be hard, returning to the real world also presents challenges. Penny found that returning to people and technology was overwhelming. 'The challenge is to maintain the feeling of peace that you have on the pilgrimage in everyday life,' she says.

'The real Camino begins when you get home,' is a well-known saying. Author Lisa Dempster relates in her book, 'Neon Pilgrim' how she walked the Shikoku pilgrimage in an effort to recover from depression. Initially she found completing the walk anti-climactic before realising that the pilgrimage, 'doesn't really have a start or end anymore than any spiritual journey starts or ends...' Indeed, some people find that endings are also beginnings and that they never give up the pilgrimage. Instead, at the end, they just turn around and go back the other way.

To me this points to the idea of life as one big pilgrimage and I wonder, is it the place that matters, or just the process? If you take time out from your daily life to meditate upon a question,

will it have the same result regardless of where you do it? Can you, in effect, design your own pilgrimage? I'd like to think that you can, because that's exactly what I've done.

A few years ago, inspired by pilgrims' tales, I started to write a novel about a woman walking the Shikoku pilgrimage. I bought a lot of books and became quite an armchair expert, but somehow I could never find the time to go. Despite this obstacle the book was on a roll so, loathe to put on the brakes, I got creative and changed the setting. My pilgrim now travels no further north than Noosa and no further south than Sydney. She is a 'do it yourself' pilgrim, finding transcendence on the highways and byways of our local area on her way to the next 'big thing'. And for those who might think this sounds dull compared to the offerings of The Camino or Shikoku, I can only ask – have you been to the Big Banana lately? 🌍

*Lisa Walker is the author of the novels 'Liar Bird' and 'Sex, Lies and Bonsai' (HarperCollins) and the ABC Radio National Play 'Baddest Backpackers.' She is also an eclectic reader, surfer and lover of wild places. Her third novel, 'Arkie's Pilgrimage to the Next Big Thing' (Random House) is released in 2015. [www.lisawalker.com.au](http://www.lisawalker.com.au)*



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**Matthew Michaelis**

# SURVIVAL IN THE 21st CENTURY

## and the Primordial Foodie



I've got a 'thing' I do each day to clean my palette, I think it's civilised, (it's a necessary part of being a food scribe). With the aid of a pop-top water bottle, I make up some saline using water and salt, then, with a heave, I squirt the contents up each nostril. I'll understand if you're all dry-retching right about now - but until you try it, you can't knock it. Apart from the very important tastebuds that I'm cleansing, the feeling of salt water shooting up my nose, reminds me of surfing, sailing and waterskiing - regular events that have been burnt into my psyche. These energetic pastimes come flooding back (literally) with the salt water spray; falling off boards, water skis and tumbling out of a sail boat, part of my advantaged childhood and often the pastime and hobbies of many kids and adults in the diverse countryside surrounding Byron Bay. Surfers don't need to worry about such things with the salt sea spray imbibed in every wave. I admit, I don't surf any more due to a sports injury that occurred while in the ocean, though it's still in my blood. Now that I've cleared my nose, I'm ready to eat, cook and sip in one of God's finest refectories - the Byron Shire.

Sun, surf and salty spray complement some of the most varied choices in foods grown and prepared anywhere on planet earth. The Shire and its surrounding countryside houses the sea-changed, the tree-changed, expats and farmers that proudly call themselves foodies from all walks of life and skill bases they come

forth to live and work among the perfect backdrop that allures anyone with a thread of sentience.

The Byron Shire is flanked by the largest caldera in the southern hemisphere (the cauldron-like volcanic area formed by a volcanic eruption - for those who didn't study geology). The word caldera is Spanish from the Latin calderia, meaning "cooking pot". How fitting considering the Shire is filled with some of the best food grown and available at the many markets, stores, cafes and restaurants. The volcanic soil, in part, is why the valleys and lands in and around the Shire are just so fertile and one of the many reasons so many foodies end up growing, planting, making and composing their culinary complements. The ever-growing popularity of the local Farmers' Markets is a testimony to this.

Civilisation to me is an upgrade and gastronomic enhancement to the hunter-gatherer in our nature. Eating has certainly become more sophisticated. The rudimentary need for food has transmuted to an obligatory prerequisite to consume it with balance, elegance, beauty and nutrition. In this mixed-up, disparate world, Byron Shire is a place where the seasoned foodie can happily contemplate what survival means to the spoil for choice in the 21st Century. 🌍

*Matthew Michaelis is a culinary philosopher, an artist of digestion, a food critic, writer and producer for the past 35 years, stalking mediocrity in the dead of night. [www.everycookandcranny.com.au](http://www.everycookandcranny.com.au)*

*When the power of love overcomes  
the love of power, the world will  
know peace*

JIMI HENDRIX



Photo: Nelly Le Comte

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Photo: Nelly Le Comte

**Claire McGarry**

## SECURING OUR FOOD FUTURE

Did you know that the average NSW household spends \$1036 a year on food that goes to waste, and this adds up to \$2.5 billion a year across the State? Or that between 2010 and 2011 more than 1.2 million tonnes of food went to landfill in NSW, equivalent to one swimming pool every nine hours? Or the number of farms in Australia has dropped by 20,000 over the past decade? And in 2008, only 6% of Australian adults consumed the recommended daily intake of both fruit and vegetables and almost one quarter of Australia's disease burden is associated with diet-related risk factors?

From this compelling background of figures, and in line with the clean, green reputation of our region, Regional Development Australia's Securing our Food Future project was created to spread practical information on local food economies to councils across NSW. A series of workshops were delivered addressing key areas including community gardens, farmers'

markets, roadside food stalls, public space gardens, sustainable catering and waste reduction. A resources kit was also sent to every council in the state. The overwhelming success of the project arose from bringing people within regions together to talk about food and the security of their local food system. The conversations that started as a result of just having the right people in the room talking about this issue were unbelievably inspiring. They all started to see that they weren't alone in their concern around this issue, and that if they worked together they could achieve a lot for their region in a really short time. The Food Futures project has created a valuable resource that will continue to evolve and support food safety initiatives of governments, companies and individuals across NSW. 🌱

*Claire McGarry is the Events and Grants Officer at Byron Shire Council. She began her career in the music industry before working as a regional climate change consultant encompassing local food, renewable energy and sustainable transport.*

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*Angelica Neville*

# FINDING BYRON

in a Museum of Words

Six weeks before returning home to see my parents in Byron Bay, I was in a Family Mart in Jakarta.

Family Marts are like any generic supermarket except that they are equipped with a hall of plastic tables. Taking your recently purchased snacks upstairs, you can settle in for a late-night picnic. There is no music, and the lights are fluorescent, but in Jakarta it's a choice between this or expensive cocktail bars with themes such as 'lush', 'trees', 'recycled', 'NYC', 'aeroplane', or 'bordello'.

I was travelling with a tall friend called Stephanie who people mistook for being very serious, but who in fact had a reckless edge. She had been put in touch with a Jakarta-based artist who took us to the Family Mart for a drink. Over Anker beers and above the distant hum of checkout beeps, he told us that there was a "Museum of Words" on a small island called Belitung, flung half way between the Indonesian mainland and Borneo.

We were the only foreigners on the plane to Belitung. When the airhostess translated her announcements into English, the other passengers laughed. We waited for our luggage – in my case a stuffed backpack with a blue enamel teapot tied to the outside and in my friend's case, a wheelie bag of neatly folded, pure cotton, garments. Other passengers approached us, asking where we were from and if they could stand with us in photos. They would point upwards towards my friend's face in order to communicate,



stationary and hysterical, "Isn't she tall!?"

Our accommodation, booked via text message, had sent an old van and a toothy driver called Andy to pick us up. To make up for our lack of shared language, Andy kept offering us

cigarettes on the winding drive.

Stretches of Belitung's interior are pockmarked by tin-mines, but you wouldn't know this from the island's sandy outer edge. The beaches are what people look for when they go to all the places "that are like Bali fifty years ago." You can sit on the wharf and see fish deep in the water, then you can eat the fish sitting with your feet in the sand. We hired a wooden boat the size of a junior humpback whale to explore surrounding uninhabited atolls. Our captain was a muscular and ageless fisherman who spent the day in black underpants, frequently diving deep into the sea, holding his breath for incredible lengths. He took us to a 70-metre-tall lighthouse built in 1882 by Dutch colonisers, on an atoll that hosted nothing else but a clump of palm trees. The grounds were begging to be renovated into a boutique hotel, but for now we climbed 18 flights of rusting stairs that smelt of urine, scaling the structure's interior. Just above the lantern room was a terrifying balcony from which we could see the distant curve of the ocean's horizon.

The prospect of intrepid boating almost distracted us entirely from The Museum of Words but Andy agreed to take us, and we



*Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on, or by imbeciles who really mean it.*

MARK TWAIN



climbed back into to his smoke-filled van. It took two hours to get there from the main town, and even longer from the cabins we were staying in. They were termite-riddled and our hosts always had the TV on full volume, but our shaky balconies looked right over the beach.

We crossed the landmass. We drove by a dozen roundabouts, each one marked by a kitsch plaster sculpture – a fish, a family, a crocodile. We saw mines and dams and stretches of land that looked strangely Australian – corrugated iron houses planted amongst plains of dry-spikey shrubs.

We drove through a Balinese “transmigrasi” town marked by Hindu temples. Transmigration was an Indonesia-wide policy introduced by the Dutch and carried on after independence. It moved landless people from densely populated regions like Bali and Java to less populated outer islands, like the one we found ourselves driving through at high speeds. We saw the abandoned foundations of a seaside resort, a project of the former dictator Suharto’s son, construction frozen while corruption cases take their course. We saw an empty restaurant replicating a

Spanish galleon ship on the side of a small lake.

Finally we reached The Museum of Words. Simultaneously, my fiend Stephanie lost her voice – perhaps from exclaiming on the window’s shifting scenes. It was an inviting wooden house with Queenslander elements. In the front garden there was a life-size sculpture depicting a scene from Gulliver’s Travels: A voyage to Lilliput. Gulliver, who looked as if he had been sculpted from metal coat hangers, was tied down by dozens of three-inch tall men.

Parts of the Museum’s interior evoked my old Steiner school. There were rooms and rooms of quotes about creativity, reading, spirals and believing, painted in various pastel colours. Other rooms were covered floor to ceiling with passages from famous books. JK Rowling’s prose hung un-snobbishly next to Hemingway’s, and coffee boiled on an open fire at the Umberto Eco Café. In one dark corner there was an antique wooden desk piled with stamped postcards and pens, encouraging people to write home. A laminated placard at the entrance to “Indonesia’s first literary museum” explained it all. The Museum of

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Words (or Museum Kata) is an initiative of Andrea Hirata, a shaggy-haired economist turned best-selling Indonesian author. His autobiographical book, *The Rainbow Troops*, is about growing up poor on Belitung. From his tin-shed island school he managed to achieve against all the odds. It's a feel-good rags-to-riches tale that had unprecedented success; it sold 5 million copies in Indonesia, and according to Wikipedia, an additional 15 million copies were pirated.

Hirata's Museum of Words embodies the book's social justice message, the importance of education for all. It even has two mini-schools inside: one is a replica of the battered classroom that much of his story is set in, and the other is a reading corner for kids. By celebrating the author's success, the museum aims to motivate the people of Belitung. One huge poster asks 'Do I inspire you?'

Hirata's tale made the whole island famous, but only nationally. Belitung evades mention in the particularly thick Lonely Planet Indonesia and everybody on the island was surprised we were there. Even the museum's employees asked to stand in pictures with us, again they pointed upwards and grinned. How had we made it to this distant atoll?

I did one last round of the museum's wooden corridors and found Stephanie pointing excitedly at a well-adorned wall. She was

mouthed the words, 'have you seen this?!' – I looked at the display and made an exclamation of surprise loud enough for the two of us.

A whole section of wall was devoted to Byron Bay. Clippings from the Byron Shire News, photographs and placards were tessellated to reveal that Hirata had visited Byron in 2012. He had spoken at the Byron Bay Writer's Festival, and judging by the array of newspaper articles on the visit, he and the town had left a mutual impression on each other.

On the tropical island with a Museum of Words I think of the surf-town with streets named after poets. Byron Bay itself is not named after the sexed-up romantic Lord Byron, but rather his grandfather, a skilled navigator who was much more respectable. However, the assumption that poet-Byron was the namesake stirred the literary imaginations of town-planners in the 1880s. Like the Museum of Words, popular writers of the day are casually bundled together; an Australian 'bush poet' (Patterson) runs parallel to an English playwright (Massinger), off which runs a Scottish satirist (Carlyle); on the other side of town, behind a string of surf schools, Milton Street is only three blocks long.

The museum filled with Hirata fans by midday, and toothy-Andy looked increasingly bored. He was slumped in the corner with his

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The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

Alice Walker



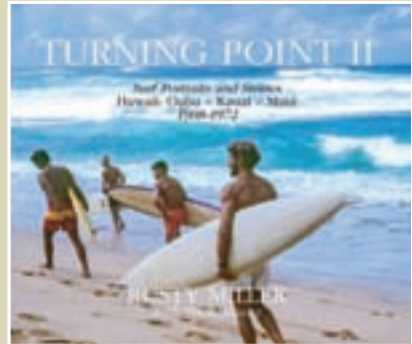
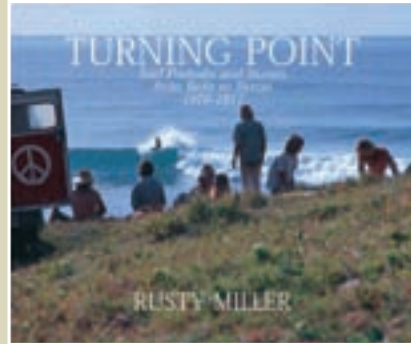
fourth coffee, defended by a circle of saucers-turned-ashtrays. Stephanie and I took a photo under the 'do I inspire you?' poster, trying to pull off the same cheesy brand of posed-comedy that greeted us at the airport. 'Isn't she tall!' 'Do I inspire You?!'

Back in the van we passed the empty ship-shaped restaurant and went somewhere else for lunch. 🌐

Angelica is a writer and researcher interested in political theory, social impact and travel, who undertook her postgraduate studies at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.



Photo: Nelly Le Comte



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*The Arakwal National Park and Cape Byron State Conservation Area have both been formally recognised as among the best managed reserves in the world. They are among just three Australian areas selected for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) new 'green List' of protected areas. Encompassing the area behind Tallow Beach to the Byron Bay lighthouse, the combined area is a haven for migratory birds, a range of native wildlife and an Australian tourism hotspot. There was only one other area in Australia that was added to the 'green list'. The IUCN already has a widely recognised 'red list', which looks at species and areas facing extinction. But this new initiative celebrates effective protected areas and their benefits to communities and nature. The IUCN is the world's most significant international conservation agency.*

*The Arakwal National Park was established in 2001, as part of a historical land use agreement between the Arakwal Indigenous community and the New South Wales government. They are one of the first parks to be green listed in the world.*

Photo: Tao Jones

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FASHION

*Richard Hil*

# UNIVERSITY EDUCATION MATTERS

But what sort?



I spend a lot of my time talking to people in the Byron Shire and beyond about education – what it means to them, why it's important; what constitutes a good or bad education, who benefits from it, what's right or wrong about the current system, how can the system be improved, and so forth. The one thing that everyone seems to agree on is that education - in all its forms - matters a lot. It is – or should be - the backbone of a decent, caring, productive, creative, innovative, peaceful and 'prosperous' society. It should make us kinder, more empathetic and respectful citizens, partners, community members and neighbours.

On the matter of university education, a Mullumbimby resident argued that: 'It should be about the public good rather than simple self-interest', adding that, 'education strives to make the world a better place. It should

not be manipulated by the powerful to meet their preferred ideological ends, or to prop up existing arrangements to benefit particular sectional interests. And it's certainly more than about productivity and economic

growth'.

I have to admit that many of the folk I spoke to in the Byron Shire were hardly your average conservative voters: far from it. Nonetheless, they did raise some interesting questions, especially on the vexed matter of university education, like: what sort of education are students getting at today's universities? What sorts of values underpin these institutions, and why?

Since the so-called Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s, the university system has been characterised by the '3Ms': marketisation, massification, and managerialism. Big words;

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*Women who seek to be equal  
with men lack ambition*

TIMOTHY LEARY



yes, but resonant with meaning. The first 'M' – marketisation – refers to the open and intensive competition for student enrolments that occurs between Australia's 42 universities and thousands of other tertiary institutions across the globe. The second 'M' denotes the huge increase in domestic and international students – now numbering over 1,200,000 – who inhabit our universities. That's a lot of students, but most universities desperately need them for 'income generating' purposes since government funding is linked closely to enrolment numbers. That said, the so-called Group of Eight (Go8) – made up of the older 'sandstone' universities – get a lot more money than their more modest competitors, chiefly from research grants, bequests, corporate sponsorship and donations. For the rest, life in an open market can be tough going, especially when it comes to enrolling students. And

that's why they so frequently (and alarmingly) set such absurdly low entry standards and promise the earth to prospective enrollees – the existence of some institutions depends on such strategies.

However, once enrolled, students – 'consumers' or 'customers' as they are known these days – soon discover some of the awkward realities of the modern university: an over-emphasis on job readiness (or 'vocationalism'); rigid and formulaic performance-based learning, bloated class sizes, hidden charges and fees, and poor and inadequate resources and services. To make matters worse, growing numbers of students are reporting less contact with lecturers, more online rather than 'face-to-face' delivery, loneliness, boredom and isolation – this despite desperate attempts by university administrators to promote 'student engagement' and a 'sense of community'. For

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most students, the physical or 'virtual' campus is a rather anodyne place where education is regarded as a 'product' or 'service' rather than a space for meaningful social exchange and deep intellectual engagement. This functional approach to university life is hardly surprising given that up to 80 percent of students are in some sort of employment, trying to cope with 'work-life balance', and choosing (or being compelled) to study online.

Despite such challenges, universities still manage to turn out many bright, capable and highly skilled graduates who go on to make significant contributions in various walks of life. On the other hand, in an unplanned – some say 'wild' - market system, there are also thousands of graduates who find it difficult, if not impossible, to secure relevant employment – especially in the fields of engineering, psychology, speech therapy, law, dentistry etc. For them, the post-university experience can be devastating - and expensive, since most students are now lumbered with long-term debt (which, under new government policies, is set to get a whole lot worse). Moreover, as numerous business surveys testify, employers both here and overseas are increasingly reluctant to employ graduates because they often lack the most basic work-related skills, including the ability to communicate effectively and work in teams.

The challenges facing international students are even more marked. Now comprising over a third of Australia's university intake, these students (many of whom come from poor families in developing countries) pay up to three times more in fees than their domestic peers. It's big business, with international and offshore students contributing a whopping \$16 billion per annum to the Australian economy. That said, many of these enrollees do it tough, often living in overcrowded and dilapidated rental accommodation in distant suburbs, struggling with inadequate transport, holding down low paid casual jobs, and having few rights of access to medical care, legal services

and welfare provision. Many also struggle with English language skills which prompts some to seek out 'ghost writers' to complete their assignments. Additionally, as the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) recently noted, many universities take short cuts when it comes to assessing international students in order to get them through courses.

While universities claim they are about 'world class education', 'excellence', 'creativity', 'innovation' and so forth, the sad reality is, as academics testify, that educational standards have been seriously compromised in order to ensure enrolments and retention, and therefore healthy revenue streams. While mindful of such developments, academics are generally reluctant to speak out since they too are considered part of a corporate brand that has to be protected. This is achieved, in part, through the third 'M' - managerialism: a hierarchical, top-down system of management that, through a variety of regulatory devices, ensures compliance, effectively dissuading academics from criticising their own institutions.

The silence is palpable. However, it's not silence we need right now, but rather an energetic public debate about what makes for a 'good university' – one that is concerned above all with the public good rather than productivity and economic enrichment. 🌐

*Dr Richard Hil of Mullumbimby, is Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University, Gold Coast, and is author of Whackademia: An insider's account of the troubled university. josephgora@hotmail.com*



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*George Smilovici*

# ACT OF GOD



When I first moved up to Byron Bay in 1999 I can honestly say that it was not through design, it just happened to me, as if I'd been taken by a rip in the surf. It was exactly like my career as a comedian.

Many people in the past have asked me, "What made you become a Stand Up Comedian?" just as they've asked me "What made you move to Byron?" My answer; it was an act of God. Simple. Like Mr. Magoo, I've stumbled upon or landed in good things.

Soon after arriving here I was invited to a party by a man named Jim Elliot, an old acquaintance from Bali. When I walked into his house I felt like a fish out of water because everyone there was wearing orange and I wasn't. I felt like a clothed pervert at a nudist beach. Jim then kindly comforted me and explained that the party was in honour of a holy man, a Guru who'd been touring the world and was now coming to Byron Bay. It was an auspicious occasion.

A few minutes later the doorbell chimed and in walked a short, fat, bearded fellow who made his way straight towards the smorgasbord that was laden with delights fit for a Pasha. I knew it was him. He was the Guru. He was the enlightened one. He knew where the action was.

Being the facetious prick that I can be when necessary, I made my way towards the shiny one and feigning ignorance as to knowing who he was I introduced myself and tried to engage him in some light (not enlightened) chit chat. I talked to him about things I knew nothing about like footy and Seagulls and Panthers and

Bulldogs and other possible pets or delicacies and when I gauged that he was losing his patience and not being in "the NOW" with me, I asked him the most pertinent of all questions.

"What do you do?"

He looked at me with that beatific Guru gaze, raised his hands, palms upwards as if offering something to me and then, staring deeply into me answered, "I show people ...the way."

"OH" I said, "Do you know where the toilet is?"

He was not at all amused. He was utterly pissed off with me and at such an affront on his "Spirituality". After one more dip of his half-eaten gluten-free cracker into the tofu and spinach dip he excused himself in a non-accepting huff. My sense of humour had derailed his equanimity.

And I thought to myself, a Guru lacking a sense of humour is no Guru because in laughter one experiences true and utter freedom.

Byron Bay is full of them. Charlatan Haven. It's the esoteric epicentre of the Southern Hemisphere.

Yes, we've got Gurus and meditation, and acupuncture and acupressure and Kahuna Hawaiian Body massage, which doesn't really work on me because I've got a Cuban Jewish body. We've got Tarot readings and rebirthing and drummers that I throw money to not to play and we've got eco-dentists and past life facilitators and chakra balancing and cranio-sacral alignment and we've got Reiki therapy where they wave their hands over you and draw

*If you have a garden and a library,  
you have everything you need.*

**CICERO**

*(Taylor added... and a loving family)*



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out the bad energy in your body and flick it away to one side and somebody happens to be walking by as they flick it away and then they're afflicted with all that bad energy.

Yes we've got colonic irrigation. I don't know what they want to irrigate or grow up there, maybe compassion fruit. Oh yeah, the other day I saw a small advertisement on the notice wall advertising a, wait for it, a Colon Whisperer. Now, I've spoken to a lot of arseholes in my life but it's not something I'm proud of or something I would sell as a remedial service.

Yes Byron Bay is a perfectly symbiotic society. Half the people are sick, the other half are healers.

But I'll tell you what's special about this place to me personally. I can retreat from all the crap when I need to, I can walk around my house naked and do what a man should always be able to do ... piss from off my verandah or in my garden. I can buy beautiful fruit and vegetables from the Singhs so cheap, I can swim across the Bay from the Pass to the Beach Hotel while

praying that I won't be taken by a shark ...and it's worked so far. I can distance myself from the manic rat race and focus on keeping my body and mind sparkling and strong.

At the beginning of this year I was smitten by some undiagnosed sickness. I was close to kicking the bucket. Byron Bay gave me the time and space to recover and prevail. Thank God.

From December to March and from June till August I spend my time in my birthplace Cuba where I have my own band called Frente Caliente (Hot Front). The rest of the year I'm based in Byron Bay while travelling everywhere and anywhere being funny for a living. Like Mr Magoo, I'm blessed, how great is that!

It's an act of God. 🌐

*Cuban born, George Smilovici is an iconic, Australian Stand Up Comedian. He performs all over the world. A music composer and gifted guitarist, George spends half the year with his band "FRENTE CALIENTE" in Havana, Cuba.*

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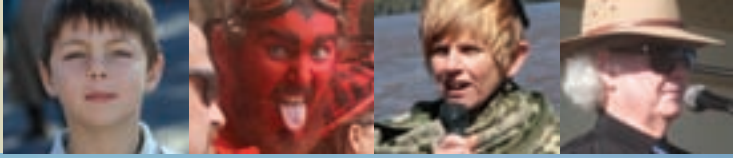


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*Zenith Virago*

## INCLUSIVE BYRON

As a long term Byron Shire resident and a frequent world traveller, I love leaving the Byron Shire, but I REALLY love returning. It doesn't matter where I wander, what I experience, there is always a sense of deep pleasure and joy at returning to home. The natural beauty is what speaks to me most, because as a daily ocean swimmer, it is the pristine and changing aliveness of ocean that for me is the precious jewel in the crown of the Byron Shire. The Cape headland, the glorious beaches, the lush rainforests and trees and the hinterland, all magnificently beautiful.

Byron is home to the strong Indigenous Arakwal people, as well as large vibrant gay and straight communities, hippies, surfers, long-timers, newcomers and also the vulnerable and homeless. There are the artistic, creatives, misfits, spiritual seekers, families, frumps, ferals and freaks. We seem to have everything



here, and we learn to not judge by what people look or dress like, but more who they are, the quality of the person, and we learn to love them all.

That mix of individuality has grown each of our small towns into a unique expression of its inhabitants and its history, pulsating with all the various communities that make up the complex North Coast, with its wonder, its joy, its challenges, its conflicts and its shadow of greed.

Magic! All of it.

How fortunate I feel to have been able to live here since the early 1980's, coming as a young, free woman, already opening to life, love and land, and now I am grown into a more mature, calmer, deeper, wiser older woman, still open to everything, and much more than I could possibly have imagined. My time in Byron has taught me much about valuing life, health, death, kindness,





*Chengdu Daoist priest, Happiness,  
he told her, was the distance  
between what you are and what  
you wish to be true.*



care, community and diversity amongst many other things, in a rich, well-lived life.

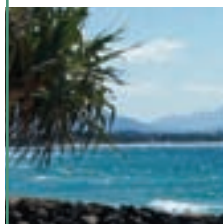
Over the years, I have lived in all of the townships, and in many of the surrounding areas and was fortunate to be a co-ordinator of the Byron Community Centre for a while. My current work takes me into many of the communities that make up our colourful Rainbow region.

It has been a journey of discovery and change, initiation and expansion. When people learn how long I have been here they often make the obvious comment, "you must have seen a lot of changes?" I have seen, experienced and felt a lot of change. Recently I was away for just a month within Australia, and when I came back, I was amazed at how much had changed in just that short time! There is so much happening here now, on any given day or night, and most

weekends, we have a multitude of movies, workshops, talks, groups, gigs, concerts, conferences and some of the best festivals. Some might say we are on overload. Are we?

Are we spoilt? Have we lost our originality? Have we managed to acquire all the city trimmings that many of us originally turned our backs on? Are we a metropolis of our own making?

Each person can only answer those questions themselves. Life is different for everyone. However, change is the only constant. Of course nothing stays the same for long, and with each year we have a new influx of people coming to live their lives. We are many. We do not all hold the same views and beliefs, we are also a Shire of continual change, challenge and conflict. We have never been united on anything, the closest issue is the anti CSG movement.



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NAOMI KLEIN



We cannot hold onto what once was, what drew many of us here, we can only steward the land, live and die gracefully. As we all evolve, the young will become the old, ( just like we have.)

It is just an extraordinary social experiment, the land has supported us. I offer my gratitude to the land for hosting so many world travellers to make a home here. Many of us may not have lasted long elsewhere, it is shelter to the lost, the damaged, those seeking altered states, the dull, the beautiful, the ordinary, the gifted. It would seem, everyone has a place here, we can feel it welcome us or repel us, some of us have grown and prospered, spiritually, financially or in our shared humanity, some of us have moved away, and many have moved on.

After 30 years, I feel we that live here, must welcome those that come to explore the area and themselves, we must stay open to newness,

to diversity, to things that challenge us, to any sense that it is ours to keep or to retain. The Byron Shire is its unique self, it belongs to no-one, nor are we what made it what it is. It made us who we are.

Who are we? We are a collection of individuals who wanted a richer inner and outer life, for ourselves and our children, and for others, and to create a better world.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of, and those yet to come. Please respect what is precious. In the big scheme of things we are all here on this earth for a brief moment, so be the change you want to see, and please leave the world a better place for your being in it

*Zenith Virago: Deathwalker, Celebrant, Adventurer, has lived in Byron Shire for over 30 years. She is seen swimming most days between Wategos and The Pass, living life to the fullest in one of the richest areas for marine biodiversity.*



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*Dr Liz Hawkins*

# BYRON BAY DOLPHINS



Located in one of the richest areas for marine biodiversity, Byron Bay is an important area for many a species including humpback whales, grey nurse sharks, manta rays and bottlenose dolphins. These dolphins can often be seen surfing waves around the iconic Cape Byron Headland and along the beaches in the region. They rarely fail to entertain bystanders, surfers and boaters with their aerial antics and seemingly playful demeanor. The convergence of warm and cool currents in the subtropical region of Byron Bay generates high productivity and

attracts different prey species for dolphins. Consequently at different times of the year, many of these high order predators can be encountered and it is estimated that within a given year over 1000 dolphins can

move in and out of The Bay. However, there are only a small percentage of these dolphins that remain throughout the year.

Bottlenose dolphins are highly social, living in sexually segregated fission fusion societies, where females maintain large networks of associates, preferring to remain with other

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\*Yes, it really is that good

*If you are depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present.*

LAO TZU



females that might have similar age calves. Male dolphins, on the other hand, form tightly bonded alliances of four to five individuals and they'll stay with their 'best mates' for decades only occasionally interacting with the female groups. The female communities being composed of mostly mothers and calves, will often favour particular home ranges, while males will tend to roam over large distances. Each day the females and their calves, move within their home ranges to fulfill essential tasks of finding food, resting and care for young.

Byron Bay is home to a resident community of female bottlenose dolphins consisting of an estimated 60-90 individuals. This community resides year round in the Bay and can often be seen from the Cape Byron Headland moving between Tallow Beach and Wategos Beach. This small area around the Headland

is a place of great importance for this dolphin community to rest, teach and care for their young and obtain sufficient food and has been identified as their critical habitat.

Contrary to popular belief the lives of dolphins are not all fun and games. There is indeed a serious side to living in such a dynamic, often harsh and dangerous oceanic world. Every part of their daily life is shaped to carry out essential tasks for their survival with the dolphins' energy budget carefully distributed to ensure they are able to complete these tasks. Increases in stress from disturbance and interference can tip this balance and result in dire consequences for these animals.

In an ever-changing world, dolphins are being faced with a cocktail of threats from human activities. Dolphins not only have an important part to play in the marine food web, they are also indicators of environmental health.

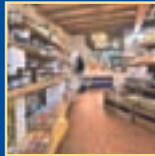
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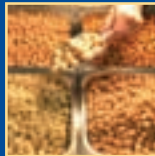
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It is up to each of us to protect the dolphins, their future generations and habitats. If you encounter dolphins, abide by the NSW and Australian dolphin watching regulations and do not approach dolphins closer than 50m and if there are calves, no closer than 150m. Please be a responsible boater, surfer, fisher and beach user by not attempting to touch, feed or pursue dolphins as this can cause these mammals high levels of stress.

Dolphin Research Australia Inc. is a locally

based marine conservation, education and research charity that has been researching dolphins in the region for over ten years. You can get involved in helping to monitor dolphin populations along our coastline by becoming a citizen scientist reporting your dolphin sightings, and you can become a dolphin guardian by adopting one of the resident dolphin community. 🌐

*Liz Hawkins, PhD, is a Director, of Dolphin Research Australia Inc. [www.dolphinresearchaustralia.com](http://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.com) [info@dolphinresearchaustralia.com](mailto:info@dolphinresearchaustralia.com)*



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*It is easier to build strong children  
than to repair broken men.*

FREDERICK DOUGLASS



## **Michael Katakis - self exiled American journalist & photographer lamenting the state of his country**

Increasingly we are leaving little room in our lives for chance itself to sweep us off our feet. Step by step we are replacing them not with each other but with illusions of control and efficiency while in actuality we are simply becoming more frazzled with a constant and nagging feeling that something that has been left undone, something has. We have forgotten to dance.

We Americans have a very severe practicality now. And there's not a lot of room for serendipity. I think what I'm seeing is extraordinary narcissism on a large scale in the United States. This illusion of control. We hold our phones and our devices and all this and somehow we think we're connected to the world and that we are in charge. We are losing a lot of the poetry of living, the sweetness of life. And, when you lose the sweetness of life and the poetry of living it becomes in my opinion easier to vilify those people you want to dismiss and put aside.

A society will be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable. 🐾

*Michael Katakis, Writer and Photographer. Source: Australian Radio National. Late night live. September 9 2014.*



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*Taylor Miller*

## THE ISLAND

The last book Aldous Huxley\* ever wrote was a detailed, utopic vision of a peaceful society called Pala. His book, 'Island', follows the journey of a reporter named Will Farnaby who shipwrecked on the fictional island of Pala and through this character, the reader discovers the fabric of a near-perfect society where everyone is happy, well supported, educated and healthy in body, mind and soul. Pala is a society based on well-being, as opposed to economic might and it is incredibly illuminating to read about, especially in light of the times. It makes fantastic sense.

Sometimes I like to imagine the Byron Shire as a little Pala. The people are generally happy (relative to other parts of Australia it appears), the environment is clean, we grow our own food here and we value spirituality. Like in the novel, there is the constant threat of development and the evils of the outside world being thrust upon us. We remain pacifists, desperately hopeful for the still beautiful Byron Bay. Perhaps it is idealistic, however wouldn't it be nice if we could be a bit more like Pala? All of Australia could have been like Pala and maybe it would have had Gough Whitlam never got the boot.

The island's educational system, which merges the sciences, the arts, and self-control techniques with the personal search for spiritual self-fulfillment is a good start. Educational tiers are cross-pollinated and the kind of black and white system that we know is completely upturned. One example of this takes us to a class with the school



principal Mrs. Narayan, where the children study a Gardenia flower. Initially they look at it under the microscope and learn its botanical being; how it pollinates, its cell structure etc. And simultaneously, they learn

about its nature, its smell, its purpose and conceptual being;

"We tell the boys and girls to stop thinking and just look. 'But don't look analytically,' we tell them, 'don't look as scientists, even as gardeners. Liberate yourselves from everything you know and look with complete innocence at this infinitely improbable thing before you.

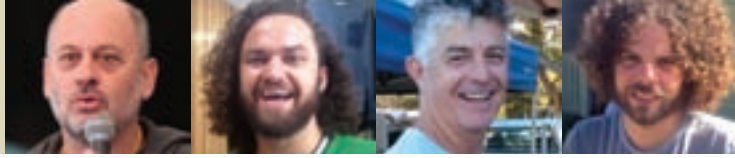


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*The role of art is to help us...  
to transcend. it's to put you in a  
transcendent state so you can get over  
the things that you can't bear otherwise.*

LINDA RONSTADT



Look at it as though you'd never seen anything of the kind before, as though it had no name and belonged to no recognizable class. Look at it alertly but passively, receptively, without labeling or judging or comparing. And as you look at it, inhale its mystery, breathe in the spirit of sense, the smell of the wisdom of the Other Shore.... it all gets looked at receptively as well as conceptually, as a fact of aesthetic or spiritual experience as well as in terms of science or history or economics. Training in receptivity is the complement and antidote to training in analysis and symbol manipulation. Both kinds of training are absolutely indispensable. If you neglect either of them you'll never grow into a fully human being."

This bridged approach to learning is not restricted to flora but inherent within all their systems – agricultural, economic, political etc. They think fluidly, progressively and with quality of living and greater good the driver of practice. And it makes them happy. The Palanese are so intimately connected with sense of self and the reality of the moment that they even have taught the local myna birds to say "Attention" and "Karu," to remind the

people to stay focused on the here-and-now and to have compassion.

Please take yourself to the library, or the bookshop, while staying in Byron Bay, read Huxley's last hymn, and consider his ideas. Even if just within our 'Byron Bubble', maybe the Island is a reality worth dreaming about and even striving for...

*\*Aldous Leonard Huxley was an English writer, philosopher and essayist. He is very well remembered for several novels including his prophetic and dystopian 'Brave New World', 'The Doors of Perception', about taking a psychedelic drug experience, and many essays. He passed away in 1963 age 69.*

*Taylor Miller is a 27 year old born and bred Byron child who thrives in the wild. Taylor graduated in Arts/Hons at USYD in 2011 and regularly travels the world surfing.*

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*Ilona Harker*

## RICH AND VISIBLE

When I was a young child we were quite well off, private schools, dad's massive boat in the front yard, ballet lessons and Christmas presents piled into a mountain, higher than my six year old head. My parents were part of the fledgling cities' elite: polliès, rich pastoralists, pearl magnates, who all mingled together over my mum's chilli prawns cooked in rustic '70s earthenware pots at parties that my sister and I would sneak into as young intrepid spies, Rat and Spud. I, of course, was 'Spud' being the chunky little sister.

Hiding under tables and drunken swaying adults, we'd appropriate the last dregs from what was left in glasses above us, so pumped with awe over our powers of invisibility. They were high times and even the dark cloud of my dad's violence was polished into a debonair manly charm for such occasions.



Then the cracks became more obvious. There were less parties and mum's bruises were more frequent and although nothing was said, I am sure the glittering ones all tutted quietly to each other and protested by not attending the evening soirees and turned their backs, making our whole family invisible, not just my sister and myself.

Then eventually when the beatings started being delivered to us all, mum left dad and moved us from the tropics into the bitter cold of New England. I was nine and my childhood was about to end. There was no money, five kids and my mum and my grandmother in a two bedroom apartment in Armidale. The only heating was from kerosene heaters that required me to take a trip to the garage on my bike wearing my St. Vinnies parka, corduroy pants and synthetic wool gloves that smelled like kero. It was an adventure for a while but I was starting to feel



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*This wise man once told me.  
It's not about the latitude and  
longitude of your life but your attitude.*

ANON



the stress and was unable to find refuge in the fantasy worlds I created to hide in. Mum would cry often, her MS looming like a noose and we all became invisible to each other, each watching and waiting for something.

Then dad came back and we bought a house and mum got pregnant again. And we felt rich and visible but dad couldn't get a job: not with the police, not with the fire brigade, only at the brickworks where he slogged it. He and mum together got sicker and sicker: he with insanity and mum with MS. Then after the baby was born dad left for good. He lived with his mother in Sydney before his madness took him completely and he lived for sometime on the streets preaching like a lunatic.

Mum couldn't walk or look after the baby, so again my grandmother came and we ate a lot of soup. We were officially poor and again I felt very invisible. Mum found refuge and tried to regain her respectability in the church. Slowly she disintegrated with six kids and a shattered heart, no money and an illness with no cure. Yet she painted and raged and sang and laughed and howled and made hats as she crumbled and fought. So today as I woke up to the birds chattering excitedly about the big wet that's coming, I thought about being rich and being poor. Only after I read the letter to my mum the other month in public, did I realise that I had a residual shame about being poor, a deep embarrassment of not having what others had and trying so hard to look respectable and well off. It wasn't easy to expose that, as it seems ridiculous in the glaring light of day. Why should a child feel responsible for circumstances beyond their control? But the mind and heart hide things in deep dark pockets and now I feel a little lighter opening that little wound.

I am lucky to have known both wealth and western poverty and even though I see the very obvious benefits of wealth and power in this system we have created of status and

success, I also see the benefits of being able to see beyond a person's wealth, beauty and power. To see the richness of their expression, their history, their unique and varied way of thinking about stuff, their passions and their way of functioning in a very nutty world is far more exciting to me than what stuff they have. We all want to be valued and the way we have been taught to do this is with money but it's just one facet of wealth and richness.

Please don't think me crass for exposing my wealth here and now but the truth is I am very bloody rich. I have immense wealth in my ability to create, express and love and am stinking rich with wonderful friends. As for the money side of things ...I'm happy enough just getting by and I no longer feel invisible, unless I call upon my childhood Spud invisibility powers and well ...you just never know where I might be.

*Singer/songwriter of a folk-noir orientation, who lives in Byron Shire. [www.ilonaharker.com](http://www.ilonaharker.com)*



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## *Interview with Max Pendergast*

# SURF SAFETY



Max is the oldest Byron Bay-born surfer still in Byron Bay. He's not really that old, just 71. And, he's been surfing for over 60 years. In that time he's seen a lot of sharks but he's never felt threatened.

His mother was born and raised in Ewingsdale, just on the edge of town next to the Pacific Highway before the highway became a freeway. His Grandmother had a zoo there in about 1924 called Mrs. Holland's Zoo. So, visitors have been coming to Byron Bay for a very long time, for different reasons, albeit sporadically throughout those early years.

Max's childhood home was in the old, stone heritage-listed buildings on Fletcher St. where a flower shop now exists. That was his house until he got married. There were three places in a row; originally it was a smokehouse for fish and then converted to homes. The walls were 11 inches thick so you couldn't hear your neighbours. Byron Bay was a small town then, about 1,000 people. Max could roam around town without his parents worrying about him.

In Max's growing up Byron Bay wasn't that popular as a place to be because of NORCO (Dairy Cooperative), the piggery, and the very smelly abattoir. It was a working class town, its main industries being primary ones. He did his apprenticeship at the local meatworks (Andersons) and then NORCO as a fitter and turner.

When he was surfing The Pass in the 1960s and 1970s, the train brought the day trippers over from the inland towns of Casino and Lismore

on weekends to go to the beach. Cars weren't common in those days. Max started riding waves on surf mats, then toothpicks, a borrowed Surf Club ski, and okanuis (small 8 foot plywood boards) before getting his first

surfboard. The original Australian surfing cinematographer, Bob Evans came to Byron Bay in the early 60's with some guys and Max saw people riding the modern surfboards. His first board was made by Joe Larkin, a Gold Coast shaper whose first factory was on the main street of Coolangatta before it moved to Kirra. There were only six guys surfing in The Bay then.

Max says that now days as a surfer you develop a myopic view. You wave to the people you know and ignore the rest. You only see what you want to see. And, Max wants to see the ocean. He doesn't think that there are more fish now because The Bay is a designated Marine Park. As a child there were plenty of fish in The Bay. His father would regularly catch whiting for dinner. And, there have always been sharks; more of them back then. Forty years ago Max and Noel Henderson went up to the lighthouse to see if they should go surfing and they lost count when they reached 400 sharks.

Max doesn't see any booms and busts in Byron Bay, just the boom times. Back in the day when the abattoir existed, mining, NORCO and whaling, people would come and look at the caught whales and say "Oh, you come from that stinky place."

*And since time sets its own tempo, like a heartbeat or an ebb tide, timepieces don't really keep time. They just keep up with it, if they're able.*

*'Longitude' by DAVA SOBE*



BY ADRIAT



When beginners are asked what they think is the most dangerous thing about surfing? They often reply "sharks," "rocks," "stingers"... But in actual fact it is other surfers because more surfers, especially beginners, are injured by being hit or run over by another surfer because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Always look to see if another surfer is on the wave before you paddle for it.

As such a long time waterman in Byron Bay Max has always been interested in surf safety and looking after the ocean. For the past twenty years he has worked on teaching children about it, along with his wife Yvonne, through his Menahune Future Legends program. He has books filled with his drawings and surf safety messages. He is a visual person. With the Byron Shire Council he has designed a sign that will be placed at local beaches in the Shire that shows visitors and residents alike how to escape from a rip. But, he says that Byron Bay does not have a history of people drowning. What he would like to see is that town surfboard rental businesses tell people when it is too dangerous to go out in

the ocean as a beginner and say no to renting them a surfboard.

Max trained as an engineer and worked around Australia and New Zealand for a large food processing company. He was offered a major position as Chief Engineer that would see him oversee work in their 23 subsidiary companies and six Japanese companies. He was in Sydney, standing on top of one of the big buildings there, looked down and said, "I can't do this." He was already missing out on being with his two children back in Byron Bay, as he travelled extensively around the country. So, he called his wife and said so and she said for him to do whatever he wanted to do. So, he came home to Byron Bay, doing what so many people do here, work at multiple different jobs. For Max this involved working as an architect, who designed the original RSL on Jonson St.

These days Max spends time with his grandchildren, surfs as much as he can, tends his beautiful garden and works towards promoting his surf safety message as much as possible. To view Max's drawings see: [www.facebook.com/surfsafebyron](http://www.facebook.com/surfsafebyron)

*Have you found yourselves saying... 'We could live here?'*

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[byron.fallsfestival.com.au](http://byron.fallsfestival.com.au)

EVOLVE YOGA FESTIVAL, BYRON BAY > JANUARY

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

BRUNSWICK HEADS FISH AND CHIPS FESTIVAL > JANUARY

[brunswickheads.org.au](http://brunswickheads.org.au)

BRUNSWICK HEADS KITES AND BIKES FESTIVAL > MARCH

[brunswickheads.org.au](http://brunswickheads.org.au)

BYRON BAY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL > MARCH

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

BLUESFEST > EASTER

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

BANGALOW BILLYCART FESTIVAL > MOTHER'S DAY

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

SPLENDOUR IN THE GRASS > JULY

[splendourinthegrass.com](http://splendourinthegrass.com)

BYRON BAY WRITER'S FESTIVAL > AUGUST

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

BANGALOW CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVAL > AUGUST  
[visitnsw.com](http://visitnsw.com)

BANGALOW BBQ & BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL > AUGUST  
[bbqbluegrass.com.au](http://bbqbluegrass.com.au)

BYRON BAY SURF FESTIVAL > OCTOBER  
[byronbaysurffestival.com](http://byronbaysurffestival.com)

BOOMERANG FESTIVAL BI-ANNUAL > OCTOBER  
[boomerangfestival.com.au](http://boomerangfestival.com.au)

BYRON LATIN DANCE FESTIVAL > OCTOBER  
[byronlatinfiesta.com.au](http://byronlatinfiesta.com.au)

MULLUMBIMBY MUSIC FESTIVAL > NOVEMBER  
[mullummusicfestival.com](http://mullummusicfestival.com)

BANGALOW SHOW > NOVEMBER  
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UPLIFT BYRON BAY > DECEMBER  
[upliftfestival.com](http://upliftfestival.com)

SPIRIT FESTIVAL, MULLUMBIMBY > DECEMBER  
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# BYRON BAY WRITERS FESTIVAL

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[www.byronbaywritersfestival.com](http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com)



Vaughan Blakey

## KEEP IT REEL

North Coast camping with Dad was always the best adventure.

All the old boy wanted was an Alvey. The most basic of beach fishing reels, it can be operated by a monkey without straining too many brain cells. He wanted the Alvey so that when the surf was flat he could take us kids up to Broken, get our hand-line baits into the water and then cast a line himself and enjoy a rare moment of paternal contentment.

But, when the old boy went into the store to buy the Alvey a mate of his convinced him to fork out top dollar for some elaborate looking eggbeater reel with more bells and whistles than the latest Korean small car. The second I saw it I was worried. It was a fiddly device and, while the old boy prided himself on having the hands of a surgeon, I knew that when fiddly stuff got the better of him it usually didn't last too long. He didn't seem convinced of his purchase either, but by now it was too late to go back. A couple of weeks



later, we went camping.

My family has always been big on camping. Mum had hauled us from Noosa to Kioloa when we were growing up and the old boy regularly took us from Forster to Broken. For psyched

groms like us, any holiday that guaranteed endless hours in the water just didn't get any better. Epic sessions at random little back beaches and on weird chunks of reef, small nameless breakwalls and sharky rivermouths were ample reward for enduring the long hot drives, the missing tent pegs, the rolling onto the side of your tent on a wet night so that you woke up soaked and freezing at three in the morning and, of course, the inevitable domestic spats.

Pleasures out of the surf were many. Rosellas eating seed out of your hair, goannas racing through the campsite to steal a sausage that had fallen off the barbie plate, games of force 'em back, chasing kangaroos down the bush track onto the beach. None of it seemed

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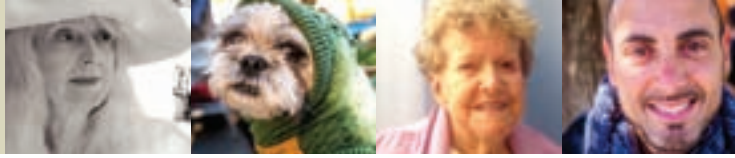
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*Cicero claims that the absence of political rights corrupts moral virtues.*



extraordinary or unusual. It felt as much a part of the surfing ritual as waxing your board.

Dramas were a daily occurrence, though mostly for the one bloke whose sole objective was to enjoy a snippet of peace and quiet, just once. The old boy took it pretty personally when things didn't stay true to the masterplan. Over the years, I saw him punch the skin off his knuckles on the trunk of a tree when we got bogged in the sand checking a remote beachie. He dislocated his fingers on a shallow sandbank after nose-diving on the first wave of the holidays and I saw him tear his half built tent out of the ground and hurl it into the scrub cause the instructions that came with it were written in Chinese.

Then there was the mother of them all. The tale we now refer to as the "Shoulda got the Alvey". It was our fourth holiday to Broken and, like our

previous experiences, the surf had been fun if not totally cracking. We enjoyed a couple of head-high days before the northerlies knocked the guts out of the swell and the ocean went oily calm.

On dusk one day, the old boy took us out to the point to go fishing. We found a spot on the rocks that looked into a nice deep hole and within minutes we were watching our sinkers and bait disappear into the shadows below. With us kids all set, the old boy began working on getting his flashy new eggbeater happening. Suddenly, my brother hooked on. A second later and... BANG! I was on too and then my younger brother, who pretty much hates fishing, hooked one as well. We started reeling them in, screaming with laughter and at first the old boy was delighted. It was a mixed haul, a leather jacket, a bream and a



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little shovel-nosed shark. No sooner had we cut everything loose we were on again... all three of us. By the time we'd cut the second lot free, the old boy had still not managed to thread his line through the first guide on his rod. I could see his face starting to go red and then I noticed some of his line had gone up under egg beater and somehow been dragged into the mechanics, jarring the handle so that the reel didn't even spin. The mood of the arvo quickly began to change but the haul was relentless. I began to wish the damned fish would just stop biting.

Sure enough, the old boy finally snapped. First came the swearing, then the screaming and, lastly, bits of brand new reel shooting in several directions at once after it exploded from point blank range onto the rocks. Not daring to turn around I then watched what was left of the reel fly over my shoulder and out toward the horizon, plonking into the sea a lot further out than you would have thought was possible. When I eventually turned around, the old boy was sitting there on his haunches, head buried into the palms of his hands, utterly defeated. He sensed my stare and looked up. We looked into each others eyes.

"Why bother?" he sighed.

How could he have known in that moment that he'd just answered his own question. 🌀

*Vaughan Blakey is the editor of Surfing World Magazine, Australia's longest running surf title (first published in 1962). Raised in New Brighton he still calls the sleepy town home and hopes to one day live in a Yurt in the dunes behind Newy shop. [www.surfingworld.com.au](http://www.surfingworld.com.au)*



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Why should corporate "rights" ever be superior to human rights and the Common Good?

JIM HIGHTOWER



*There is nobody in this country that got rich on his own.*

*Nobody. You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I wanna be clear. You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for.... You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea. God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.*

**Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. August 2011.**

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Our economic system and our  
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NAOMI KLEIN



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<b>Julian's Apartments</b> 124 Lighthouse Rd www.juliansbyronbay.com	6680 9697	
<b>North Coast Holiday Parks</b> www.northcoastholidayparks.com.au	6691 0300	59
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Laughter is the glue of friendship...  
laughter releases endorphins



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**Byron Shire Echo** Village Way, Mullumbimby  
at the Byron Bay Community Centre 59 Jonson St  
www.echo.net.au / www.echonetdaily.net.au  
6684 1777  
6685 5222  
44

**Rusty's Byron Guide** PO Box 851, Byron Bay, NSW, 2481  
rustym@inet.net.au / www.byron-bay-guide.com.au  
6684 7390

## REAL ESTATE

**Byron Beach Realty** 5/120 Jonson St  
www.byronbeachrealty.com.au  
6680 8110  
56

**Ed Silk Real Estate** 2/6 Jonson St www.edsilkrealestate.com.au  
6680 8668

## SERVICES

**Atlas Currency Exchange** 4/47 Byron St, Byron Bay  
www.atlascurrency.com.au  
1300 261 090  
57

**Byron Community Centre** 69 Jonson St www.byroncentre.com.au  
6685 6807

**Byron Car Hire & Service Station** NRMA @ the Railway crossing  
www.simmonsbyronbay.com.au  
6685 6638  
58

**Byron Shire Council** 70-90 Station St Mullumbimby  
www.byron.nsw.gov.au  
6626 7000

**Nothern River Community Foundation** Suite 7/31 Cherry St  
Ballina www.nrcf.org.au  
6686 2887

**Tricia Shantz TS Consultants Social Planning,**  
Social Geographer / Planning / Research PO Box 851  
0421 422 645

## SOLICITOR

**BVK** 8 Byron St www.bvk.com.au  
6680 8522  
53

**Ramsey Moloney** 1/6 Jonson St Fax: 6685 6516  
6685 6400  
17

**Stuart Garrett** 3/130 Jonson St www.splawyerssg.com.au  
6639 1000  
39

## SURFING

**C Skins** 12/12 Lawson St www.c-skins.com.au  
0412 081 546  
30

**Black Dog Surfing** 4/5 11 Byron St. www.blackdogsurfing.com  
6680 9828  
47

**Let's Go Surfing** 84 Jonson St www.byronbay.letsgosurfing.com.au  
6685 4878  
56

**McTavish Surfboards** 91 Centennial Cct Arts & Ind Est  
www.mctavish.com.au  
6680 8807  
6

**Munro Surfboards** 29 Acacia St, Arts & Ind Est  
www.munrosurfboards.com.au  
6685 6211  
7

**Rusty Miller Personalised Surfing Instruction**  
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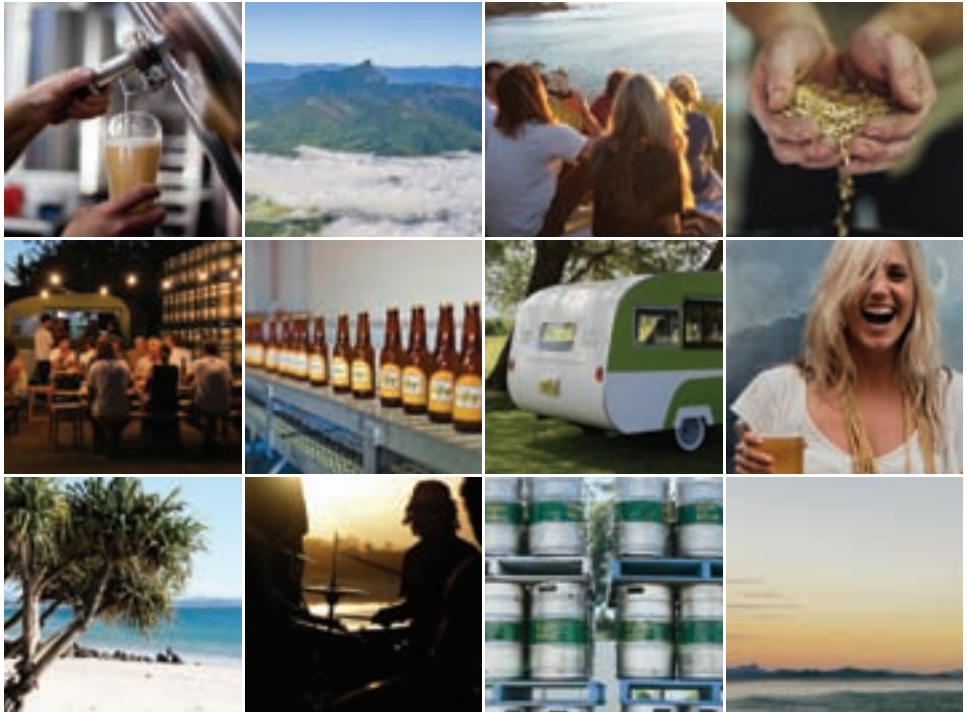
**LOCAL SERVICES**

Police Station	6685 9499	Byron Bay Library	6685 8540
Marine Rescue	6680 8417	Byron Shire Council	6626 7000
Byron Bay Hospital	6685 6200	George the Snakeman	0409 965 092
Mullumbimby Hospital	6684 2266	Byron Bay Visitor Centre	6680 8558
Byron Bay Community Centre	6685 6807	NRMA	132 132

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We brew beer for times like these, beer that is simply good to drink.



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