

coastbeat

RRP \$8.99

ISSUE 06 / AUTUMN 19
GREAT LAKES TO BYRON BAY

DI MORRISSEY
RETURNING HOME

NUSA INDAH SURFBOARDS
THE GREAT LAKES

SAM BLOOM
BROKEN BUT BEAUTIFUL

4WD ADVENTURE
THE SWISS TOYMAKER

DAVID HELFGOTT
STILL SHINING



THE PULSE OF THE COAST



SAWTELL COMMONS

between the mountains and the sea

'Commons' (definition) is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth.

"Sawtell Commons is a place for family, friends, fresh air & all good things."

- John Gowing



Site map subject to change, pending development approval.

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Sawtell Commons is the last undeveloped land close to Sawtell with fantastic access and views over the Bongil Bongil National Park, offering generous blocks in a unique bush setting within minutes of the gorgeous Sawtell coastline. Set over a picturesque 38.49 hectares, our first release of 43 blocks is due to start selling off the plan over the coming weeks. These blocks have an average size of 640.3m² and feature access to cycleways and pathways connecting natural vegetation areas to creek reserves and park lands. A children's playground & community garden will feature in the parkland areas. The stage 1 display village is under construction and will feature our home builder partners including Adenbrook, GJ Gardner, McDonald Jones, Blue Ribbon, Brian Hopwood & Coral Homes.



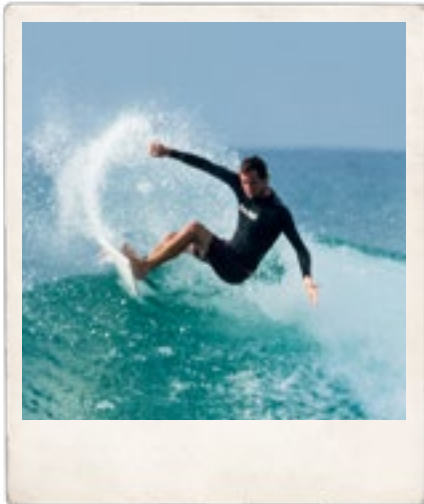
This is a limited release, don't miss out, register your interest NOW for priority block selection.
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Lives, since 1868

Autumn Feels

1.



The best season for surfing. It's goodbye to the Summer northerlies and hello to offshore winds and smooth, glassy waves

2.



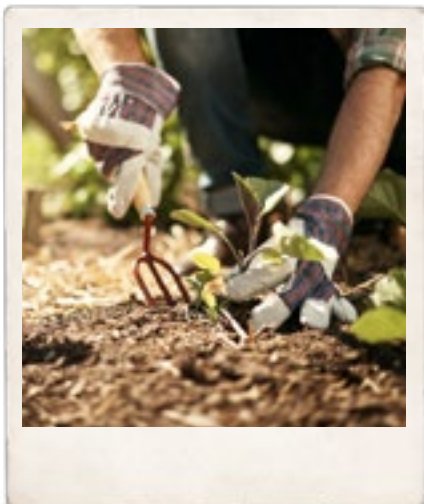
Outdoor meals on the deck and wood-fired pizza evenings

3.



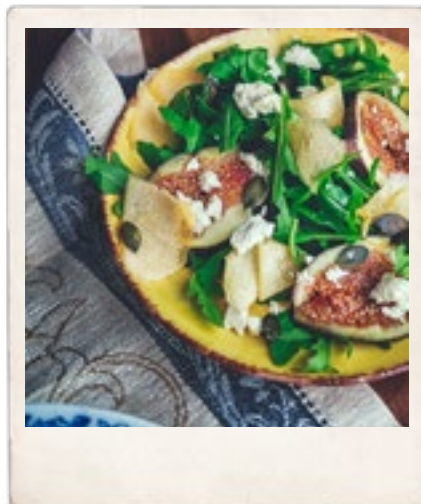
Kids hunting for Easter eggs and coastal camping trips with friends

4.



Removing the weeds and Summer scorched plants and giving the garden some love

5.



Backyard Autumn produce - figs, pomegranates, guavas, pumpkins and macadamias

6.



Empty beaches and beautiful ocean temperatures

Contents

8. FULL CIRCLE / Returning Home	12. COURAGE / Broken but Beautiful	16. DESTINATION / Surf Seekers
20. MAKER / The Toymaker	24. GETAWAY / Getaway to the Great Lakes	28. ADVENTURE / Dirt Track Adventures
32. MARINE / Fins, Fishing and Fatherhood	36. CONNECTION / Still Shining	40. LIFESTYLE / Art in the Ocean
44. LIFESTYLE / Designing a Lifestyle	48. LIFESTYLE / Little Cottages	54. SUCCESS / Changing the Story
58. CREATIVE / Little Treasures	60. ANZAC / Remembering the Innocents	64. NATURE / Devil's Advocate
69. CHAT / Inside a Writer's Life	76. SOURCE / Heart of the Land	78. SUSTAINABILITY / Hemp for Health
80. TASTE / Depot Café	86. EXPLORE / Moon River	89. CULTURE / Best Books for Autumn
92. DINING / So Fresh, So French	96. FASHION / What's trending this Autumn	98. HEALTH / Turning over a New Leaf
100. ACTIVE / Active Living with Lorna Jane	102. WELLNESS / Surrender at endota	105. SOCIAL / Coastbeat Party

Welcome



Unwinding on the Coffs Coast. Image by Milla Black

Dear Fellow Coasters,

It is a pleasure to introduce you to our Autumn issue of *Coastbeat*. As I write this, Christmas has come and gone, the New Year is well underway, and Summer is on its last legs. How hot and windy was January? Wow! I'm glad Miriam and I were safely ensconced in New Zealand, where we almost lost our back to a North Island freak bushfire. Today, Cyclone Oma is perched off the coast – there could be some epic surf this weekend...

This issue of *Cb* is content rich; we've found some unique coast characters to interview and write about. I would sincerely like to thank them for being in *Coastbeat*.

There were tears in my eyes as I read the story of Jack's Dad, who went to two world wars to fight for Australia and to protect our freedom and way of life. Coincidentally, I was leafing through my Dad's WWII Flight log book on Monday with friends from NZ who grew up near Plymouth in the UK and they were able to help me discover that Plymouth was where Dad spent most

of the war flying Hurricanes, protecting the port and convoys on their way to England.

Then there is the inspiring story of the Helfgotts, and a 4WD road trip down Point Plomer Road from Crescent Head to Port Macquarie.

I think there's a story for everyone.

Thanks to everyone on the *Coastbeat* team, for putting together this, our 6th issue, and particularly to those who recently arranged the first, very successful *Coastbeat* event at the new Coffs Central first floor event venue (see photos on p105).

We are starting pre-sales at our Sawtell Commons residential subdivision. Thank you to all who have expressed an interest. Robyn, our sales advisor, should have already been in contact, but to those of you who would like to find out more about the opportunity, please see information on our inside opening pages and get in touch.

Stay safe. For the Coast.

John

Founding Sponsor Partners



Cb Autumn Issue Team



Tia Duck
Photographer

Tia loved photographing the workers at Macleay Options. "Their enthusiasm is infectious and you can't help but feel uplifted when spending time with everyone."



Yvette Harper
Editor / Writer

Emerald Beach local Yvette enjoyed chatting to the courageous and honest Sam Bloom. "I loved hearing how rediscovering the ocean has helped her smile again."



Aaron Cuneo
Photographer

"Local hero, Di Morrissey did not disappoint one bit. She warmly welcomed Geordie and I with cheese and wine, was at ease with the camera and inspiring with her writing and community engagement."



Carina Pascoe
Designer

The Graphic Designer from Port Macquarie was humbled by the Toymaker story. With a love of arts, crafts and sustainability and an appreciation of family history, Carina found this a very relatable story.



Sooz Myhill
Photographer

With David and Gillian Helfgott, Bellingen based Sooz found warmth and kindness around every corner. "It was a truly unforgettable morning and I feel incredibly grateful to have shared those moments with them."



Cameron Bloom
Photographer

Cameron Bloom has been a photographer since the age of 16. *Coastbeat* is delighted to have the beautiful images of his wife and family grace the pages of the article on Sam Bloom.

Editorial Assistant

Geordie Bull

Contributing Writers in addition to those above

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Feel free to share a photo, story or let us know what you love about the coast at hello@coastbeat.com.au

A word from the Editor

As always, we're proud to tell stories of fascinating people and take you to wonderful places. We talk with Di Morrissey about homecoming, meet new World Champion Sam Bloom and bring you a beautifully written article on renowned pianist David Helfgott and his wife, Gillian.

With a dedicated lifestyle theme this issue, we learn more about the team behind tiny houses in Port Macquarie and chat with Jada McNeil of Nusa Indah Surfboards and interior designer, Nicolle Foster.

We also catch up with a former Moulin Rouge dancer in Yamba, go off-roading in the Macleay Valley, kayak under a full moon and explore the Great Lakes.

Additionally, we bring you the inspiring stories of clever local creatives as well as the latest festivals and events in our region.

Don't forget to subscribe online for your chance to win one of three \$200 gift vouchers from endota spa - our gift to you!

We hope you enjoy our Autumn issue,
Yvette

Cover image of Nusa Indah surfboards by Brett Rutkowski

Coastbeat Magazine is published by Gowings Media, a division of Gowing Bros. Limited
Suite 21, Jones Bay Wharf, 26-32 Pirrama Road Pyrmont NSW 2009 Australia T +61 2 9264 6321



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Di Morrissey relaxing at her beloved Manning Valley home

Returning Home

Di Morrissey is a publisher's dream, producing a bestselling book each year from her idyllic home in the Manning Valley. *Coastbeat* caught up with Di to talk about her greatest passions – family, the environment and the self-funded community newspaper that is making waves in her region.

Words by Geordie Bull

Photography by Aaron Cuneo



The author is working on her 26th novel

Most high-profile people are relatively guarded, limiting media interviews to superficial subjects. Not Di. She invites us into her home, taking us on a tour through the renovated farmhouse she shares with her partner, Boris.

It's clear Di doesn't care for the current trend of minimalism: this is a house that spills over with personality. Newspaper clippings compete for wall space with treasured photos of grandkids and Indigenous artworks; every spare surface is filled by vases of fresh flowers and books. Di's two-storey writing studio is a dream with expansive views of the Manning River, an exercise bike, a huge library and entertaining room. As we descend the stairs, she points out the life-size portrait of herself (a finalist in the Archibald prize) by artist David Andrews before showing us a favourite op shop find. It's a house that, like its owner, refuses to be stereotyped.

We settle in for a chat, complete with nibbles and a glass of chilled white wine and delve into Di's incredible life – a story that could easily grace the pages of one of her novels. After spending her first five years in the Manning Valley chasing chooks and taking walks with her grandfather through Wingham Brush, Di's family moved to Lovett Bay, an eclectic waterside community in Sydney's north where her father ran a water taxi service. It was here she met many creative characters, including famed poet Dorothea Mackellar, who

“Di was 10 when she returned home from school to learn that her father and 18-month old brother had drowned in a tragic boating accident.”

encouraged Di to write - a dream that would never leave her. Di's neighbour, actor Chips Rafferty became her godfather, telling her whatever she did in life, “make it Australian.”

Di was 10 when she returned home from school to learn that her father and 18-month-old brother had drowned in a tragic boating accident. With their world turned upside down, Di and her mother, Kay, went to stay with her mother's sister in California where Kay, at Chips' suggestion, did a TV production course, returned home and worked her way up to be Australia's first female commercial TV/film director.

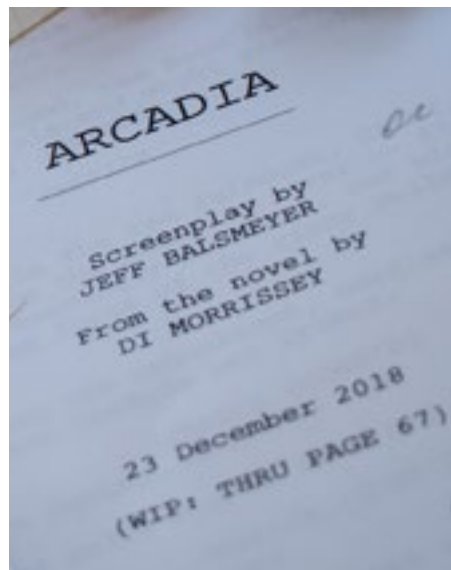
Di would grow up to train as a journalist, marry diplomat Peter Morrissey, become a mother of two and travel the world, living in exotic destinations and working as a journalist and television presenter.

It was a beautiful life, but Di felt the dream of becoming a writer tugging at her heart and, at the age of 40, she divorced, moved home to Australia and began to write earnestly from a rented cottage in Byron Bay.

After nine years on her own writing numerous bestsellers, Di reunited with Boris, a handsome cameraman she'd met at a Christmas party when she was 15. They felt an instant connection and have been together ever since. As Byron Bay began to change from the place they fell in love with, the couple decided to return to where Di was born – her beloved Manning Valley.



Di's home is full of vintage treasures



Screenplay for Arcadia

"All the people of my ilk and era were leaving Byron and I was ready for a change," she says. "When we came here and saw this view of the river, we fell in love instantly. People think I'm rich, but they don't realise that I've been poor most of my life. I've struggled, and I feel very fortunate to be where I am now."

Di still produces one book a year, an admirable feat considering the amount of research that goes into each story. While she adores her peaceful home, Di also enjoys the balance provided by her yearly research trips, the most recent of which saw her travel to Tasmania for her latest book, *Arcadia*.

"My stories are always inspired by a place," she says. "I can come home and close my eyes and I'm back in the cold mountains of Tassie. I've always immersed myself in places to research my books – as a journalist I believe you can't write about a place you haven't been to. Boris is always with me and he records interviews and take photographs."

On top of her rigorous publishing schedule, Di also manages to produce the monthly *Manning Community News*, a community newspaper she funds herself and distributes with the help of Boris and a band of loyal volunteers.

"I started the newspaper in 2015 as I felt the local papers were not covering very serious issues," she says. "I'm a journalist in the thorough old-fashioned way. I trained as a cadet at Australian Consolidated Press and am prepared to stick my neck out because, unlike regular newspaper employees, I don't need to be afraid of losing my job!"

The *Manning Community News* covers issues that Di feels are excluded from the mainstream local media, as well as book reviews and environmental news (Bob Brown and Tim Fischer are among leading figures who have contributed. Former Manus Island refugee, now in the US, Imran Mohammed, writes for her regularly, too). It's her way of giving back to the

place she loves and feels a fierce need to protect.

"I'm playing my part in empowering people to stand up for what they believe in," Di says. "As a child, I was taught that if you could make a difference, you did so. Whether it was my

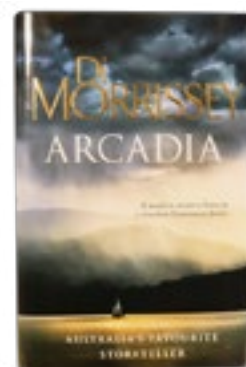
grandmother working in the CWA or going down to Purfleet and helping with Aboriginal health issues. Everyone needs to contribute to the place they live in – even if it's just picking up litter on Clean Up Australia Day. I've always been of the mind, 'if you can, you should'."

The desire to meaningfully contribute to the world is a thread that runs through Di's life and work – a trait she is proud to have passed onto her children,

Gabrielle, a well-known sexuality and relationships educator, and Nicolas, a professor of Asian art and religion. Despite all her incredible achievements, Di says the thing she is most grateful for is that her children are good people.

"I'm really proud of my children," she says. "I feel like we have a duty to encourage our children to be good people and I'm so happy that mine are. They're philanthropic, they're brave and they speak up and do good things, and I see them passing this onto their own children.

This sense of contribution is the legacy I want to leave."



For more info, go to www.dimorrissey.com.au

Arcadia is stocked at Book Face in Port Central and Kmart in Coffs Central. Book Face also stock several other Di Morrissey books.



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Fresco
Marketplace
Seasonal
fruit at
market
price

Pansabella
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Ornamental
pineapple
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marble
eye wear
\$260

Lily & Sapphire
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Uptown
Local
Woven
slides
\$159.95



Lily & Sapphire
Island Hopping book \$85.00

Lily & Sapphire
Auguste dress \$155.95



Sam and Noah training for the Wings for Life charity run in early May



Kayaking brought Sam some welcome solitude and independence



The new World Champion smiling at her proud husband



Sam and "Penguin"



Sam with (l to r) Noah, Rueben and Oli and their adored maggie

Broken but Beautiful

Six years ago, on a family holiday in Thailand, Sam Bloom's life change irrevocably when the rooftop railing she leant against gave way. Sam's spine was shattered in two places, her lungs were ruptured, and she had bleeding on the brain. The fall would leave her paralysed from the chest down. It has been a challenging and dark road at times for Sam but rediscovering the ocean has helped make her wheelchair bound world a little bigger and a little brighter.

Words by Yvette Harper

Photography by Cameron Bloom



Sam surfs on a board made especially for her by Angourie shaper, Luke Short. Image by Sam Rutty

I first met Sam and her husband Cameron 20 years ago in a vast, fly-in only safari camp in northern Botswana. An odd place for fellow Sydneysiders to cross paths. I was working there and Cam, a professional photographer, had been commissioned by an Aussie magazine to shoot a feature article.

Sam tells me her spinal cord injury robbed the world of that girl; the happy, carefree, spontaneous adventurer, but I disagree. I still see much of the Sam I met back then; shy, self-deprecating, honest, humble, athletic and quietly determined. Both then and now I appreciate she's not one to underestimate.

My early impressions were that Sam and Cam were peas in a pod even though their personalities were so very different. Cam the extrovert, the chatterbox and Sam, more reserved and with an inherent kindness you could spot a mile away. Sam was and is the love of Cam's life and tragic circumstances have in no way diminished that.

"Cam has been incredible from the moment it happened. He has had to put up with a lot from me but has never wavered in his support, compassion or positivity. It blows my mind actually," Sam says with much warmth in her voice.

Sam's story has inspired people the world over, many of whom discovered her through the best-selling book, *Penguin Bloom* about a magpie chick the family found abandoned.

One of the videos showing "Penguin" with Sam and Cam discussing the impact the little bird had on Sam's recovery,

has been viewed millions of times (46 million views and counting). More still will learn about the Blooms when the major motion picture comes out in the next year or two.

It's difficult for Sam to see silver linings as she misses her independence and pre-accident life so dearly. However, she acknowledges that one of the best things to come from her story being widely known is hearing from people all over the world who thank her for giving them strength and making them feel less alone. Family members of those with motor neurone disease, MS or spinal cord injuries and individuals struggling with a devastating diagnosis have contacted Sam with words of gratitude and love.

About 18 months ago, one Australian woman sent Sam a package with a beautiful letter and handmade cowrie shell jewellery. She also encouraged Sam to take up surfing again – a sport Sam has loved since childhood and which had long been her beautiful escape. Incidentally, the parcel was from Nola Wilson, the mother of champion surfer, Julian Wilson (currently second in the world rankings). Through Julian, Nola understands the tremendous joy and fulfillment the ocean can bring.

"Nola played a huge role in getting me out into the ocean and back on a surfboard. I think she understood how beneficial the ocean could be for me, not just physically but from a mental health perspective too," Sam says.

"Every time Cam takes me out, I feel so much better and we always have fun. Getting back on a board has played a massive role in making me feel a bit like my old self again.



Sam out and about on her bike

>> I love being in the water, it brings a sense of freedom but I'm still a bit of a chicken in big waves!"

Sam has always been competitive, and sport played a huge part in her life prior to the accident. A few years ago Sam decided to give kayaking a go. She hadn't done much of it before but loved being out on the water and away from the wheelchair. As someone still coming to terms with needing to be helped so much day-to-day, kayaking also brought Sam some much welcome solitude and independence.

Kayaking was particularly challenging because Sam's spinal cord was severely damaged high on her back, so she is unable to use her torso for strength and balance like most kayakers. The power instead must come from her arms and upper body. There were countless wobbles and falls but Sam is Sam and before long, the right people were taking notice. She was selected in the Australian ParaCanoe team and competed in the 2015 World Championships in Milan.

She also formed a very close bond with her kayaking coach. "Gaye was amazing because she would treat me normally, which was so refreshing. Everyone else was so careful about what they would say so I loved that Gaye would bag me out and challenge me."

Surfing presented Sam's next big opportunity. Having grown up surfing, Sam felt more comfortable on a board than she had in a kayak and it helped that she could call on old skills to read the waves and surf conditions. She never planned to compete but entered her first competition mid-2018 and was thrilled to be selected in the Australian Adaptive Surf Team.

In December, Cam, Sam and their three teenage boys, Rueben, Noah and Oli packed their bags for the Stance ISA World Adaptive Surfing Championship in San Diego. Sam had only been surfing again for a year.

A short board shaped especially for Sam by local Angourie shaper, Luke Short was designed to be more responsive to her particular style. "Most women surf longer boards but I really wanted to have more control and the ability to take off on steeper faces and turn more. A handle on the front of the board enables me to leverage my torso left and right – this is how I turn," Sam explains.

Sam loved every minute of the competition. The wheelchair was far from sight, she was surfing under a beautiful blue Californian sky and as always, Cam was close by, cheering her on. Their three boys watched, hearts full, from the shoreline.

Sam gave her all to every single wave throughout the competition. Her coach was there to catch her after each wave and help her back on the board if she fell. He would then paddle her back out to Cam who pushed Sam onto the best waves.

After the final event, Cam and Sam headed into the beach together. It was only as the sounds of 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, oi, oi, oi' reached them that they learnt the outcome. Sam had won! She was the new world champion in her class of adaptive surfing. Her beautiful broad smile as she was carried from the surf said it all.

Sam was encouraged and embraced by the incredible surfing community in attendance and inspired by many competitors, too. "Our family met amazing people from all around the world and everyone had a different story. Some were in wheelchairs, others were blind or missing limbs and it was awesome for the boys to meet such brave and inspirational athletes."

Ever humble, Sam says her story is no different to anyone else's. "Many people have to deal with something awful in their lives."

And while Sam may think that the gentle but resilient adventurer I met two decades ago in the African bush has gone, every day she fights and strives for new challenges like kayaking and surfing to make her world a little bit bigger. I still see her, it's just that some of her parts are broken now.

To find out more: www.sambloom.com.au or Instagram @samjbloom

Watch a beautiful Bloom family video, including "Penguin" at Coastbeat TV on YouTube.

***Penguin Bloom – The Odd Little Bird Who Saved a Family* by Cameron Bloom & Bradley Trevor Grieve is available at Book Face Port Central. Ph) 6584 6001**



The Bloom family



CONGRATULATIONS SAM BLOOM

WOMEN'S WORLD ADAPTIVE SURF CHAMPION

101 REASONS

TO PLAY, STAY, TASTE & EXPLORE



coffscoast.com



Marley on the timber jetty in Coffs Harbour

Surf Seekers

The Coffs Coast stretches from Nambucca to Red Rock and is jam-packed with nature reserves, striking headlands and of course, beautiful beaches. Camping only metres from the surf in one of the many holiday parks along this spectacular coastline is a rite of passage for many Aussie families. Kirk Owers takes his family on an Autumn road trip in search of the best waves.

Words and images by Kirk Owers



The perfect spot to catch up on some reading

You never forget your first surf trip. Mine was at the age of 11 to a magical place called Moonee Beach, just north of Coffs Harbour. It was the '80s and my brother and I were salty surf rats decked out in the latest fluoro shades. We camped for a week and scored many a wave by taking a short walk from our campsite across the estuary to the beach.

Photos from the trip show us surfing, whacking cricket balls and eating watermelons bigger than our heads. Fast forward and it felt very satisfying to return to the region, chasing the waves with my own young family in tow. Having already Googled the area, my two boys knew the best spots and were eager to surf them all. We pitched our tent at BIG4 Sawtell Beach Holiday Park; a great base for daily surf checks and enjoying the relaxed vibe of Sawtell village.

Perfect surf is a very subjective matter and it can be tricky to find waves to suit a multi-generational clan. The selection of surf breaks on the Coffs Coast is exceptional, ranging from safe 'shoreys' for beginners to challenging breaks for the pros. We used a handy guide book (Mark Warren's *Atlas of Australian Surfing*) to get an overview but made our best discoveries independently. Few things beat the thrill of rounding a corner or topping a headland to find perfect uncrowded waves peeling off.

We'd had a great surf at Macauleys, a popular spot for surfing competitions and were slurping banana smoothies when the sound of an old Kombi twanging towards the harbour's southside caught our attention. We decided to investigate and soon pulled up at a rise overlooking an offshore-groomed beach. Our guide book described it as a spot that "sorts the boys from the men" but on this day Gallows was head high and the perfect canvas for gliding on a longboard or practising shortboard manoeuvres.

We surfed for hours, splitting sets with friendly locals who shared local surf lore and exuded a sunny vibe. My wife joined us and we had the whole family out together, a rare treat. Afterwards, we hit the local skate park (Brelsford Park) in the heart of Coffs and watched some talented locals perform kick flips and nose blunts.

That night we dined at Lime Mexican in Sawtell. The place was packed, live music spilled over from the bar next door and we were lucky to get a table. Sawtell's eat street is a beauty; the median strip is lined with enormous fig trees which throw shade across a string of restaurants, cafes, bars and an indie cinema. Best of all, it's walking distance from our campground so we could waddle home full of beans, beer and good cheer!



The surf seekers - Marley (l) and Kirk (r) taking in the Boambee Beach view

On our final day we found another great wave right in our backyard. Sawtell Island shields winds from most directions and its sandbanks are regularly topped and sculpted into shape by an estuary which runs out on both sides of the island. We surfed with a small crowd and logged some more memorable rides.

Packing up to leave was hard but we consoled ourselves with the thought of a return. Our next trip would definitely have to be longer. On the drive home I reminisced about my first visit to the Coffs Coast and reflected on how the experience awakened my life-long passion for surf exploration...and I wondered how my own kids would remember this little adventure 30 years from now.

Our Pick of the Waves

1. Arrawarra - A long measured right hand pointbreak. Best on a SE swell and a SW wind. Ideal for longboarders and learners.
2. Moonee Beach - A beautiful beach break reached by a tree-lined walkway. Best in small SE swells.
3. Macauleys - This classy beach break is protected from the NE sea breeze and often has high performance waves.
4. Gallows - Handles big challenging swells (thus the name) but can be super fun on smaller NE swells.
5. Sawtell Island - Great point-style waves can be found on either side of the island which protects the waves from most winds.

For more information on these locations, visit coffscoast.com



Gusto skating at Brelsford Park



Gusto making the most of the surfing road trip

In Season this Autumn

From the daily seafood catch to the local farmer's harvest, here's your guide to fresh, local food available on the Coffs Coast.



Foodie Tip: Shop for local produce at farmers' markets, greengrocers and specialist seafood retailers.

Fruit				
Avocado	Custard Apple (early)	Kiwifruit	Mango (early)	Rockmelon
Banana	Davidson Plum	Lemon	Pear	Watermelon
Blueberries	Grapefruit (late)	Mandarin (late)	Pineapple	

Herbs				
Basil	Dill	Lemongrass	Myrtle - lemon/aniseed	Spring Onion
Chilli	Finger Limes	Macadamia	Oregano	Thyme
Chives	Garlic	Mint	Parsley	Watercress
Coriander	Ginger			

Vegetables				
Artichoke	Carrot	Gourds	Peas (late)	Spinach
Beans	Cauliflower	Kale	Potato	Squash
Beetroot	Celery (late)	Leek	Pumpkin	Sweet Potato
Bok Choy	Choko	Lettuce	Radish	Tatsoi
Broccoli	Choy Sum	Mushroom	Rhubarb	Tomato
Button Squash	Corn	Okra	Rocket	Wombok
Cabbage	Cucumber	Onion	Silverbeet	Zucchini
Capsicum	Eggplant			

Seafood				
Balmain Bugs (early)	Bullseye - red	Kingfish - yellowtail	Mahi Mahi (early)	Swordfish (early)
Blue Eye Trevalla / Cod (mid-late)	Cuttlefish	(mid-late)	Mud Crab	Tuna - yellowfin (early)
Bream - yellowfin (mid-late)	Grinner - painted (mid-late)	King Prawns	Octopus	Whitebait (mid-late)
		Mackerel - spanish / spotted	Snapper	Whiting
			Spanner Crab (mid-late)	

Season timing indicated in brackets. This Autumn Harvest Calendar is brought to you by Coffs Coast Harvest.



Armin's toys have been delighting families for generations



The toymaker often gets lost in his work



The Toymaker

After emigrating from Switzerland to Australia in the 1960s, Armin Koch followed his heart to a workshop on the mid north coast where he began crafting intricate wooden toys finished with fine brush work. More than 40 years after he and his wife Nina opened their toy shop, customers have become like family and the Kochs are enjoying the contentment and satisfaction that comes from a life lived with integrity.

Words and images by Elize Strydom



Armin surrounded by his beautiful handcrafted creations

"A lot of the people stop in and tell us they still have the toys their parents bought them 20, 30 or even 40 years ago," says toy maker Armin Koch. "They have their own children now and they've passed the toys down," adds Nina Koch with a smile that makes her eyes sparkle. "For us, that feels good," concludes Armin. "To have made something that they hand on – that's important."

I'm sitting at the Koch's kitchen table, nibbling biscuits and sipping tea as I feel one tear, then another, fall down my cheek. After being so warmly welcomed into this beautiful couple's cottage-style home and hearing their story, it's difficult to keep my emotions in check. Their interactions are playful, and they jokingly goad each other. Armin rolls his eyes every time Nina brings up astrology or numerology and Nina pokes fun at Armin when recalling anecdotes about money management. They have the kind of deep, lasting connection that is only possible after decades together marked by hard work, immense joy, deep sadness and true satisfaction.

"Our policy as a couple is 'come out with it' – so we talk a lot," explains Armin. "We work together and we have the same ideas about life, the world and people. We want to do the right thing."

"We've had the most beautiful customers over the years, the way they've stayed with us and still come to see us means they're more like family."

Now in his eighties, Armin's working life began in Switzerland at age 16. He took a job as a house painter and stayed with the profession until he was 32. But ultimately, his heart wasn't in it. "In between jobs I did a bit of folk art which wasn't profitable at all," he laughs. "I continued with my day job, but I had all sorts of little escapes into the world of art and craft."

Migration to Australia in the late 1960s brought the exciting prospect of a new life. "Our first stop was the immigration camp at Bonegilla," Armin explains. "Then we moved to Brisbane and jumped right in, even though we didn't speak English." "The woman at the embassy in Geneva had said not to worry about that as we'd learn quickly when we arrived," adds Nina. "And she was right!"

Armin soon gained employment as a house painter – something he hoped to avoid – but Nina reminds him that his toy making career may never have begun had he not accepted the job. "He would bring home pieces of wood from the job sites," she begins. "It was a combination of my urge to do some fine brush and wood work and the waste of timber I could see," Armin continues.

A friend saw the toys Armin was making and suggested he sell them to local stores. He appreciated her support and encouragement, but it wasn't all smooth sailing.



"People would commission toys and then never pay," he says. "We discovered that our brains were still in Europe and our thinking just didn't fit here. We made the wrong things!"

After four years in Brisbane, Armin and Nina decided it was time to leave the city and find a place to raise their growing family. They bought a house near Nambucca Heads and began to renovate. The new property included a workshop and a shopfront.

"It was 1972 and tourism in the region was taking off," says Nina. "In those days we opened the doors of our toy shop and never closed them, despite having four children in the house!"

"We had a lot of people calling in and we always had time for families," continues Armin. "I would show them the workshop and answer the kids' questions. I think it's so important to do that."

Armin laments the lack of human contact in modern transactions. He makes a point of conversing with the person serving him at the supermarket checkout and always asks questions about the timber in the hardware shop. He speaks of the need for young people to understand how things are made in order to truly value and appreciate what they have.

"That's how our childhoods were," remembers Nina. "We saw the shoemaker who fixed the shoes, and we knew the people who knitted our jumpers."

When I ask Armin how long it takes him to make each piece, he throws his hands in the air and laughs. "Too long!" He chuckles before adopting a more serious tone. "Being a craftsman, time is not important – it's the finished product. That's the true reward."

Watching Armin in his workshop confirms this. The look on his face as he carefully crafts each object reveals deep concentration and genuine satisfaction. A quick glance around the shed and later, the toyshop, shows no signs of a business in decline or a craftsman who wants to slow down. But Armin is adamant he has taken a big step back.

"The day I turned 65 I took my saw and walked to the front gate," he remembers. "It was time to cut our shop sign down."

There is a cheeky grin on Nina's face as she adds to the story. "I tried to help him but put my hand in the wrong place," she begins. "He cut my finger so badly I had to go to hospital and have stitches! Would you believe that?"

Armin and Nina share a laugh over the fond memory and explain that "stepping back" meant opening five days a week instead of seven, then three days and now, by appointment.

"But if someone knocks on the door I won't turn them away," clarifies Armin. "We have wonderful times with people and I enjoy my work too much."

"We've had the most beautiful customers over the years," says Nina. "The way they've stayed with us and still come to see us means they're more like family."

In the few hours I spend with Armin and Nina, I start to feel like a member of that same family. When it's time to go, Nina gives me one of her warm hugs and hands me a wrapped sandwich and some fruit. Armin invites me into the shop and offers a toy for my young nephew. As I start the car, I look in the rear-view mirror to see them standing together, waving me off. Once again, I feel one tear, then another, fall down my cheek.

If you would like to make an appointment with Armin and Nina, please contact *Coastbeat* and we can put you in touch: hello@coastbeat.com.au



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Sugarloaf Point Lighthouse. Image courtesy of Kirk Owers



Forster Marina local. Image by Elize Strydom



Miles Island, near the Forster-Tuncurry bridge, is wonderful to explore at low tide. Image by Cain Pascoe

Getaway to the Great Lakes

Lovers of the great outdoors will find themselves very much at home in the Forster-Tuncurry and Pacific Palms region. The destination, now part of the Barrington Coast, is known for its white sand beaches, endless turquoise waters and ancient forests. *Coastbeat* chatted to some long-time locals who shared their suggestions on making the most of this unique wonderland. So, pack your adventure gear and settle in for a weekend (or better still - a week) of reconnecting with nature.

Words by Geordie Bull & Yvette Harper



Aerial view of Forster. Image courtesy of Shane Chalker

For nature lovers

Outdoor enthusiasts are truly spoiled for choice in the Great Lakes region – named for the three adjoining lakes that create snake-like waterways, providing endless opportunities for exploration.

Wallis Lake is hard to beat when it comes to nature on show, with plenty of locals (and their pooches) spending their weekends SUPing on its calm waters. Kids can also play in the wide expanse of safe, shallow water – great for parents who want to relax! Wallis Lake also consists of many islands, shoals and bays; one local family said they love to swim or paddle to **Miles Island** near the Forster-Tuncurry Bridge at low-tide to spend the day playing in the shallows and exploring the island.

Kids will also love visiting **One Mile Beach**, where they can burn some energy bodyboarding down the steep sand dunes.

At **Booti Booti National Park** you'll find one of *Coastbeat's* favourite walking trails (featured in our Autumn 2018 issue), a loop of several kms which begins at the Ruins Campground. The walk takes you up the northern side of Booti Hill, along the ridge and then down to Elizabeth Beach. It's a gorgeous trail, with the ocean on your left and bushland to your right. Booti Booti National Park is also home to over 200 bird species so twitchers best pack the binos for this outing.

Just along from the Ruins Campground you'll find **The Green Cathedral**. It's a unique outdoor cathedral and wedding venue under a canopy of green with Wallis Lake views. If there's no wedding party in sight, it's the perfect place to soak up the serenity.

Boasting pristine beaches just begging to be explored and a tiny cluster of fibro beach shacks, **Seal Rocks** has managed to retain its village feel. Boat Beach is still a working bay so grab a sandy spot and watch the fishermen returning with their catch. This tucked away little paradise is about 40 minutes south of Forster.

The **Sugarloaf Point / Seal Rocks Lighthouse** walk is another one to consider. It's short (about 700m) and steep but all huffing and puffing is rewarded by the spectacular views from the top. If you really like the lighthouse, you can even sleep there, with accommodation available in the three keepers' cottages.

Surfers have waves a-plenty to choose from and locals say you can't go too wrong from **Tuncurry Beach** all the way to **Boomerang Beach**. **Janie's Corner**, accessed from **Seven Mile Beach**, also rates a special mention. Fishing enthusiasts will love **Elizabeth Beach** and **Smiths Lake**.



Boat Beach, Seal Rocks. Image courtesy of Shane Chalker



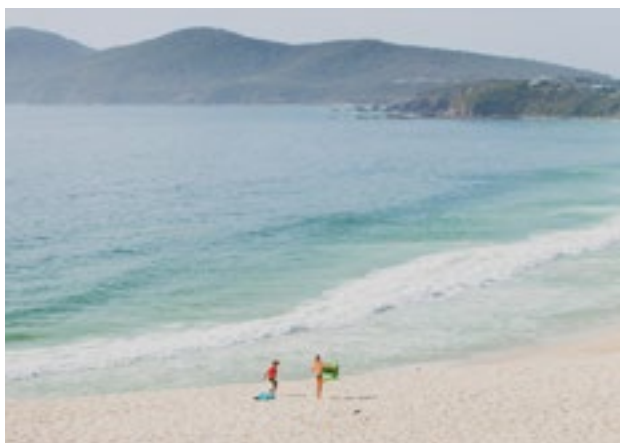
A fun way to cool off in Forster. Image by Elize Strydom

For adventurers

There are plenty of outdoor activities to keep you busy in the Forster / Great Lakes region.

Tuncurry's **HorseaboutTours** offer sunrise and sunset beach rides – a once-in-a-lifetime experience (read the reviews on TripAdvisor!).

Another recommended activity is a whale watching tour with **Amaroo Cruises**. The season runs from early June to late November. Last year, one guest was overheard saying her humpback whale trip in Forster was better than the Antarctic experience! Out of whale season, enjoy a top day out and plenty of dolphin sightings. Amaroo even offers a 100% dolphin guarantee!



One Mile Beach sand dunes. Image by Elize Strydom

For those who want to get a little deeper, a dive trip with **Forster Dive at Fisherman's Wharf** can have you up close and personal with the endangered grey nurse shark. Gabby from Forster Dive tells us that these sharks are placid, non-threatening and stick to certain locations in the ocean, so they're a very reliable shark to dive with. After more bonding with marine creatures? Forster Dive also has a Swimming with Dolphins cruise which offers in-water dolphin interaction in the open ocean and lake environment.

If you're keen to while away some time in the waterways of Forster and its surrounds, why not rent a BBQ boat for a day or even better, a houseboat? Find out more at **Forster Marina**.

For foodies

No weekend away is complete without some local food recommendations. Sample the region's famous seafood at **Hamilton's Oysters** in Tuncurry where you can sit back and take in the wonderful waterfront position as you dine on something delightful. Dolphin sightings, fantastic cocktails and live music all make for a pretty unbeatable experience.

The Reef Bar is another waterside pick. Their pizzas come highly recommended by those in the know. Next door to Reef Bar is the must-try **Spice Monkey** which specialises in Japanese fusion cuisine.

If you're after something a little more low-key but with yet another jaw-dropping view, finish your day with a meal and sundowner as you gaze across the lake at the Pacific Palms Recreation Club, better known as '**The Recky**'.

Close by, at Blueys Beach you'll find Kembali. At **Kembali**, the atmosphere is laid-back and welcoming, and the food is absolutely delicious. It's a favourite with locals for its tasty Indonesian fare (menu hint: start with the Asian squid salad or Nasi Goreng). Word is the coffee's great, too.



Lunch by Hamilton's Oysters. Image by Elize Strydom

For hinterland explorers

While the Forster area is known for its famous turquoise coastline, the hinterland contains some hidden treasures of its own.

No excursion into the hinterland is complete without a visit to the historic town of **Wingham**, where you'll be faced with the tough decision between lunching at the deliciously healthy Garden Grub Café or coffee-lover's favourite, Bent on Food.

While you're there, take a walk on the Wingham Brush Boardwalk to look for numerous rare birds and see hundreds of flying foxes sleeping in the treetops. The beautiful Moreton Bay fig trees provide a magical environment for the imagination to run wild.

From Wingham, venture out to **Potoroo Falls**, where you'll find a 900m walking trail leading to a fantastic swimming hole that kids will love. Potoroo Falls is also home to the largest recorded watergum in NSW.

'Ancient' is the only word to describe **Alum Mountain**, which is located an hour's drive from Forster. With its imposing rocky outcrops, lookouts, trails, a quarry tunnel from old mining days and picnic areas overlooking Bulahdelah and the Myall River Valley, this place is well worth a visit.

For more information see www.greatlakes.org.au
or call the Forster based Visitor Information
Centre on Ph) 1800 802 692



Potoroo Falls. Image courtesy of @eyesaboutaustralia

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Hot croissants straight out of the Bush Kitchen's wood-fired oven

Dirt Track Adventures

Heading south to Port Macquarie, Ballina boy Paul Pryor decided to get his four-wheel drive off the highway and take the scenic route. He found pristine beaches, dusty dirt roads, bush camping and some tasty tucker. Take the road less travelled...

Words by Paul Pryor

Photography by Elize Strydom



The view north from Queens Head

I'm travelling with my friend Elize and she assures me I'll want to take a look at Crescent Head, so we pull into the car park and see the perfect peelers coming around the point. A big part of me wants to stay right there but I know there's more adventure just around the corner.

We fill the truck with fuel and stock up on bakery treats before heading out Baker Drive and onto Point Plomer Road. The sealed road ends pretty quickly and we hit a corrugated dirt road. There are no major potholes, but it is a bit bumpy. Four-wheel drives would have no trouble, but it could be a bit uncomfortable for low two-wheel drives. We pass multiple accommodation options from campgrounds to luxury retreats. There seems to be something for every budget. We haven't lined up anywhere to stay so we try our luck at Waves Campground, just across the road from Delicate Nobby Beach.

Kit greets us at the front desk and assures us that he has room. He's an enthusiastic and informative host and tells us all about what Waves has to offer. The surf lessons are appealing but I'll leave morning yoga and the essential oils workshop to Elize! Kit gives us a number of unpowered bush campsites to choose from and it's not an easy decision. They're all very spacious and surrounded by trees that provide a fair amount of privacy.

Tummies rumbling, Kit points us in the direction of the onsite café, Surf Fuel. We're impressed with the healthy breakfast and lunch options, tasty coffee and friendly service. Once we've had our fill and set up the tent, we hop

back in the truck and drive towards Queens Beach via Point Plomer. The campground at Point Plomer is bustling. This is certainly a popular spot and it's not hard to see why. The beach is a stone's throw away and the view up the coast is spectacular.

We'd heard that the sand on Queens Beach was especially soft due to the lack of rain and northerly winds but see a number of four-wheel drives going up and down the track, so we decide to risk it. I make sure to let down the pressure in my tyres first – this helps the car climb over the sand rather than sinking into it. The drive down to the water isn't too bad but I definitely have to go easy over some very soft sections that have the potential to get inexperienced drivers into trouble. We say g'day to a few others – there are only a handful of vehicles on this seriously picturesque beach.

We pull out the camp chairs and have a few drinks before going for a walk up to the headland and taking in amazing 360-degree views. I've been told about an old gravel mining road that runs parallel to the beach but was advised to avoid it as it has fallen into disrepair.

My curiosity gets the better of me and we give it a go. The track is certainly rough and there's a sign at the beginning stating that it's not suitable for two-wheel drives. I could see that it would be challenging yet super fun in the wet but, dry as it is, we're reduced to a slow crawl.

Just when we're about to turn around and head back to the campground, we come across a young couple who have bottomed out and found themselves stuck in soft sand.

They thought their station wagon could handle the terrain, but they didn't count on the sandy section. I rustle around in the tray and try to find something that can attach my power winch to the back of their vehicle. After a number of attempts I'm eventually able to pull them out and send them on their way. They're extremely grateful and perhaps a little sheepish. Good deed done, we wind back through Limeburners Creek National Park to Waves. Dinner and chats around our small fire cap off the night before it's into the swag for some shut eye.

It's bright and sunny the next morning so we hop straight over to the beach and throw ourselves into the water. When it's time for breakfast Elize remembers the sign she saw for the Bush Kitchen, a café just down the road. We arrive at Kim's open-air establishment and feel instantly at home. Kim has lived in the area for 17 years and had the café open for seven of them. He sets us up with coffee, smoothies and freshly baked croissants then heads over to his wood-fired oven to cook our bacon, eggs and toast. If we'd been staying another night we'd definitely have come back at dinnertime for one of his wood-fired pizzas.

After yesterday's test run on Queens Beach, I decide against driving south to Port Macquarie due to the super soft sand. Instead we go back to Crescent Head and find the Maria River gravel road which takes us south through bush and farmland all the way to Port Macquarie's North Shore. We pick up two backpackers on the way – Abby and Eva. They entertain us with stories of their travels and their first impressions of

Australia. At North Shore we join the Settlement Point Ferry and cross the Hastings River.

There's no question that the Pacific Highway upgrade has made the trip south quicker and safer, but sometimes it's a hell of a lot more fun to get off road and do some exploring in out of the way places. You never know what you'll find, and you certainly won't regret it. Life's all about the journey, right? Right!

Stay: Waves Campground - www.wavescampground.com

Eat: The Bush Kitchen, 1060 Point Plomer Road

Facebook: [@thebushkitchen](https://www.facebook.com/thebushkitchen)

Explore: Queens Head and Queens Beach



Backpackers Abby and Eva hitch a ride with us to Port Macquarie

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SMART drumlines are used as part of the Shark Management Strategy



Paul tags a White shark for tracking

Fins, Fishing and Fatherhood

Not many people would welcome close contact with White Sharks (yes, the Great ones), Tiger Sharks and Bull Sharks but it's all in a day's work for Senior Research Scientist, Dr Paul Butcher. We caught up with "Butch" to find out more about his work, family and life on the Coffs Coast.

Words by Yvette Harper

Photos courtesy of NSW DPI



The Butcher family (l to r) - Taj, Candy, Nate, Paul and Eli. Image by Brendan Ray

For a kid who grew up spending weekends in Woolli catching crabs, snorkelling in the river and chasing fish in the seagrass, Paul was delighted to get a job fresh out of university (2004) with NSW Fisheries.

Butch is currently involved in the largest shark tagging program in the world. This has been his specific focus for the past three years. The program aims to determine shark movement patterns and increase knowledge of their behaviour. He spends his days monitoring sharks as part of the NSW Government's \$16 million Shark Management Strategy.

Butch is a boots and all kind of fella – no half measures for him. He is passionate and incredibly dedicated to the things he loves, such as his job, his family and his rugby. I've seen it in action as my 11-year-old son's rugby coach. As a parent, I'm yet to have met a more encouraging and committed coach on the sporting fields. I think my son would move into the Butcher household tomorrow if he could...

"I go at things with 100% and put a lot of time and effort into my work – it's the same with my family and sport. I love getting the best out of kids and adults alike. I also love answering questions which is why I find it so fulfilling coming up with strategies to mitigate the risk of shark bites and shark interactions."

I ask Butch why everyone is so interested (and often fearful) of our apex ocean predators.

"They are an internationally iconic species and people are always curious about big things. I love them but at the same time I understand that that same animal can have a really negative and detrimental impact on society. Through our work in Shark Management Strategy we meet people who have been bitten or have had close encounters and so I can

appreciate both sides. It can be a challenging topic to talk about, but we're focused on getting the information and delivering that to the public."

Sharks are inquisitive and unpredictable by nature and research thus far shows they rarely follow a distinct track. The idea of fixed migratory patterns for all animals has certainly been ruled out with research revealing that some animals may move from New Zealand to Papua New Guinea within a few months.

A number of publications and reports will be out this year (the current program concludes in 2020) but recent drone research findings suggest that the shark threat on our coastline is possibly overblown. Spot a large marine animal near our coastline and it's 135 times more likely to be a dolphin than a shark.

An estimated 4,000 large marine animals were counted around the known shark bite locations of Lennox Head, Ballina, Byron Bay and Evans Head and a 'thriving and vibrant ecosystem' was revealed with very few White Sharks, Tiger Sharks and Bull Sharks among those creatures monitored.

The Strategy's goal is to find new and existing technologies to make our beaches safer. Drones, answering the quandary about where to bury dead whales that wash ashore, SMART drumlines, and the most exciting one for Butch, tagging and tracking sharks all come into play.

Butch tells me that technology has improved research twenty-fold. "Drones are a great example," he says. "Who would have thought they'd play such a vital part? Our research has morphed into affiliations with surf clubs too. We can use our information to show people that the sharks may be there, but we can still do what we love to do in the ocean with them in the water."

And it's a guarantee that when not at work or busy encouraging keen young rugby players like mine to strive, you'll find Butch and his family in or by the ocean. Along with wife Candy, Paul is likely to be out and about with sons Taj, Eli and Nate doing the very things he loved as a kid; heading up the river to chase mud crabs, beach fishing or getting in the canoe in search of flathead, bream and whiting.

Work may often take him up and down the NSW coastline (a box of chocolates on the bed for 100 nights spent in one Ballina hotel in a year is an indication of how often he's away from home), but his heart is here with his family on the Coffs Coast.

"Candy and I love chasing our three boys around and strongly encourage them to follow their passions as we both have. It's great to be involved in the community, coaching as I do and having close mates through the kids' sports. It's wonderful to follow in the footsteps of my parents and grandparents and lead a life where we get to experience the ocean and outdoors so readily."

I can't help but wonder as Taj, Eli or Nate reel in that big fish or explore the beautiful coastal waterways whether the wheels are being set in motion for them to head down the path of ground-breaking, world-leading research just like their dad.

Keen to find out more? Search SharkSmart @ www.dpi.nsw.gov.au or download the SharkSmart app. YouTube's Coastbeat TV also has video content relating to the NSW Shark Management Strategy.



Another shark is tagged to monitor its movements

In recognition of Shark Awareness Day, Paul Butcher will be at Coffs Central at 11am on Saturday July 13 for a free presentation. Everyone is welcome. Enquiries can be made through the Concierge Desk - Ph) 5622 8900





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Port Macquarie-Hastings 200 Years

From 2018 to 2021 Port Macquarie is commemorating the town's bicentenary in recognition of a milestone period in the region's history.

Words by Kue Hall

Images courtesy of Port Macquarie Museum



Horton Street looking north, circa 1890

While three years may seem like an extended time to be memorialising such an event, it's for a good reason: The bicentenary recognises two key dates in Port Macquarie's early history, the year John Oxley and his team of explorers surveyed the region for European settlement (1818) and the year Port was settled by the British (1821).

Throughout this period, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council is looking to bring the community together to remember the history, heritage and people who make the region what it is today.

Things kicked off in October last year, when Council hosted the successful '200 Together' community event at the Town Green. This included cultural and heritage displays, historic tours across the CBD, live music and activities celebrating Indigenous culture.

Council and the community are now working together to bring more exciting events to the region over the next three years.

Mitch McKay, principal of Port Macquarie-Hastings Heritage and award-winning heritage consultant, has long been involved in promoting the history of the region. He says there are plenty of little-known facts about the region that make it one of the most historically-rich towns in the country.

"Port Macquarie is one of the oldest settlements in Australia," says Mitch. "The settlement pre-dates every capital city in Australia except for Sydney and Hobart, and Port was one of the earliest places established for secondary punishment."

Volunteer curator at Port Macquarie Museum, Debbie Sommers agrees that most people don't realise the historical significance of the region. "Port Macquarie has a long tourism history and

during the 1960s claimed itself as 'Australia's First Resort,'" says Debbie.

"The town's association with our nation's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, is not widely known either, but had he not been our local member of parliament, federation would not have taken place in 1901. There are so many more stories that would fascinate people."

Debbie says the bicentenary celebrations provide an opportunity to reflect on the past and an opportunity to help shape the future. "Such celebrations are about the place we live in and our cultural identity. Coming together as one community suggests shared values despite cultural and historical differences."

Just as Port Macquarie is rich with history, it is also rich with ways to learn about it. One option is to explore the town on foot with walking tours conducted by Mitch. The 'Uncovering our Past Tour' delves into the history and archaeology of the region, while the 'Grave Tales Tour' explores the historic cemetery.

The Glasshouse exhibits the remains of an overseer's cottage, while Port Macquarie Museum has a wide local history collection on exhibit with themed displays covering everything from British settlement through to Port's contemporary history as a popular tourist destination and sought-after sea change location.



Image of John Oxley

Port Macquarie Museum is located right near Port Central at 22 Clarence Street or online at www.portmuseum.org.au
For information on walking tours visit www.pmheritage.com.au and for further details on the bicentenary and related events visit www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au



David's beloved piano holds pride of place in his garden music room



For David, playing piano is as natural as breathing



Liszt: The great Romantic composer



Still Shining

David Helfgott is the astounding pianist made famous through the 1996 Oscar-winning biopic *Shine*. Many of his admirers regard him as the greatest concert pianist since Horowitz, citing his technical skill and the unique passion that he brings to his playing. His greatest admirer is his wife, Gillian, who tells the tale of a love at first sight that has lasted thirty years.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Photography by Sooz Myhill



David performing with the Bellingh Youth Orchestra at their 10th Anniversary Concert. Image by Jay Black

To interview David and Gillian Helfgott we leave Bellingh for the Promised Land, traversing winding roads through lush greenery, crossing Never Never Creek. We approach their house via a small bridge over a tranquil lily pond, overhung by luxuriant greenery. In the distance, across landscaped lawns dotted with outbreaks of wild tropical flowering shrubs, there is a second lily pond, decorated by a delightful bright red, arching footbridge.

A figure darts from the front of the house. It is David Helfgott. He raises his arms and to our surprise, releases a small bird into the air, then turns and runs inside again.

The whimsy of our first impression continues throughout the next two hours as David and Gillian entertain, charm and enchant us. They greet us in a rush of hugs, then David whisks photographer Sooz off, saying “You’ll want to see the piano? Of course you will.” He doesn’t wait for an answer; Gillian and I retire to the elegant interior of their home.

“We fell in love with this area,” she tells me. “George Negus and his partner Kirsty Cockburn introduced us to the Promised Land thirty years ago; we settled here in 1989.”

‘Settled’ is a misleading verb within the Helfgott’s context. Even before the success of *Shine*, David maintained a demanding schedule of concert performances, which continues today. The Helfgotts have just returned from a four-month tour of Europe, performing in Paris, Budapest, Denmark, Copenhagen, Zurich, Vienna and Istanbul, playing

to packed houses and critical acclaim.

“In Budapest, David played to 2,500 people. Denmark was more intimate and, of course, Copenhagen – David has played there every year since 1988. He celebrated his 70th birthday with a concert there last year and received a standing ovation.”

From the piano room we hear strains of Nikolai Rimsky-

Korsakov’s *Flight of the Bumblebee* which, along with Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No. 3*, is one of David’s signature pieces. I find out later that it is a favourite of Sooz, and David has delighted her with a performance. Such generosity is a hallmark of David’s musicianship.

“It’s like he channels the music,” says Gillian.

“He tells me that he was born to play the piano.”

The frenetic energy of *Flight of the Bumblebee* seems appropriate for David, who buzzes in minutes later, dragging Sooz by the hand. He is keen for us to have a cup of tea. He gives everyone a kiss, then rushes off again. As I follow Gillian to the kitchen I hope that Sooz is managing to get some shots in.

“He is a very spontaneous person, quite uninhibited, and so kind,” Gillian comments. “That bird you saw him releasing had been flapping around in here for hours this morning, poor thing; I couldn’t catch it. David came in from the pool and offered to help, which was a relief. It took him just a few minutes talking quietly to calm the bird down enough to catch it. Animals love him.”



The Helfgotts live in the beautiful Promised Land

On David's website there is a remarkable image of David playing while a leopard lounges atop his piano. Gillian tells me it was fascinated by him and kept licking his hands.

"Another time," Gillian says, "David came in to tell me that 'a snake had given him a cuddle while he was swimming'. It slid in and wrapped itself around him, but he was worried that it might drown, so he unwrapped it and placed it on the pool side. I was concerned, but he looked at me very seriously and said, 'Darling, you do know the snake would never harm me?' He's like that with everything; I have had not one boring day being married to him."

David has already told me that he spends a lot of time swimming.

"It calms him down," confirms Gillian. "That's why we love it here – David can be close to nature, which is so good for him. He is happier than I've ever seen him and playing better than ever before."

David's generosity encompasses the community of Bellingham too, in a series of performances with the Bellingham Youth Orchestra (BYO). I ask why this particular collaboration and Gillian replies, emphatically, "Annie Phelan," naming the BYO creative director and conductor. "One of the most inspirational musicians I've met in my life. She is a perfect example of discipline, passion and care for the musicianship of her students."

The admiration is mutual. Emailing me from overseas, Annie responded: "The orchestra is always excited when I tell them that David will be performing with them. He is a great inspiration and encourages the kids to perform at a very high level. The orchestra wouldn't be what it is today without the support and encouragement from David and Gillian."

The BYO just celebrated its 10th anniversary and now comprises 90 musicians. They recently performed to an audience of 3,000. "It's all about the love of music," says Gillian, "which David loves sharing with the students."

David and Sooz return for a cup of tea, served in beautiful Klimt crockery that is in accord with walls hung with paintings, richly hued upholstery and a symphony of green glimpsed through long windows. The Helfgott home is a haven.

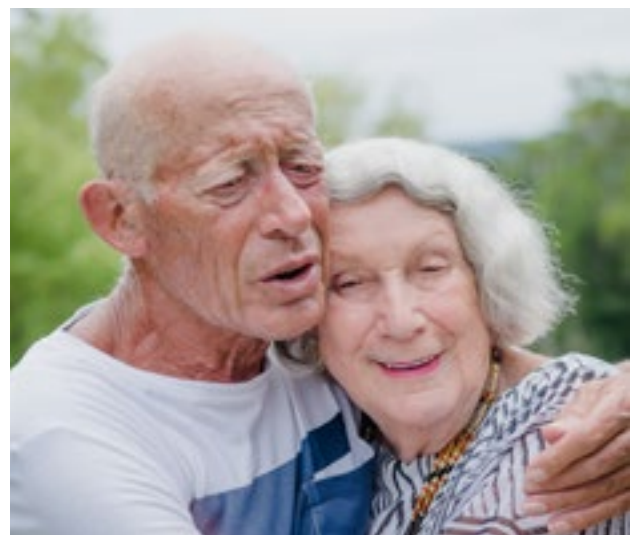
It's my turn in the piano room now. David and I talk a little of his love for the Romantic composers and I confide that my favourite is Smetana. Immediately he plays *The Moldau*, his quicksilver fingers lightly teasing out the opening bars before launching into the dramatic main theme. To my surprise I stand and join him, singing along as best I can. We find our way through until David stops playing.

"As long as you know the notes," he says, laughing. As I thank him, he replies, in his rapid-fire style, "It's all meant to be - be in the now, now is what matters."

We walk outside for photographs of Gillian and David by the lily pond then, suddenly, two hours have passed, and it is time to leave. We are embraced and sent on our way with invitations to come again; the spell of the Helfgotts lasts all the way home.

During our broad-ranging conversation, Gillian and I talked a little about David's mental health. I have watched many of David's performances online, noticing how he turns repeatedly to the audience, how he sings along as he plays. Now, having met him, it occurs to me that music is a powerful way to make connection. David's warmth, his generosity and his love of sharing that which he loves, seems inseparable from his musicianship and I realise that when he stands to bow, arms outstretched, he wants to embrace us all in this music that pours through him, to connect us to what he can feel. And when he sings he is saying, as he did to me in his piano room at home: "Isn't this marvellous? Be in the now, it's meant to be."

For tour and biographical information visit
www.davidhelfgott.com



David and Gillian Helfgott - 30 years on and still shining



Lifestyle

In the following pages, dedicated to lifestyle, we introduce you to individuals who have turned what they love and believe in into great business opportunities - from colourful surfboards for women to tiny, sustainable houses and beautiful interior design.

Jada McNeil with two of her three kids at Forster's One Mile Beach. Image by Elize Strydom



Jada with a range she designed for Aussie-inspired cafe and lifestyle store Bluestone Lane



On Forster Main Beach



The 'Madonna' board for the 'Meet me at the Met' campaign



Jada and kids on a bush track near home

Art in the Ocean

Jada McNeil's surfboards have found a market with local women and international brands alike, with those who want to ride the waves and those who want to decorate their space. Incorporating traditional Indonesian textiles and collaborating with established artists, Jada's Nusa Indah label is taking surfing to new frontiers.

Words by Elize Strydom

Photography by Brett Rutkowski



These stunning surfboards were a collaboration between Nusa Indah and Bahamas based designer Lulu DK

"It's amazing that I've been able to combine the two things that I love: surfing and textiles," says Jada McNeil from her beachside home in Forster. "The boards I make are all so special to me and it's incredible to see them resonate with other people."

In 2013, Jada had three children under the age of five and an old yellow surfboard gathering dust in the corner. She was certain that a colourful new board would motivate her to get back in the water. Taking a treasured piece of green batik fabric to a local surfboard shaper and glasser, she created a beautiful board she'd be happy to ride and equally as pleased to look at when it wasn't in use.

"I put a photo of the board on my Instagram profile and received a bit of attention," she explains. "I thought it was cool that something so personal struck a chord with so many other people."

To Jada's surprise and delight, the photo was then shared by billionaire businesswoman – and granddaughter of cosmetics royalty Estée Lauder – Aerin Lauder. "I don't know how she ever laid eyes on it, but it brought in a whole new market for me – American women seeking surfboards as interior products for their stores, resorts and advertising campaigns," says Jada.

At that point, Jada was designing and making boards for close friends and family but her big break came in an email she received while on a family camping trip.

"US designer and artist Lulu de Kwiatkowski of Lulu DK wrote to say she was redesigning a luxury hotel in the Bahamas," Jada explains. "She asked me to put her artwork on 20 surfboards that would be used as décor in the pool

cabanas of The Cove, Atlantis!"

It was then Jada realised she had the opportunity to turn Nusa Indah into a successful business. But far from being yet another brand profiting off the back of surfing's popularity, she knew her lifelong connection to the ocean would shine through.

Growing up in Taree, her mum and dad would often take the family to a small island off Bali for months at a time. "From the main island it was a four-and-a-half-hour boat trip on a rickety old wooden outrigger full of chickens, motorbikes and seaweed," Jada remembers. "Mum struggled with seasickness so she made sure we stayed on the island for at

least a month so she could recover."

Jada and her siblings spent their time surfing and hanging out with the local kids. They became very close to an Indonesian family on the island and still visit them regularly.

Compared to overseas adventures, sitting in a high school classroom in Taree didn't rate very highly. "I started Year 12 and then dad bought an old bus and decked it out," she says. "He took my brother and I surfing down the south coast and over to Western Australia."

When Jada got home some three months later, she informed the school that she wouldn't be sitting the HSC. Her parents didn't mind too much as they knew the value of life experience, but Jada says her mum not-so-subtly hinted that she'd need to find herself a job, quick smart.

"I'd been working with a professional surf coach in Old Bar, Martin Dunn," she says. "I would film his coaching sessions and sit with him while he analysed the videos."

"I thought it was cool that something so personal struck a chord with so many other people."

With the support of Martin and her parents, Jada got her surf coach qualifications and started the Saltwater Surf School at Wallabi Point. She also took a Special Tertiary Admissions Test and was accepted into a Bachelor of Psychology at university.

Jada says her surf coaching experience has given her a clear idea of the specific needs of female surfers and what's required at different stages of the learning process. She tailors boards to suit individuals and to ensure they have the ability to catch the maximum amount of waves.

"I offer a personal level of contact that people appreciate," she says. "I want them to feel that their board has been specifically crafted for them."

As Nusa Indah's reputation has grown, so have the number of emails Jada receives from international brands and artists wanting to collaborate with her. "I've been quite selective because the process takes time," she says. "The jobs are getting bigger so I'm starting to have to narrow down what I say yes to."

One of those "big jobs" involves a certain global fashion empire. It goes by the name Vogue – perhaps you've heard of it? While the nature of the partnership is hush hush at the moment, Jada reveals that she has been to New York City to speak with Vogue's brand director and is continuing to work out the details. "I will say that they love my products and have

been very warm and welcoming – they've surprised me with a few favourable magazine articles already!" she says.

Jada admits that she sometimes has trouble believing where she is and what she's doing. A friend recently suggested she make a timeline of her life to get some perspective. "I recommend everyone do it," she says excitedly. "I realised that everything that had come before – my experiences and my passions – had prepared me for this exact moment in time. It's amazing!"

Check out Jada's surfboards on the Nusa Indah website: www.nusaindahsurfboards.com and follow her adventures on Instagram: [@nusaindahsurfboards](https://www.instagram.com/nusaindahsurfboards)



Jada in a Nusa Indah silk dress

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This beautiful beachfront home at Sapphire Beach is one of the projects by Nicolle and her team. Image by Peter Sechi



Nicolle's dog Murphy - happy at home. Image by Elize Strydom



Interior of a granny flat by Natural Habitat. Image by Mitch Franzi

Designing a Lifestyle

For 25 years Nicolle Foster has helped shape the look and feel of the Coffs Coast as owner and Senior Designer at Natural Habitat Interiors and Design. *Coastbeat* met with Nicolle to talk about the evolution of public spaces, the process of design and her favourite room in the house.

Words by Elize Strydom



Owner of Natural Habitat Interiors and Design, Nicolle Foster. Image by Elize Strydom

At a time when many of her peers were still figuring out what to do with their lives, 25-year-old Nicolle Foster was starting her own design consultancy business.

"I grew up in a creative environment and was the girl who used to change the bedroom furniture around all the time!" She laughs. "My dad was a well-regarded builder and mum was the frustrated interior decorator who encouraged me down that path because she could see the potential."

Initially working for a local decorating business, Nicolle knew when it was time to strike out on her own and open Natural Habitat Interiors and Design. "There were very few interior designers in this area at that time but there was a degree of demand," she says. "I always said I'd be here when Coffs Harbour 'happens' and when I reflect on how it has evolved over the last 25 years, I'm heartened."

While some design trends were initially slow to catch on regionally, Nicolle points to new, innovative housing estates like North Sapphire and modern commercial development in the public space. "I really like working on these kinds of projects," she says. "You're creating environments that everyone is able to enjoy. There's nothing more rewarding than seeing people in a pub or a restaurant you've designed."

Nicolle is proud of the role she's played in shaping the local community aesthetically, including her work at Coffs

Central and Moonee Market. "Shopping can be a pleasurable experience and the way that Gowings is bringing the lifestyle element back to these centres is really clever," she says. "It's important that we still have meeting hubs where people can go and get out of their houses to interact."

The rise of social media and photo sharing websites like Pinterest mean design trends are easy to access. The availability of discount homewares means they're widely replicated. Nicolle can see both sides of this development.

"On one hand, the consumer has more exposure to trends so there's a much more level playing field as far as progress and design," she says. But her concern is that following trends could lead to overconsumption and materialism. "There's a lot of mass-produced stuff out there that we don't need," she warns. "Consider your purchase. I lean towards quality so that I value the item and then I spend my savings on experiences – a trip to Italy perhaps!"

When clients come to Nicolle and her team, they usually fall into one of two categories. Some are time poor and happy to hand over complete control while others have too many ideas and struggle to make decisions. "A big part of what we do relies on being able to relate to people – being perceptive and intuitive," she explains. "We ask a lot of questions in order to build a client profile and from there, formulate a scheme to suit the brief."

The team will then address the scope of works and present the client with a proposal including digital mood boards, computer generated images and tactile samples. Inevitably challenges arise, but Nicolle enjoys problem solving. She says that one of the most rewarding parts of her job is seeing a project through to completion and photographing the finished product.

Nicolle's own home is set back on a hill overlooking the city's spectacular Jetty precinct. It is open and light filled yet private, surrounded by a lush wall of bamboo. Her design studio has separate street frontage, creating the ideal home-based business environment.

"What is now the studio was originally the corner shop for the Jetty area," she reveals. "Many of the kids who went to Jetty High before the 1980s would remember coming across to buy their lollies and milkshakes."

While in the past Nicolle designed and built homes to her taste, she says buying and renovating her current property was a positive experience. "You have to work within pre-existing parameters and can't push beyond certain boundaries," she observes. "But it had good bones; it was designed by Byron Bay based architect Rosalie Stollery and I engaged the help of friend and colleague Ann Gee of G2 Architects with the renos."

When it comes to her favourite room, Nicolle has trouble naming just one, as the kitchen, dining and lounge rooms all bi-fold out onto the deck. "I love the big outside deck as we catch a beautiful breeze," she says. "It's very much about indoor/outdoor living." Nicolle says she was initially sold on the location of her home. "It's a central location that has become a meeting place for the kids and for friends," she says. "The kids both surf and we enjoy the beautiful Jetty every day."



Depot Café in Coffs Central. Image courtesy of Natural Habitat



Salty Crew Kiosk in Port Macquarie. Image courtesy of Natural Habitat

Nicolle's tips for interior design

1. Indulge in pleasurable little luxuries. I love fresh flowers or greenery and a good quality candle.
2. Focus on combining different textures. Think timber, beautiful fabrics and tactile rugs.
3. Go for original art. It doesn't have to be expensive! I combine drawings my son did in pre-school with paintings by professional artists. The trick is to have everything framed really well.
4. Don't have too many "heroes" in one room. Work out what your stand out pieces will be and get the balance right. That balance applies to size, shape and colour.
5. Incorporate your personal taste. I'm a fan of natural history and I pick up things like banksia pods and shells to throw into the mix. That resonates with me but of course, everyone is different. Perhaps you'd rather add objects you picked up while travelling overseas. That creates layers and tells your story.
6. De-clutter regularly. Every three months I sweep through my house and clear out the space. There is a lot to be said for not having that cluttered energy around you.
7. If you're going to buy something, consider it first. Buy quality, buy it once and look after it. It's about truly valuing things – which is why I love handmade, artisan objects.

Visit Natural Habitat Interiors and Design online:
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The mid-range Sojourner with an innovative slide-out section



View from the upstairs loft bedroom



Full size kitchen with timber benchtops and flooring



View from the lounge room to the kitchen, bathroom and loft

Little Cottages Making a Big Impression

'Looking at life in a different way'. This is the vision of husband and wife duo Scott and Sarah Rohdich and their best friends David Boyd and Sam Verlaan. Together they are changing the views of first homebuyers, retirees and savvy investors around the country who are choosing to live life a little more simply, smartly and most importantly - sustainably.

Words by Ali Hiddlestone

It's been five years since Sarah and Scott Rohdich were inspired to launch Häuslein Tiny House Co. The word 'Häuslein' is German for 'little cottage' - a reference to their heritage and love of fine German quality finishes.

After living in a 'tiny house' for two years on a property belonging to Sarah's parents in Alpine Victoria, the pair was surprised at how quickly they adapted to the 'simple life'. "You don't need as much as you think you do," says Sarah. "Scott and I were amazed at how easily we adjusted to small living;

even once our first child turned one and started walking. Yes, it was a little tricky for a while but we all just loved it."

While many would cringe at the thought of life in a confined space with a toddler, for the Rohdich family, it was an adventure. "We spent most of our time in the great outdoors or getting in the garden to run off energy," says Sarah.

"Inside, we created 'zones' and we'd place different books and toys in these areas to create variety. Living in a tiny house also meant getting serious about house-training Micah early for safety (we had a fireplace in our first tiny home!). But it was so much fun and even now, Micah who is four and our 18-month-old son Judah plead with us to go back to the 'little house'!"

After their life-changing tiny house experience down south, Sarah and Scott decided to relocate back to Port Macquarie, where they'd met and married, in pursuit of their new venture.

According to Sarah, there's a Häuslein Tiny House to suit just about anyone. "Whether it's for extra 'granny flat' type accommodation in the backyard, a weekender, downsizing, a mobile business or a stepping stone to being able to build or buy a bigger house if you're struggling to break into the housing market, Häuslein is for you. It is all about encouraging people to consider a simpler life, less debt, less stress and more of the important things in life."

It seems this different perspective has made quite an impression on the local community with the pair overwhelmed by the support they've received. "We had around 300 people turn up to our first open day to see our display and many more since then. Lots of people were already interested in the tiny home movement and were therefore very excited to have a local company that would be able to build them a high-quality tiny house," Sarah says.

Taking between two to four months to build, there are three models of the tiny house to choose from; the Little Sojourner,

Images courtesy of Zane Wilson

the Sojourner and the Grand Sojourner.

"At 20 metres in size with one bedroom, one bathroom and a loft upstairs, the Little Sojourner is a little more compact and ideal for someone looking for a really plush caravan and who is keen to travel." The next step up, The Sojourner, features a pitched roof and has one bedroom, one bathroom and is slightly bigger in size. The largest home, The Grand Sojourner, features three bedrooms, one bathroom and, at 32 square metres in size, could fit the whole family.

Functionality is key to the design, according to Sarah, with all homes featuring clever storage spaces and full size appliances. "We found this really invaluable when we were living in our little house. You don't feel like you're living in a cramped caravan because you can do everything you would normally do in a larger home. There is a

full-size fridge, oven, four-burner stove and a huge kitchen sink. Everything is as it would be in a traditional home."

Plus, all homes are capable of going completely off grid with solar and battery powered systems, a composting toilet, water collection system and eco-friendly drainage systems.

"It's all about making it comfortable, sustainable and, if you want to just pack up and go and live somewhere remote, you can!"

For the team behind Häuslein Tiny Houses, it's all about creating a lifestyle that gives people the time to appreciate the little things - a life without the financial pressures of a mortgage.

"We believe reducing debt and living life more simply can be part of the solution for a more wholesome lifestyle that many of us long for," says Sarah.

The Häuslein team are all about offering people a 'less-stressed life.' Sarah adds, "We believe life is for living and for enjoying." Sounds good to me. I wonder how much a deposit is?

"We believe reducing debt and living life more simply can be part of the solution for a more wholesome lifestyle that many of us long for."

For more information on Häuslein Tiny House Co, visit www.hauslein.com.au



The Häuslein team (l to r) - Sarah, Scott, Sam and David

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Contact Shane Brooks 0403 266 707

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Contact Nicole Stark 0418 290 153

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Contact Yvette Ward 0403 602 544

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Contact Yvette Ward 0403 602 544

129 North Bonville Rd, Bonville



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Contact Nicole Stark 0418 290 153

4 Reicks Cl, Sapphire Beach



4 2 2

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Brand New - North Sapphire Estate

This faultless Arakoon home features open-plan living spaces with plenty of natural light. The main living area combines lounge, dining and kitchen spaces with raked ceilings which flow through glass stacker sliding doors to the covered north-east facing alfresco area. The kitchen features stone benchtops, two-pac soft close cupboards and stainless steel appliances, built-in microwave and 900mm wide gas cooktop. Located close to beautiful beaches and the Beachstone Café.

Contact Shane Brooks 0403 266 707



Shane Brooks
Principal & Licensee
0403 266 707



Nicole Stark
Sales
0418 290 153



Yvette Ward
Sales
0403 602 544



Luke Wenban
Sales
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Samantha Warner
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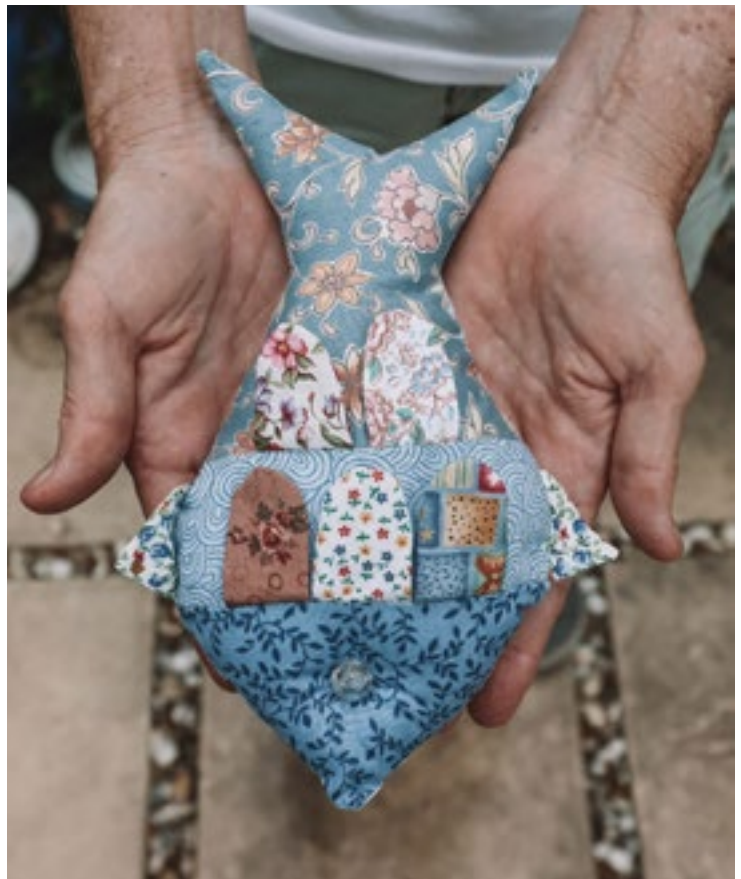
Cushions made by the 'Threads' crew are sold at the Macleay Options stores in Kempsey



Macleay Options processes local macadamias



Wall art for a child's room



Made with love

Changing the Story

Transforming people's lives is all in a day's work for Kempsey business Macleay Options, an award-winning disability service provider that is blazing the trail for social enterprises that want to stay true to their core values.

Words by Geordie Bull

Photography by Tia Duck



'Threads' volunteer Jo Ford (l) and employee Bronwyn Ritchie (r) finish off a project

"That's my son over there folding papers," says 86-year-old Maurie Britten, pointing to a robust-looking middle-aged man. "You'd never know it to look at him, but Peter is profoundly intellectually disabled. He's 56 years old and we still have to ask him if he's brushed his teeth or washed properly."

It was love for his son that motivated Maurie to join a group of concerned Kempsey community members to co-found Macleay Options, a phenomenally successful disability service provider that now employs over 150 people with disabilities in the Macleay Valley.

Beginning as a 'Jack and Jill workshop' in 1970, Macleay Options has grown to support a diverse group of community members – from school-leavers to the physically disabled and people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Last year, the business turned over \$5 million, \$4 million of which went into wages and supporting employees.

According to Marketing Manager Fiona Welsh, Macleay Options' success is grounded in a solid financial foundation, a genuine dedication to its original concept and the ability to adapt to challenges. Along with support services, the business includes several teams of employees who work on products and services,

including Momacs (macadamia processing), Mowhawks (lawnmowing and yard work), Threads (sewing) and Woodies (woodwork). Recent additions to the business include a recycling enterprise, two retail outlets and an online store.

Cass Finch studied business administration at TAFE before starting work with Macleay Options as a receptionist in 2008. Despite having an intellectual disability that prevents her from multi-tasking, Cass is great with computers and has a beautiful speaking manner.

"I've become more confident since working here because they understand that I'm only able to do one task at a time," she says. "I don't feel too much pressure so I'm able to do a good job.

That's why I love it here – the understanding."

It's a sentiment echoed by Richard Fischer, who has been working with the Woodies crew for the past three years after a car accident left him with brain damage and impaired vision.

"I was driving to my parents' house, hit a tree and that was it," he says. "I was found dead at the scene and was in a coma for seven weeks. Working here gives me something to do in life, instead of sitting around doing nothing. I love a challenge – nothing beats me, I beat it!"

"Pointing at his heart, Troy says, 'I feel it in here, that good feeling you get from knowing you can make a difference'."



Employee Trish Berry with one of her creations

It's evident that Macleay Options' commitment to identifying strengths and deeply understanding the needs of people with disabilities, works. Clients like 22-year-old Troy Kinny are given the opportunity to shine past their disabilities and discover strengths that will help them move forward in life. Alongside Troy's obvious intelligence and drive (he has a black belt in Zen Chi Ryu), he has a mild form of autism. Prior to joining the Macleay Options SLES program, Troy had never been outside the Macleay Valley.

"I used the program to help me to come out of my shell," Troy says. "Before I began, I was quite hesitant and insular, but I had this goal to complete a sports coaching course and continue evolving as a Zen Chi Ryu instructor."

During Troy's two years with the SLES program, he has obtained work at a Kempsey childcare centre and gained considerable social skills. Troy's support workers proudly describe him as a "mentor to new members of the program".

"In the last year, I've discovered that I have the ability to really help other people – particularly those with special needs." Pointing to his heart, Troy says, "I feel it in here, that good feeling you get from knowing you can make a difference, even if it's something really small."

It's stories like these that fuel the incredible work the management team at Macleay Options do to acquire funding and expand their programs to assist an ever-growing database of clients.

For CEO Mick Milicevic, the feeling of watching employees blossom with the right support is one he never takes for granted. "Most employees would not be doing anything if they weren't here," he says, gesturing to

a group of ladies laughing together as they create bags in the sewing room.

Mick adds, "I love watching their independence and social life grow and seeing the pride they feel when they make something. We get audited several times a year and the auditors always ask our clients, 'how do you feel about your pay?' and they say, 'we'd work for nothing!' It's not the money for them, it's the fact that they've got somewhere to go and a means of contributing that makes them feel really good."

Mick is buoyed by the recent success of the Kempsey Place Plan, a program initiated by FaCS in conjunction with Macleay Options to help people with employment and job opportunities in the Macleay Valley. The program has successfully employed 51 people in the past two years - mostly in mowing crews.

"They are doing a fantastic job and we're getting great feedback from the community. The employment has really enhanced their personal lives and that of their families."

It's been a long journey to get here since the early days of the business, and Maurie Britten could not be prouder of his son and of the organisation he co-founded in the '70s, a time, he says, when people with disabilities were "hidden behind the door and never out in public."

Maurie adds, "Peter is an incredible fisherman – he goes out with the local club and the captain says he's the best fisherman on the boat. Macleay Options gives people like Peter somewhere to go, a place where they can feel good about themselves. Am I proud? I'm more than proud."

Visit Macleay Options at www.macleayoptions.org.au or contact enquiries@macleayoptions.org.au



Peter Britten happy at work

ETC helps horse riding accident survivor return to work

Michelle Graham had a horse riding accident four years ago which left her wheelchair bound for 10 months. "I had to learn how to walk and talk again as I hit my head hard when I fell," Michelle said.

Wanting to return to the workforce Michelle was linked to Disability Employment Service (DES) provider ETC to see what her options were.

"ETC worked out what my abilities were, helped with my resume, clothing for interviews and suitable shoes for me to work in."

ETC placed Michelle into a full-time job as the showroom hostess and personal assistant at Designer Living Kitchens (DLK).

Two years later Michelle is loving her job and is grateful to her employer and ETC for their support.

DLK Showroom Manager Damon White encouraged other employers to give people with disability a chance.

"Disability or not, Shelley was the stand-out from all the applicants we received. She has proven to be very suitable for the role with her skill-set," Damon said.

ETC provides specialist help to people with an injury, illness or disability to find and keep a job.

For further information call ETC on 1800 007 400 or visit www.etcltd.com.au



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Caroline loves to surf



A crocheted character



'Takara' means "little treasures" in Japanese



Caroline surfing at Arrawarra



Caroline enjoys her role with Fire and Rescue NSW

Little Treasures

For Arrawarra jewellery maker Caroline Harada, an average day could see her finish the school run then surf for two hours, fight a fire and create a new range for her label Takara Too. Since leaving the city, Caroline has been able to create a life that combines her passions and keeps her connected to the community.

Words and images by Elize Strydom



For Caroline, craft is a “time-consuming obsession” that she loves

Coastbeat: Tell me about the name Takara Too?

Caroline Harada: I was living in Sydney, raising my children and making toys to sell at local markets. Takara means “little treasures” in Japanese so I decided on the name Takara Crochet. In 2010 we moved to Arrawarra and I wanted to create something more affordable and accessible. I went with Takara Too, because my earrings and necklaces are little treasures as well!

Coastbeat: How did it come about finding stockists locally?

CH: Once I started selling my soft toys and jewellery at the Coffs Central markets people got to know me, and I was stocked in a few local stores. Things just went ballistic because people hadn't seen this type of jewellery before. I don't visit trade shows, I don't know what's popular or trending – everything I do just comes naturally. My jewellery is costume, it's fun, it's not to be taken seriously. I mean, who wears frogs in their ears? I enjoy vintage and quirky objects and I've been so fortunate in that people really like what I make.

Coastbeat: As well as making and selling jewellery, you raise your three children, surf and volunteer in the community. It sounds like you have quite a full plate!

CH: It's busy but it's a beautiful life. I'm trying to focus on finding and maintaining balance, not simply making money. I left Sydney because of that. Now I'm able to live in this amazing environment, I can attend school activities, surf every day and earn money doing something I love.



I had no direction when I was younger. I'm not career orientated – more of a dreamer – so I feel very lucky to have made this life for myself and my family.

Coastbeat: How long have you been working with Fire and Rescue NSW?

CH: I joined Fire and Rescue NSW in May last year and it has been so good for me – I've really had to put myself out there. The fact that I'm a woman doesn't matter, and age doesn't matter either. The training is epic, and you learn so much. There's a tiny bit of administration but it's always hands on. The great thing is, I can be available for local call-outs and still have time for my family and time to make and create.

Coastbeat: Your workspace is bursting with colour and texture and overflowing with so many different materials!

CH: I've always been a crafter. My cupboards are full of fabrics and paper. However, my theory is, if it's not out, you can't create. If it's stored in boxes, you forget about it. It's a time-consuming obsession and I never stop, but I love it. I hate to say this because it's become such a cliché, but I'm certainly blessed.

See Caroline at her Coffs Central market stall every Thursday in front of the Commonwealth Bank or purchase her jewellery from Moonee Pharmacy at Moonee Market. Instagram @takara.crochet_takarattoo



Image of Horrie courtesy of the Australian War Memorial



A tobacco tin young Jack made for this father



Jack Parsons holds a photograph of his parents

Remembering the Innocents

The last issue of *Coastbeat* featured Save the Brumbies and mentioned ‘Walers’, the horses that carried the men of the legendary Australian Light Horse Brigade into battle. This ANZAC Day we would like to pay our respects to these soldiers – both men and mounts.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Images of Jack Parsons by Elize Strydom



The Australian Light Horse. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial

Roy Hilton Parsons was a young horseman from Forbes who, full of patriotic fervour, joined the Cooee March and enlisted in World War I as an Australian Light Horseman. However, Roy's son Jack can never officially claim his father's WWI record because Roy enlisted aged 15, using an assumed name. But the exploits of the Light Horsemen are legendary.

The Australian Light Horse were renowned for their hardiness and spirit throughout the WWI desert campaigns, famously demonstrated at the Battle of Beersheba on October 31, 1917, when the Light Horsemen charged the entrenched Turkish lines, leaping clear over the trenches to break the enemy stronghold.

Imagine the courage of both horse and rider, galloping through gunfire to leap over the riflemen's heads and fight their way into the city. Consider the trust between horse and rider that allowed such bravery.

Jack Parsons describes his father as a serious man who was “hard but fair”; who rarely spoke of his time as a Light Horseman. With hindsight, his reticence to revisit such memories may have good reason. After the war, the government deemed it financially unviable to bring the horses home. Heartbroken, the Light Horsemen refused to allow their equine comrades to be sold into servitude in Egypt.

What happened next is still debated. Popular folklore claims that the horses were shot by their own riders; official

records differ. Either way, one can understand why a soldier and horseman like Roy Parsons, still so young, might refuse to talk about leaving his horse behind. Those who knew Roy before WWI have told Jack that he returned from the war a changed man.

However, at the outbreak of WWII Roy volunteered again, this time under his real name. He joined the 2/1st Machine Gun Battalion. Like before, Roy never discussed his war experiences with his son, bar one exception: another animal mate that we would like to honour, whose story has a happier ending than the brave war horses of WWI.

Jack remembers his father talking about their battalion mascot, an Egyptian terrier they called Horrie the ‘Wog Dog’ (sic), now known as Horrie the War Dog.

Horrie was an honorary corporal and has his own page at the Australian War Memorial online. His mate, Private Jim Moody, trained Horrie to carry messages to outlying soldiers, tucked into a handkerchief around his neck, and his sharp hearing provided early-warning for incoming enemy planes. So loved was Horrie that he would accompany the Commander of the battalion on parade, wearing his own uniform, made to keep him warm during the cold Syrian campaign.

In 1942 Jim Moody was given home leave before being deployed to Papua New Guinea. Not wanting to abandon his mate, Jim smuggled Horrie into Australia in his duffel bag.



Horrie lived happily at the family farm for three years until quarantine officers learned of his existence and threatened Jim with gaol if he did not surrender Horrie. Although the mascot was obviously disease-free, an example was to be made to dissuade others. Moody surrendered Horrie, who was destroyed on March 12, 1945.

Not a happy ending? There is a second part to this story: Legend has it that Jim, unwilling to see his mate destroyed, searched dog pounds until he found a look-alike dog and surrendered this fake-Horrie to be euthanised. Apparently, the real Horrie lived out his life with the Moodys in Corryong, Victoria. This revised story is thoroughly explored in Roland Perry's entertaining 2013 book, *Horrie the War Dog*.

Indisputably, quarantine laws are crucial to keeping Australia disease-free and must never be broken. But the abandonment of the beautiful horses, and the many mascots like Horrie who supported our soldiers, seems callous. Let's hope that in the future we find a kinder way to show our gratitude for their services. Better still, for the sake of the innocents: the animals and the children like Roy's son Jack, let's never go to war again.

To discover more visit: www.awm.gov.au
Horrie the War Dog is available at Book Face,
 Port Central: Ph) 6584 6001



2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade. Image courtesy of AWM

To commemorate ANZAC Day and honour our fallen heroes, Port Central will be exhibiting World War I and World War II photos in Port Central Centre Court. There will also be historical photos of local ANZAC Day services.

Port Macquarie Museum staff will be on site to answer questions and guide you through the exhibit from April 23 to April 30.

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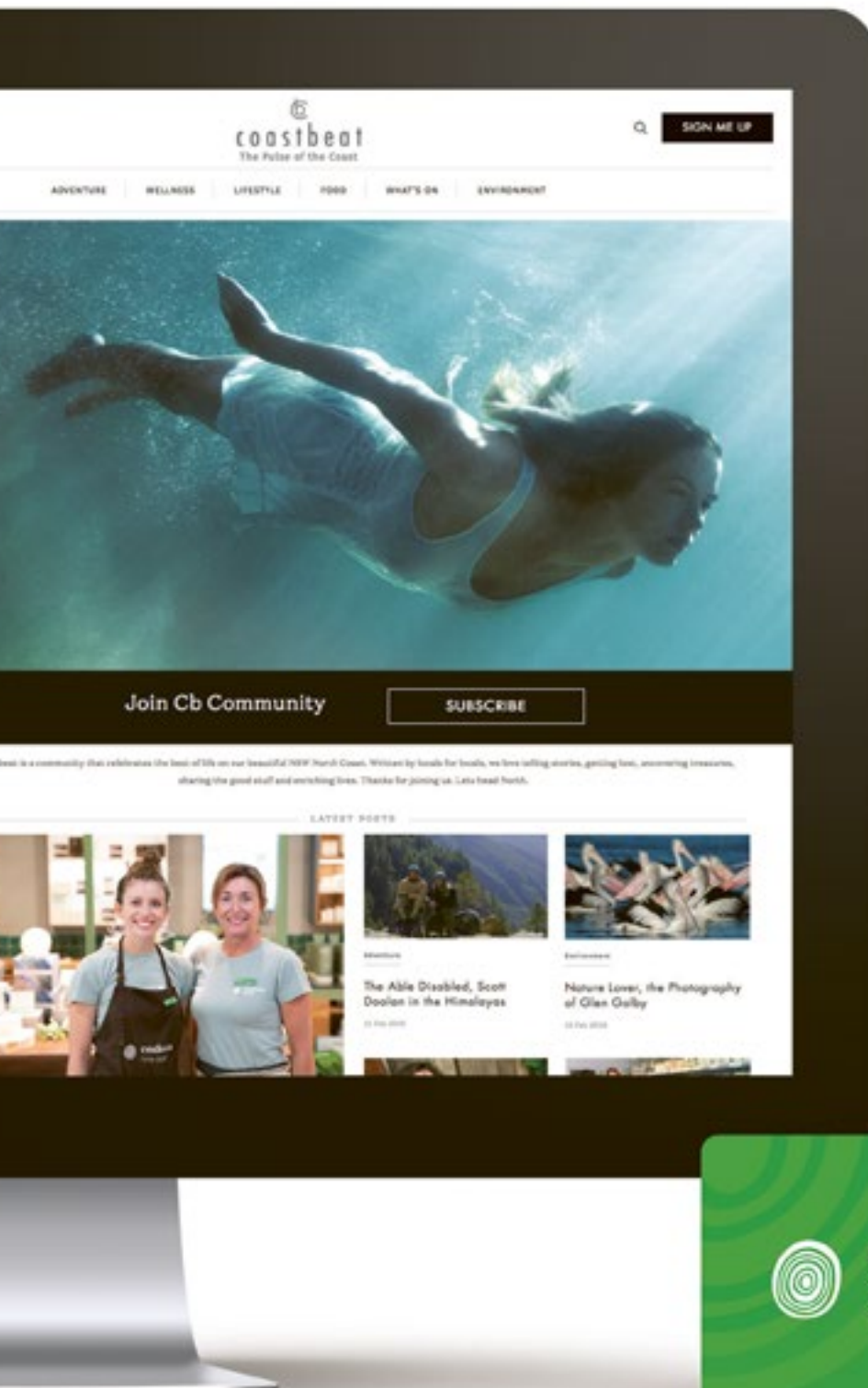
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Devil's Advocate

What is small, fluffy and likes to hang out in a tree from time to time? While you would be quick to think of the koala, our four fanged friends from down south (a.k.a the Tasmanian Devil) are also fond of bonding in the branches. And as *Coastbeat* found out, there are many other interesting facts to discover about one of our most endangered species.

Words by Ali Hiddlestone

Images courtesy of Aussie Ark



Aussie Ark in the Barrington Tops is fighting to keep the Tasmanian Devil alive

Named for its black colour, ferocious appearance and high-pitched 'demon-like' screeches, the Tasmanian Devil is the world's largest surviving carnivorous marsupial.

While historically an abundant species, their survival has been put to the test with the emergence of a fatal disease – the devil facial tumour disease – that has wiped out 90 percent of the population.

Determined to save this iconic species on the brink of extinction, the Australian Reptile Park founded Devil Ark, now known as Aussie Ark.

Aussie Ark is located in the Barrington Tops and is an innovative captive breeding program with one goal – to keep the Tasmanian Devil alive. Since launching in 2011 everyone involved in the program has been doing just that and with great success, too - increasing their breeding population from 44 'founding devils' to over 300.

"It is absolutely incredible that we've gone from that small number of founding devils to the massive programs we've got today," says Amanda Woodbine, a spokesperson for Aussie Ark. "We only keep around 150 to 200 devils on site at any given time, and of the ones we breed, we get recommendations on where to send them to other breeding programs around the country."

While some devils are used for ongoing breeding, others are sent back to their homeland to be released into smaller wild populations. "We've released around 30 to 40 individuals and of those, we know around five females have carried joeys in the wild, which is really encouraging," Amanda adds, "It seems like they're having a pretty good time of it down there!"



Aussie Ark headquarters. Image by David Stowe



The park has now opened its doors to other endangered species, including the Eastern Quoll

Safe to say that life is also pretty good for those being cared for at Aussie Ark, with the population spread out among 64 hectare, 200 hectare and 400 hectare wild sanctuaries.

According to Amanda, looking after the devil population requires a multifaceted approach. "We have 'insurance' populations and breeding programs in the smaller sanctuaries, but once we get large enough numbers, they are released into the bigger scale wild enclosures (200 and 400 hectare) so they can live in a balanced ecosystem," she says. "While they're in the wild enclosures, we still help them out from time to time, providing some food sources."

There is no doubt that Aussie Ark plays a critical role in the fight to save the Tassie Devil. "We're extremely important to the population," Amanda says. "We're working in conjunction with researchers trying to find vaccines for the disease."

Unfortunately, every time it seems they're getting close, the disease morphs and the cure no longer works. "Building an insurance population, like we're doing, is extremely important for the devils' longevity in case the worst happens and they're no longer in the wild."

Following the success of the Tasmanian Devil program, the park has opened its doors to a range of other species with declining populations. The Eastern Quoll, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Rufous Bettong (also known as the rat-kangaroo), Long Nose Potoroo, Brush-Tailed Rock-Wallaby and the Manning River Turtle complete the roll call.

"We have selected species that in recent times have declined significantly and who play a key role within their ecosystem," Amanda says.

Like most not-for-profit organisations, Aussie Ark is heavily reliant on community support. Amanda says such support is 'vital'.

Fortunately, there are a few ways people can support the various species in decline.

Aussie Ark holds open days where people can visit the facility and there are opportunities to adopt one of the animals. People can purchase items online, make donations and guests can even stay close to Aussie Ark in a gorgeous four-bedroom retreat.

Devastatingly, Australia is losing species faster than every other nation on earth. Amanda says it best, "These species need our help and together, we can change their fate."

Watch Tim playing with devil joeys at Coastbeat TV on YouTube. For more info on donations or when to visit see: www.aussieark.org.au



Aussie Ark's Co-founder and GM Tim Faulker with a devil joey

bcu, Giving back to the Community

As a member-owned organisation, bcu are dedicated to supporting the local community and offer a range of sponsorship and scholarship opportunities. One of the longest running examples of this is the Bill Ussher Scholarship. Here, we meet one lucky young recipient.



Named after bcu's founding Chairman, Mr Bill Ussher, the scholarship program was created to help driven and passionate local students accelerate their future. Recipients are awarded a share of \$20,000 to put towards their study, traineeship or apprenticeship.

One of the 2018 Bill Ussher recipients is Nambucca Heads local, Jonah Spriggs. Jonah is an incredibly talented violinist who began to play the instrument at the age of five. Now a Year 12 student, Jonah has achieved several significant milestones in the music world, such as a performance with the Australian World Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House and being accepted to play in the National Music Camp with the Australian Youth Orchestra.

Jonah will be using his scholarship to help fund his attendance at music programs with the Regional and Australian Youth Orchestras over the next 12 months. "I'm very thankful for the financial support the bcu scholarship provides," he says. "Winning this scholarship means that I can attend these programs and develop even further as a musician."

Jonah has a passion for sharing his talent. During a recent trip to Vanuatu, he jumped at the opportunity to play his violin to a group of children who had never seen the instrument before. Jonah describes the experience as "amazing".

The 2019 Bill Ussher Scholarships will open later this year and Jonah strongly encourages other local youth to apply. "The Bill Ussher scholarship allows some of the financial burden to be taken away. It also means you can develop your talent which may lead to further career opportunities."



Jonah Spriggs in Vanuatu

bcu was founded by a small group of banana farmers in the early 1970s who sought an alternative option to traditional finance. Fast forward to 2019 and incidentally, one of their most valued employees comes from generations of local banana growers. Meet Sukhpal Malhi...



Sukhpal Malhi

For Sukhpal Malhi, a bcu Relationship Manager, Commercial Banking and Coffs Coast born and bred local, the north coast offers the perfect lifestyle balance. A self-confessed sports fanatic, Sukhpal particularly loves rugby league and cricket and has played with local league clubs since he was just six years of age.

Sukhpal is the youngest son in a third generation of local farmers. His grandparents established the family farm in Sandy Beach in the late 1960s, originally producing bananas for market. The farm remains family owned and operated to this day, with the Malhi family now diversifying production into other crops.

As most farmers will appreciate, running a successful farming operation extends well beyond normal business hours and as a result, Sukhpal's weekends are often spent working on the family farm. It is this first hand understanding of what it takes to make a business work, along with over a decade of experience in banking and finance that allows Sukhpal to have such a thorough understanding of his clients' needs and concerns.

In his role at bcu, Sukhpal works with commercial customers to help implement strategies, products and services that will improve their cash flow and business needs. Sukhpal describes one of the most rewarding parts of his job as being able to learn about a customer and their business and then helping them achieve their dreams and goals.

For people who are contemplating starting a business or want to grow an existing company, Sukhpal's advice is to research, engage trusted advisors early and "plan, plan, plan." Words of wisdom from his grandfather often come to mind - 'measure twice, cut once.'

"Words of wisdom from his grandfather often come to mind - 'measure twice, cut once'."

Sukhpal loves the community focused structure of bcu. "It is something I'm very passionate about. Having worked for a larger financial organisation, it's refreshing to work with a local organisation that understands and is committed to the local community."

Gabby Pritchard

Gabby Pritchard's passion for helping people achieve their dreams and a keen interest in the financial sector made a career with bcu a logical move for Gabby – a Port Macquarie based Home Loan Lender.

Gabby has close ties to the Port Macquarie region, having lived in the area when she was younger. Despite the rapid growth of the region, the small community vibe of the area is just one of the many factors that attracted Gabby to return to the area four years ago. "It's a very relaxed place to live. People are friendly, welcoming and always willing to assist one another," she says.

In her role as a Home Loan Lender at bcu, Gabby is responsible for handling home and investment loan applications. She works closely with her customers to help guide them through every stage of the loan process, from application to settlement date.

Gabby says the most rewarding aspect of her job is helping people bring to fruition some major milestones in their lives, whether it's purchasing their first home, buying a new investment property or even upgrading to a new home.

For anyone looking to enter the property market or refinance an existing loan, Gabby offers the following advice; have a thorough understanding of your financial position - meaning your income and expenditure - and bring as much information with you as possible to your initial loan interview.

It was the reputation of bcu as a local community credit union that made Gabby keen to pursue a career with the organisation. "bcu's values are in close alignment with my own. They're passionate about the region in which we operate and that's something that really resonates with me."



Gabby Pritchard

For more information, talk to one of the friendly team at your local branch or head to www.bcu.com.au



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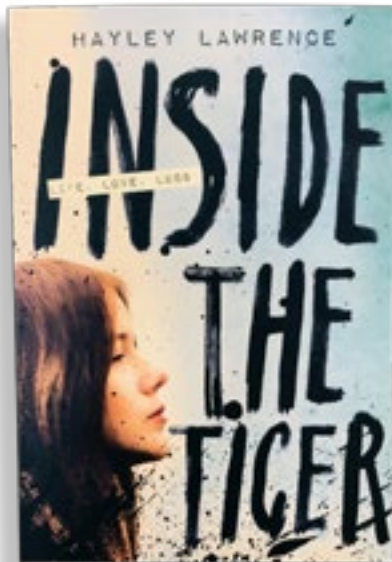
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Inside a Writer's life

Many kids fantasise about their dream job - an astronaut, pilot, doctor, teacher - without any real thought of making it a reality but for Hayley Lawrence, writing a novel was always on the cards. Her long burning passion has resulted in the release of her first novel, *Inside the Tiger*. *Coastbeat* caught up with the Port Macquarie local about the novel and her life as an author...

Words by Ali Hiddlestone



She was keeping a diary at the age of seven and writing short stories at ten, but it took Hayley until her teens before she plucked up the courage to attempt a full-length novel. While she admits it has never seen the light of day, it sparked an appetite that many years and five kids later, Hayley has finally been able to satisfy. "That first novel was my apprenticeship as an author in many ways!" She says. "After a few years buried in babies and nappies and fevers, I put aside the glass of red wine one night and took up my laptop instead. I was going to write a new novel, finish it even if it killed me and try my hardest to get it published."

Late last year - six years on - Hayley was finally holding her first published novel in her hands.

Inside the Tiger is a Young Adult novel that tells the story of a 17-year-old girl, Bel, who writes to an Australian death row prisoner in Thailand as an easy way out of an assignment. She expects Micah will never receive her letter, but when he writes back, Bel finds herself drawn into Micah's world of depravity and hardship, and what's worse - falling for him. *Inside the Tiger* was inspired by Hayley's own experience, spending five years writing to and visiting a convicted drug smuggler on death row in Thailand.

"Communicating via snail mail with a prisoner was an incredibly rewarding experience and visiting him was something I will never forget. With that said, the story of Bel and Micah is fictional and vastly different from the experiences I had," Hayley adds.

Hayley admits that writing a novel was no easy feat given she managed to juggle her five girls - Mia (11), Zara (10), Sophie (7), Heidi (5) and Lacey (3) - and produce her young adult fiction masterpiece at the same time. On top of that, Hayley's husband is a pilot with his primary base overseas.

While many would be quick to deem her a super mum (did we mention she is also a former lawyer?) Hayley is far too modest to accept such a title. "My house is almost always littered with debris. When I'm in 'creative mode' the washing baskets overflow and dinner is scraped together with a creative mix of whatever we have in the house," she says.

"I'm a very real mum who gets overwhelmed by life's demands sometimes, but hopefully my girls see this and remember that I didn't have it together all the time, so it's okay if they don't either."

It seems the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, with Hayley's daughters all keen readers and writers. "My eldest daughter, Mia, is an avid reader. She devours young adult books as well as writing her own creative stories.

Zara loves thrillers and crime fiction and is great at writing creepy, heart-starting stories. "I emphasise to the girls the importance of finding what they love to do and discovering what motivates them personally. Life is full of possibilities for them and that's wonderful."

Hayley is currently working on another novel, *Ruby Tuesday*, which explores a teenage girl's sexual boundaries and how strength and healing can be found in the wildest of places.

You'll find *Inside the Tiger* at Book Face in Port Central. For more on Hayley, visit www.hayleylawrence.com.au



Hayley Lawrence. Image by Karen O'Connor

What's On at Port Central this Autumn



WIN this Mother's Day

Find us at facebook.com/PortCentralShoppingCentre/ and tell us about a Mother's Day that you'll never forget on our 'Most Memorable Mother's Day' post and you could be 1 of 3 lucky Mums who win the 'Ultimate Indulgence Package'. Tell us why was it so great? Or not so great, simply just memorable?

Prize includes a massage from the brand new Lemon Tree Massage store, a Sussan gift voucher, sparkling wine and high tea at Michel's Patisserie, an indulgent hamper from Chemist Warehouse and a relaxation candle from Dusk.

Visit portcentralshopping.com.au from 10th April for more information and keep an eye on our Facebook page.



Meet the Easter Bunny

Bring the kids in to catch the Easter Bunny hopping around the centre, handing out Easter Eggs on Saturday 20th April.

He'll be posing for photos and handing out high fives to all ages!

When: Saturday 20th April

Where: Hopping around Port Central Shopping Centre



ANZAC Day Exhibition

To commemorate ANZAC Day, Port Central will be exhibiting historic photos in Port Central Centre Court.

With the help of Port Macquarie Historical Museum, World War I and World War II photos will be displayed along with historic photos of ANZAC Day services in Port Macquarie, so come into the centre and take a moment to remember the ANZACs.

When: Running from 23rd - 30th April 2019

Where: Port Central Centre Court

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Support Local Growers

Every Tuesday from 2:00pm the Port Central Forecourt comes alive with local passionate food stalls boasting a diverse range of locally produced food.

From farm fresh organic eggs, local macadamias and honey, cured meats, local cheese, fresh fruits, vegetables and more.

Where: Port Central / Glasshouse Forecourt

When: Every Tuesday from 2:00pm



Easter Craft Workshop

Looking for something to do during the School Holidays? Kids can unleash their creativity, make new friends and learn some new skills in our creative workshop. Wednesday 17th April 10:00am - 1:30pm.

Cost: \$15 per child.

Where: Port Central Creative Hub, upstairs in the food court

When: Wednesday 17th April 10am - 11.30am.

Book now: 5525 1000 or portcustomerservice@gowings.com



FREE Kids Shows

Bring the whole family down to the Centre Court, near Target, for some free entertainment for the kids! Shows commence at 10am through to midday and there will be games, prizes and a chance for photos with the characters! Boost Juice and Bakers Delight will offer family meal deals to keep hunger at bay as well.

When: Paw Patrol Show - Saturday 6th April

Pirates and Fairies Show - Saturday 11th May

Where: Port Central Centre Court



10% off at Book Face for Gruffalo fans

Book Face is offering 10% off any Julia Donaldson book for ticket holders to the Gruffalo show at The Glasshouse. If you haven't already booked your ticket, this is even more reason to. Show your ticket to Book Face staff in Port Central and you'll get 10% off not just The Gruffalo, but any other book by Author Julia Donaldson.

When: 15th March - 15th April 2019

Where: Book Face Port Central, ground floor next to IGA



The Nature School at Port Central

Kids can join The Nature School at Port Central during these School Holidays for some hands-on fun and learning using products found in nature. There will be weaving, flower crowns and you can get creative with clay.

When: Monday 15th April, 10:00am - 3:00pm

Location: Port Central, near Target

Enquiries:

Call 5525 1000 or email portcustomerservice@gowings.com



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40 - 42 Horton Street, Port Macquarie NSW 2450

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What's On at Coffs Central this Autumn



Easter Craft Workshop

Come join us at Coffs Central for a fun 'Kids DIY Easter Craft' workshop. Kids can make their own chick or bunny by hand, as well as create some other fun Easter decorations.

When: Wednesday April 17th, 10am - 11am

Where: The Recharge Hub, Level 1, Coffs Central

Cost: \$10

Bookings: Call 5622 8900 or email customerservice@gowings.com



Youth Week 10th-18th April

Youth Week is a celebration of young people in the community, it gives young people the opportunity to express their ideas and views, act on issues that affect their lives and have fun.

Coffs Central will be supporting local Youth Week initiatives so keep an eye on our website, facebook at @shopcoffscentral, Instagram at @coffscentralshopping, in centre and our Community Corner for upcoming activities.



Easter Catering & Gift Ideas

Look out for Coffs Central's emails and facebook and Instagram posts where we've selected the best of what's out in store this Easter, from stores Bed Bath N Table, Fresco Marketplace, Kmart, Harbour Sweets and more.

Find us on facebook at @shopcoffscentral and Instagram at @coffscentralshopping.

ENQUIRIES
CALL NOW
Phone (02) 5622 8900

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WIN this Mother's Day

Find us at www.facebook.com/shopcoffscentral/ and post on our 'Most Memorable Mother's Day' page about the Mother's Day you'll never forget and you could be 1 of 3 lucky Mums who win the 'Ultimate Indulgence Package'. What did the kids do? What was great? What made you giggle?

Prize includes a massage from the lavish endota spa, a SportsCraft gift voucher, sparkling wine and high tea at the Depot Café, an indulgent hamper from Fresco Marketplace and a relaxation ECOYA candle from Bed Bath N Table. Visit <https://coffscentralshopping.com.au/> from April 10th for more information and keep an eye on our facebook page.



Easter Egg Hunt at Coffs Central

With Easter here, the hunt begins, come join us on Easter Saturday where everybody wins! With the Easter Bunny there, you'll follow the clues and with his help you'll never lose! Delicious eggs from Harbour Sweets to be found – a fun day out for all the family.

When: Saturday April 20th, 10:30am

Where: In front of Kmart, Level 1, Coffs Central

Cost: FREE

Bookings: Call 5622 8900 or email customerservice@gowings.com



ANZAC Exhibit in centre on April 15th

Help us honour our ANZAC heroes. Coffs Central invites you to send in photos of your family's ANZAC soldiers to be used to create an ANZAC Heroes Exhibit. Simply email copies of your photographs to customerservice@gowings.com with who the image is of, who you are and the soldiers connection to you (Father, Grandfather, Cousin). All images must be submitted by April 8th. The exhibition will be out for viewing from Monday April 15th, come in to Coffs Central to view and remember the brave soldiers of ANZAC.

When: Monday April 15th

Where: In front of Kmart, Level 1, Coffs Central



ETC Apprentice of the Year Cook Off

Local Apprentice Chefs will be competing for the title of 'ETC Apprentice of the Year' during a public cook-off competition to be held at Coffs Central. The winner of the competition will then go head to head against the winners of similar events held on the Lower Mid North Coast and North Coast in July. Get behind our aspiring local chefs by coming in and offering your support. Everyone will have an opportunity to vote for their favourite dish on the day.

When: Monday March 18th, 10:30am - 12:30pm

Where: In front of Kmart, Level 1, Coffs Central



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What's On at Moonee Market this Autumn



Easter Holiday Workshops

Lalaland will be offering 'Drop, Learn & Play' workshops where kids do activities like Paint & Create, Cupcake Creating and Super Slime, whilst you get a chance to shop in centre!

When: April School Holidays

Cost: included in entry fee \$14.90

Bookings: <https://www.lalalandmoonee-beach.com.au/or> call 6653 6511



Mother's Day Gift Pack

Spoil Mum this Mother's Day with a Magnificent Mother's Day Package from Moonee Market. After everything Mums do for us, let's make them feel extra special this Mother's Day.

Gift Pack includes Facial from Nourished Earth, Pedicure from Cutting Edge Nails and Coffee and Cake from Sugarmill.

When: Available from Friday April 12th

Cost: \$100



Mother's Day Gift Workshop

Create Mum a special handmade pendant and decorate a special photo frame just for her at our Mother's Day Gift Workshop.

When: Saturday 11th May, 10:30am

Where: in front of Nourished Earth Moonee Market

Cost: \$10

Bookings: 5622 8900 or email customerservice@gowings.com



Mother's Day High Tea

Treat Mum this Mother's Day to a beautiful high tea or breakfast at Sugarmill. Choose breakfast from a Mother's Day specials board with a complimentary glass of sparkling wine or tea/coffee or high tea with petit fours, cakes, scones and sandwiches.

When: Sunday May 12th

Bookings: Call 6653 6085



Moon Dragon Dinner Deal

A Mum should never cook on Mother's Day so take her to Moon Dragon for dinner, where Mum will receive a complimentary glass of wine with a main meal.

When: Sunday May 12th

Bookings: Call 6653 7888



Coffee for Million Paws Walkers

On Sunday May 19th, thousands of people and their pooches will walk together to show their support and raise funds for the animals of Australia in the RSPCA Million Paws Walk.

Moonee Market in collaboration with Maggie's is offering participants a FREE coffee from Maggie's, upon presentation of their registration.

When: Mon 20th-Sat 25th May

Lily & Sapphire
Beechwood body
brush \$49.95



Bed Bath N Table
Owl hook



Bed Bath N Table
Plush dressing gown



Bright Eyes
Transitional
glasses
\$49.95



Kmart
The Lost Pearl book
\$6.00



Lily & Sapphire
Salt by Hendrix
body and bath
range from \$28.95

Red
Sparrow
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and Teacup

Turmeric
Tea

Kmart Long board scandi \$9.00



Bed Bath N Table
Turkish hand towel
Bamboo bath towel
Waffle slippers



Ramsay
Pharmacy
Mavala nail
polish \$8.50

Go Vita
Organic
makeup range
from \$14.99





Melanie Proud and Chris Fleming



A portion of the profits go to educating children in Uganda



Hard at work. Image courtesy of Mel Proud



Ginger has become a staple crop for Bellinger River Organics

Heart of the Land

They came from different worlds and met in “the middle of nowhere”, but Melanie Proud and Chris Fleming have teamed up to share their passion for healthy living and nutritious food. With a desire to work together on something worthwhile, Bellinger River Organics began. We discover more about the young farmers sharing produce and profits.

Words and by images by Elize Strydom

“Anything is possible!” That’s the advice that farmer Melanie Proud would give to anyone thinking about changing their career, moving to another country or, in her case, starting Bellinger River Organics with her partner, Chris Fleming.

“We met while working on a cattle station in Carnarvon in Western Australia,” she explains. “I’m from London originally and Chris is from the east coast of Australia, so we got together in a completely random setting!”

The excited new couple bought a tiny car and began a three-month journey across our wide brown land, stopping in Bellingen to visit family and friends. “My long-term life plans definitely didn’t include farming but when we arrived here, we were presented with the opportunity and it all grew from there,” Chris says.

“We’ve both had careers in different industries, but we had a desire to work for ourselves and do something as a united team; something that felt meaningful and worthwhile,” Mel elaborates. “We’re both very passionate about healthy living and organic food so it was a natural extension.”

Originally growing garlic, ginger soon took over and is now their staple. Turmeric has just been added to the mix. An average week sees Mel and Chris collate orders on a Friday, harvest ginger and turmeric on Monday, box on Tuesday, pack the trucks on Wednesday then tend to farm maintenance and administration. They have help from an employee just two days a week.

“We’ve got two great wholesalers in Brisbane and Sydney, so the mass of our produce is sent there,” says Mel. “We have strong relationships with a few local retailers too, and new contacts are being established in Coffs Harbour. We’re definitely in a growth phase.”

That phase could include the inclusion of new lines of produce as Chris researches ways to diversify. “We’ll keep going with the ginger – that will be our staple for a while – but we’ll try to work in another crop,” he says.

While it has largely been a dream run, Chris admits the last three years have certainly presented their fair share of challenges. “It’s definitely been a case of trial and error and we’ve made a few costly mistakes,” he explains. “But we’ve been lucky to have good mentors which has enabled us to get to the point where we’re confident growing quality products.”

Chris is proud of the success Bellinger River Organics has achieved in a relatively short amount of time. “Getting to the level we’re at so quickly has been a pleasant surprise,” he says.

It’s no secret that life on the land can be lonely and isolating but Mel and Chris say they’ve been warmly welcomed into the local area and have found their “people” online.

“Instagram has created a great little community,” Mel explains. “We went to FoodCon in Coffs Harbour last year and it was wonderful to see all of the people we’ve met online in the same room. That first event was very encouraging and quite motivating.”

When it comes to personal motivation, both Mel and Chris believe that work should be about far more than building up their bank balance. In 2019, they will donate a portion of their profits to Growth Educational Trust, a charity started by

Chris’s friend Hamish Coltman. In order to lift the academic level in rural Uganda, the Trust offers scholarships to school children and sponsors teachers and teacher’s aides.

“We realise that we’ve been given education and all of the opportunities to thrive and succeed so we felt it was important to give someone else that opportunity,” Mel explains.

“What we do is so rewarding and we live in paradise!” Chris adds. “We have the best of everything here, so we like to share and collaborate with others by working together and helping each other out.”

Laughing about the unexpected twists and turns their lives have taken, Mel concludes that anything is possible when you truly have your heart set on something. “I was a production manager and had worked in television for ten years so if I can change industries as dramatically as this, anyone can,” she says. “If you really want to make a change, don’t put it off or doubt your ability...just start!”

Support Growth Educational Trust:
www.geteducationuganda.org

Follow Mel and Chris on Instagram:
[@bellingerriverorganics](https://www.instagram.com/bellingerriverorganics)

You can order ginger and turmeric at Organics MattR at Port Central or order directly from Mel and Chris:
www.bellingerriverorganics.com.au



Hemp for Health

Aaron “Azza” Armstrong – aka Mr Hemp – is dispelling myths and sharing his passion for all things hemp. Based at Emerald Beach, he produces and distributes Tasmanian hemp seeds, oil, flour and protein powder as well as hemp-based body care products and even surf wax.

Interview and images by Elize Strydom



Coastbeat: When it comes to hemp, there’s a lot of confusion and misinformation. Can you clear it up for us?

Aaron Armstrong: Hemp is a variety of the Cannabis sativa plant species. Its seeds and oil are rich in omegas, minerals and aminos. Unlike cannabis, industrial hemp has no psychoactive component so you can’t get high from the seeds or oil. Simply put, hemp is a great, nutrient dense food which is now completely legal to consume without getting you high.

Hemp can actually be grown for food, for the use of fibres, to make fuel, to make plastic – there are over 50,000 products that could be made from hemp. Research shows that from a sustainability point of view, this plant doesn’t take from the environment, it gives back.

Coastbeat: As well as hemp seeds, oil and flour, you make hemp surf wax. How did that come about?

AA: When I decided that I was going to start a hemp-based business a few friends pointed out that I needed to have a unique product that was mine, as the oil and the seeds are widely available now. I thought about the things

I’m passionate about and surfing topped the list. I found surfing at a time in life when I really needed it – I’d moved to Emerald Beach after a number of negative experiences in Sydney and I didn’t know anyone. Now I’m a stoked 37-year-old grom!



A mate suggested making surf wax from hemp oil, so I enlisted my good friend Dane to help out. He’s definitely the brains behind it and has tried out almost 50 different formulas! We now have a wax that we’re both super excited about. It has no petrochemicals, no paraffins – it’s handmade naturally. We get organic wax from a local bee keeper and the oil I use is my hemp oil, obviously. There are a few other ingredients, but I don’t want to give it all away!

Coastbeat: What sort of response have you received from people on the Coffs Coast?

AA: Overall the response has been super positive. However, many people still shy away from trying my seeds at the markets because of the misconceptions about hemp. Hemp food has only been commercially available in Australia since November 2017, so I understand the hesitation. On the flip side, many people who try my seeds for the first

time cannot believe how delicious they are. I get such good feedback from customers and the benefits are confirmed over and over again.

Coastbeat: What particular benefits from hemp seeds and hemp oil might surprise people?

AA: The healing qualities! I've found the oil works wonders on my skin and hair – but don't tell my mates I said that! I had 14 stitches in my head and put hemp seed oil on the scar every day. It faded so quickly and effectively.

The whole idea of Mr Hemp is to show people that the hemp plant isn't a demon. So why not come and say hello at any of the local markets, have a chat and learn more.

Coastbeat: You love your surfing. What else is great about life on the coast?

AA: What's not to love about living on the Coffs Coast? Amazing nature, yummy local produce, awesome people! I love the fact I can escape to a quiet beach for a surf or drive 10 minutes in the opposite direction and be in the bush chasing waterfalls. Yes, there still are some secret spots that only the locals know about. I love being able to walk down the street and see friendly faces everywhere – it's not something I take for granted after coming from the city. Each little coastal community has its own unique qualities, awesome cafes and local markets. I recently become a

parent to my first fur baby – a beautiful rescue dog from the RSPCA. Her name is Inca and she's definitely taking up a lot of my time and energy at the moment...not that I'm complaining!

Mr Hemp seeds and oils are available at Nourished Earth in Moonee Market and Fresco Marketplace in Coffs Central or you can order directly from the website: www.mrhempoz.com.au

Follow Mr Hemp on Instagram: @mr_hemp_oz



Azza with one of his hemp smoothies

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Quirky fixtures throughout



David garnishing a freshly made pizza



Fresh local ingredients star in Depot Cafe lunches



Vegetarian deli brekkie board

Meet the Manager – Depot Café

Depot is a café in the heart of Coffs Central known for delicious food, boutique coffee and good old-fashioned customer service. *Coastbeat* spoke with manager David Cini about what makes Depot stand out.

Interview by Kue Hall

Photography by Cain Pascoe

Coastbeat: Tell us how you came to Depot?

David Cini: I guess you would say I was head-hunted? I was born and bred in Coffs Harbour but moved away to pursue my career in the hospitality industry. I was working for five-star hotels like Sheraton and Versace before we decided to move back to Coffs Harbour to raise our kids. I was running another café in Coffs Harbour when this opportunity came to me and I couldn't say no. Actually, putting such a stylish café in a food court was a new challenge. We were a bit unsure as to how it would work – and six years later we're still going. We've created a destination within the food court.

You can come up and grab a wrap if that's what you want; or you can come and have the whole experience: sit down, great coffee, delicious food and a bit of laughter.

Coastbeat: What do you love most about the cafe?

DC: All the different people that we meet – the variety of people that come through the food court is incredible. I treat it as if someone was coming into my home. I love making people laugh and, in this industry, you get all types, happy and cranky. I love trying to turn those cranky ones around and give them a smile. Some you can, some you can't. We also have a great team here; we wouldn't be where we are without each and every one of them.

Coastbeat: Can you tell us more about your team?

DC: A huge part of what makes Depot such a great place is the people who work here. We're all long-time locals with a passion for people and we collectively make it our mission to make people's day. Something really special to me is being able to have my son and daughter on the floor with me when they come home for holidays. Sometimes I even get all three of us one at once; that's always fun.

Coastbeat: What's the inspiration behind the menu?

DC: Our Head Chef, Scott Hardy, is exceptional. He also grew up in Korora before moving away for his career and he brings so much experience to the table. Scott has worked in five-star hotels and owned his own restaurant – those experiences influence our menu.

We have all your classic café dishes but like to add a bit of a twist as well, plus some new and fresh ideas. My favourite would be the sticky pork belly, it has a crunchy peanut brittle which is delicious – I snack on the peanut brittle probably more than I should.

“Sarah wanted to take it to another level by writing little inspiring and happy messages on coffee lids.”

Our pizzas are always really popular too. They have homemade bases and we have different specials all the time.

Coastbeat: Feel Good Friday is becoming a favourite with your regulars – can you tell us more about that?

DC: Sarah Choice, our head barista, actually came up with the idea. People already love our Will & Co boutique coffee, but she wanted to take it to another level by writing little inspiring and happy messages on their coffee lids.

We loved the idea and started Feel Good Friday a few months ago. We've had some great feedback. Many customers shared the messages with their work colleagues and a lot of people have come back and told us how much it brightened their day.

Coastbeat: What's your vision for Depot?

DC: We're actually looking to expand into functions. This is such a great space and we'd love to use it as a hub to bring the community together. We've done a few functions but we're looking to ramp that up and host events, be it parties or business launches.

Last month we hosted a fantastic event for *Coastbeat* (see p105). Everything looked amazing and we had wonderful food, a band playing, and a cocktail bar set up too. Those in attendance on the evening were so complimentary about the atmosphere and the complete transformation of the areas we used, both inside and out on the terrace.

Depot Café is located at the Food Terrace, Level 1, Coffs Central. Pop in for a coffee, meal or just to say hello to David, Scott and the team.

To enquire about Event Hire, call David on Ph) 6651 1812 or email Gia Crowhurst from Coffs Central on E) gia@gowings.com



David Cini (l) and Scott Hardy (r). Image by Brendan Ray

Depot's Sticky Twice Cooked Pork Belly with Salted Peanut Brittle

Why not recreate one of David's favourite dishes at home? Depot Chef Scott Hardy shares his pork belly recipe, perfect for entertaining this Autumn.



Depot's delicious pork belly. Image by Brendan Ray

INGREDIENTS

1kg boneless pork belly	150ml kecap manis	150gm brown sugar	200gm roasted peanuts
100ml olive oil	100ml sweet chilli sauce	2 bunches bok choy	50gm castor sugar
100gm whole ginger	2lt chicken stock	250gm green beans	
½ bunch coriander	1 red onion	250gm Asian bean shoots	
	2 kaffir lime leaves	250gm rocket	

METHOD

Seal pork belly well on both sides in a hot pan. Set aside in a roasting tray. Roughly chop red onion, coriander, ginger and kaffir lime and sauté in olive oil in the same pan. When fragrant, add kecap manis, sweet chilli sauce and brown sugar. Continue to sauté until it comes to a syrup / jam consistency then pour over pork belly. Add chicken stock until just covering the pork belly, cover with foil and seal tightly. Bake at 180 degrees Celsius for approximately 1.5 hrs or until tender.

When ready, carefully remove pork belly (making sure it is kept intact). Place on a flat tray in fridge until cool, then wrap tightly in clingfilm to compress. Strain cooking liquid discarding the 'pulp' but reserve the liquid.

SALAD

Top and tail green beans, tail the bok choy and blanch quickly in boiling water for approximately two minutes, refreshing

in ice water. In a hot pan with a little olive oil, roast peanuts, add castor sugar and gently turn the pan around as the sugar caramelises to coat the peanuts. When golden and caramel, add sea salt and slide onto a greased tray to cool. When cool, break into bite size pieces.

TO FINISH & ASSEMBLE

Remove skin from pork belly and discard. Cut pork belly into 4cm cubes. In a pan, gently sauté pork belly until brown. Add reserved liquid and cook quickly until liquid turns to a syrup consistency.

Place five to seven pieces of pork belly in each serving bowl. In a separate bowl, combine all salad ingredients and peanut brittle. Gently pour a little of the pork belly 'sticky' syrup to dress and arrange on top of pork.

ENJOY!

Hometown Hospitality

Anyone who has visited Kempsey's Depot Café over the last four years has most certainly seen Kira-Ellen Townsend's big, bright smile and experienced her warm hospitality. Born and raised in Kempsey, Kira-Ellen is committed to her home town and excited to watch it grow and change.

Interview and photos by Elize Strydom



Industrial decor, great coffee and vintage items help customers feel at home at Depot

Coastbeat: How long have you been working at Depot?

Kira-Ellen Townsend: I've been here since the café opened four years ago. We've built a really good team and we all work well together. I definitely feel like I've come out of my shell and my skills have improved so much. When I first started here I was terrible; so nervous! I'm a completely different person now.

Coastbeat: What's the best part about your job?

KET: I love meeting new people and getting to know them. I enjoy seeing our regular customers too. They're very loyal and many pop in every day.

Coastbeat: Why do people enjoy dining at Depot?

KET: There's a great atmosphere here and we have an industrial kind of vibe which sets us apart. When people walk in they can tell it's different to a traditional café. Customers love to check out the quirky vintage items like record players, books and old mirrors. We also offer seating with a spectacular view of the river that's very popular.

Coastbeat: What was it like to grow up in Kempsey?

KET: I loved it! I feel so lucky to have grown up here. We lived on a property and my nan and pop own a dairy farm. I had a wonderful childhood; I participated in a lot of sports and split my time between the country and the coast. The

beaches are only a 20-minute drive away, so I was part of the surf club at Hat Head.

Coastbeat: How do you feel about Kempsey's future?

KET: I've seen a lot of changes over the last few years but I'm excited about where Kempsey is going. I think it's a gorgeous area. There's more here than the majority of people know about.

Visit Depot Café at Kempsey Central Shopping Centre: 2-14 Belgrave Street, Kempsey. Open 7 days.



Kira-Ellen Townsend at Depot in Kempsey Central

Odd + Quirky Facts on... The Clarence Valley

Images courtesy of My Clarence Valley



Grafton's Jacaranda Festival is held every Spring and is the oldest floral festival still celebrated in Australia.



The Bundjalung and Yuraygir National Parks are home to the rare Coastal Emu. Once commonplace (older Iluka residents can remember a time when the birds would literally wander down the streets) they are now listed as endangered with less than 50 individuals remaining.



Angourie was the first gazetted surfing reserve in NSW.



Maclean is known as Australia's Scottish town. A large number of early settlers in the town were of Scottish origin and the town takes its name from Scot, Alexander Grant McLean. Every Easter Maclean celebrates these origins with a Highland Gathering.



One of the largest rivers in Australia, the Clarence also has the country's longest whitewater trail.



Beer lovers and those seeking their fortune were once right at home in Dalmorton. During the gold rush era Dalmorton was home to 5,000 residents and 13 pubs. The township no longer exists but it is a beautiful location

from which to explore the Guy Fawkes National Park or to enjoy swimming and fishing in the Boyd River.



Image courtesy of Hayley Talbot

In 2017, Yamba resident and mum-of-two Hayley Talbot became the first person to solo kayak the 400km Clarence River.



The Saraton Theatre in Grafton is Australia's largest (950 seats) and oldest theatre and cinema.

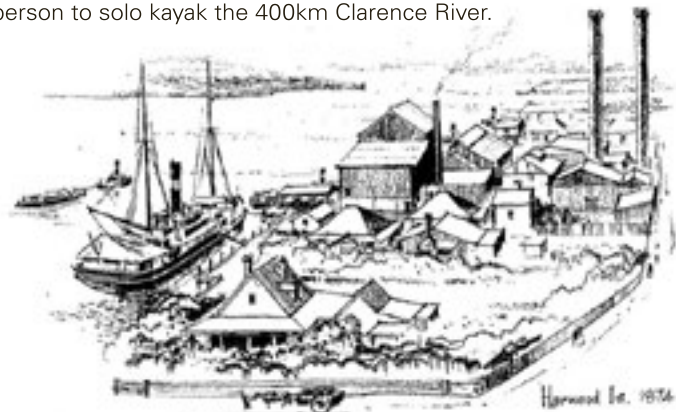


Image courtesy of Harwood Sugar Mill

Inner Circle Rum was first created in 1873 at a distillery custom-built at CSR's Harwood sugar mill on the Clarence River. This connoisseur rum was made only for distribution to the company's Colonial Sugar Refinery's Board of Directors and special clients, hence the name.



Heading upstream at the beginning of the Full Moon Paddle



Taking a break on Freeburn Island in the Clarence River

Moon River

Moon river, wider than a mile the song goes, and this issue we're crossing it in style for the Full Moon Paddle, as guests of Yamba Kayak on the Clarence River.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Images courtesy of Yamba Kayak



Mila (l) and Reminy (r) beneath a full moon. Image by Zacharey Jane

We meet at 7pm as the dusk descends; the moon rose about an hour ago but is obscured by clouds. The Clarence is calm, with just a slight breeze riffling over the water from the ocean.

After introductions, Phil and his daughter, Isabelle, kit us up with life-jackets, head torches and dry-bags for our cameras, keys and mobiles. Phil makes sure everyone is comfortable and gives us a quick 'how-to' about paddling, steering and having some fun – apparently these kayaks are nearly impossible to capsize.

We set off, through Yamba Harbour towards Dart Island. In the distance the trawler fleet is heading out to sea; the swell from their wake rocks the kayaks just enough to make it feel adventurous. I am taking it easy in the front with my camera while my teenage son, Sam, does the paddling and steering. We all share double kayaks and there is a wide range of ability between us, with a few guests never having paddled before. Some streak ahead, while others are happy to glide along at a leisurely pace.

We pass Whiting Beach and cruise smoothly beside the rock wall, paddling easily with the incoming tide. It's almost dark and the clouds have disappeared. Sam is getting into the swing of the whole thing, deftly positioning me so I can photograph the girls, Reminy and Mila, who zoom past us grinning. Then I make him go hard to catch up, so I can photograph them with the full moon hanging huge above them.

"You might have to help me paddle, if you want to catch them," he says. What a taskmaster!

"We plonk down on blankets watching the lights over the water and the glorious stars above."

Phil comes alongside to chat about river life. The Clarence River supplies high quality seafood to fishmongers all over Australia and, before Europeans arrived, to the Yaegl folk of Yamba and Iluka. The word 'Yamba' means 'plenty of mussels'. Another of Phil's tours takes kayakers through the canals to an oyster farm for lunch. I am getting a little

peckish myself and suggest to Sam that he could paddle faster as Freeburn Island and supper is our next stop.

We glide into a curving white beach and clamber out. Everyone re-introduces themselves, this time laughing and sharing stories from the last hour, while Phil and

Isabelle unpack dinner. It's surprising how much can be stowed in a kayak. We plonk down on blankets to enjoy chicken wraps and a glass of wine for the grown-ups, watching the lights over the water and the glorious stars above. One guest knows a little about astronomy and someone else has the app, so a few phones come out



'Rafting up' in Yamba Bay

for star-tracking. There's cake to finish off, which makes the kids happy, then we return. The light breeze brings the sweet aroma of the ocean, just a few kilometres away. The dark water is lit by our kayak lights and the moon, creating gorgeous ripple patterns of red and white and yellow. The other kayaks look like star-dots of light on the water ahead of me as snatches of conversation and laughter float across the water. Gliding along in my kayak feels comfortable and serene.

We return past Rabbit Island, so called for the obvious reason, to Yamba Harbour. The lights of Yamba seem like a big city after the deep dark of the river. Phil tells me about the time the Yamba Ukulele Club came down to perform to his guests, playing moon-themed songs as the kayaks floated to shore. "It was sensational – what a welcome, all of them lined up on the shore playing for us!" He says. "They've asked if they can come and do it again sometime."

We pull up one by one and slowly climb out. The girls have been splashing each other with their paddles and are soaked and silly with excitement. We were the guests of Yamba Kayak and we had a fabulous experience; now it's time to check out what everyone else thought.

Palmer's Island local, Nicky Ashby was given a birthday voucher by her neighbour. "That was the most beautiful,

serene river experience I've ever had!" she tells me. "The reflection of the moon on the water had a fairy tale quality. I felt so in the moment paddling along. It was easy... relaxing...and the picnic and wine made it perfect."

That is the consensus and Phil is thrilled that we've enjoyed the river as much as he does. "It's the best job," he says. "I'll be out here again at 8.30 tomorrow morning and still be loving it." That sounds like the gold at the rainbow's end. Moon river for me!

For bookings go to www.yambakayak.com
or call Phil on M) 0466 035 444



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Best Books for Autumn

The team from Book Face Port Macquarie share their favourite reads this season.



Fiction

Milkman

Man Booker Prize-winning *Milkman* by Anna Burns draws on the author's background growing up in troubled Belfast. At a time of deep mistrust and conflict, the novel's protagonist, Middle Sister, is keeping everyone in the dark about her Maybe-Boyfriend and an encounter with a creepy figure twice her age – the Milkman. Described by reviewers as "pre-empting the #metoo movement", *Milkman* is a novel for our times.

Normal People

Following on the success of acclaimed Irish novelist Sally Rooney's *Conversations with Friends*, comes a novel that tells the story of two Irish school friends-with-benefits, Connell and Marianne. In school, Connell is popular while Marianne is a loner. When the two strike up a conversation in Marianne's kitchen, something life-changing begins. A thrilling love story.

Mortal Engines

Young adults will love Phillip Reeve's sci-fi novel *Mortal Engines*, touted by reviewers as 'thrillingly believable'. Main narrator Tom is an orphaned apprentice living in a dangerous futuristic London where huge cities hunt, attack and fight each other for survival. An action-packed adventure for ages 11 through to adult.

Non-Fiction

Becoming

In this long-awaited memoir, Michelle Obama chronicles the experiences that shaped her - from a childhood spent on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood, marriage and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. Full of inspiration, depth and accomplishment, *Becoming* is the story of a life well-lived.

Mamie

Using her own illustrations and words, Tania McCartney provides a fresh take on the life of iconic Australian author May Gibbs. In the story, May, known to her family as Mamie, lives in a world that is both real and imagined, singing and dancing with her magical friends until her family moves to 'the bottom of the world'. A tale that will delight parents and kids alike.

The Fast 800

Health guru and proponent of the popular 5:2 Intermittent Fasting diet, Dr Michael Mosley, promises a revolutionary new way of losing weight in his latest offering. Based on the latest science, The Fast 800 method of eating includes three diet options and has been shown to potentially result in long term weight loss and reversal of type 2 diabetes.

All of the above titles are available at Book Face Store and Café at Port Central. Ph) 6584 6001



Ceramics by Annie Roberts, one of several HEADwaters artists



Malcolm King is another exhibitor



The StoryBoard bus will take Australian writers touring through *Coastbeat* country

Plunge In

Every Autumn, the Clarence Valley **plunge** Art & Cultural Festival takes a deep dive into arts of every description. There are myriad events scheduled for 2019: paper plate etching, carving, song writing, ukuleles, men in kilts...too many to cover in one article, so *Coastbeat* offers up three of our personal favourites.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Writers on the Road - Byron Writers Festival on tour

Byron Writers Festival is Australia's largest regional writers festival, bringing legendary wordsmiths of every description to booklovers in Northern NSW. One of their events is a touring show, Writers on the Road (WOTR).

This year the festival is touring four Australian authors through *Coastbeat* country in the fabulous StoryBoard bus, visiting Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Nambucca Heads, Kempsey, Port Macquarie and Taree for a series of free events. The tour is funded by Create NSW and part of **plunge** in Grafton, with an evening at the Crown Hotel on April 8.

In Grafton, WOTR teams up with WordTravels and the Australian Slam Poetry Championships, where poets perform live for audience acclaim. Regional finalists compete at the national titles, held at the Sydney Opera House, and the winner tours the world! The performances are electric, dramatic and moving. It will be the first time this competition has come to Grafton, giving poets in the region a chance to compete. In the other towns, WOTR is visiting schools to workshop with the students. The evening events are rowdier, interactive and often hilarious, like in 2016 at the Brunswick Picture House, when authors discussed sex scenes and how to write them.

Past writers have included Nick Earls, Kate Forsyth, Mark Dapin, Jesse Blackadder, Ashley Hay, Lian Hearn and Ellen Van Neervan. This year WOTR will travel with authors Melaina Faranda, Arakwal storyteller Delta Kay, Slam Champion Anna Stewart and acclaimed illustrator and artist Tony Flowers. And, disclaimer alert, the fifth writer and chairperson on board the StoryBoard bus is yours truly, back for a sixth year of literary malarkey.

They say that what happens on the road stays on the road... that is unless it turns into a best-selling novel, but that's another story

For more information, www.byronwritersfestival.com

HEADwaters - Grafton Regional Gallery

Headwater: the source of a river: the source of creativity: the source of life. This inspiring art exhibition was created by seven artists, capturing the beauty of the Clarence Valley landscape through paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture, ceramics, music and performance art.

The artists, Theresa Edwina Brook, Margo Grant, Malcolm King, Julie McKenzie, Fiona Nicholls, Annie Roberts and Jade

Dewi Tyas Tunggal, visited the area over a period of three years, responding to the changing scenery.

"Working in the landscape helped with process," says Annie Roberts. "We were able to feel the environment: the heat, the scent, the sounds. One morning we got up at 4am for our morning cuppa and spent time watching and drawing the shadows as they receded, capturing the changing landscape."

The project was conceived by Fiona Nicholls. "I've always been inspired by the linear qualities of environment," she says. "I'm interested in the mark made to convey a sense of immediacy, the suggestion of contour and form, an essence of something unique to place. It is that first being-in-the-moment feeling."

The Clarence headwater is 76kms outside Tabulam, in north-west NSW. Fiona describes it as, "a wilderness of steep hills and narrow, winding river flats, continuously changing in character, form and light, day to night, season to season."

The exhibition opens on Saturday March 29, showcasing Jade and Theresa's collaborative performance piece, so come plunge into the creativity of the amazing Clarence Valley.

For more information, visit www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au

Circus in a Day

Roll up, roll up. Join Ringmaster Rosie as she presents the most incredible Pirate Circus in the world, with you in the starring role! Jacqui Levy (aka Ringmaster Rosie) and her partner Rhett Morrow, have created this combined workshop and performance for **plunge**. Participants learn a wide variety of circus skills: spinning plates, hula hoop, balances, tumbling, devil sticks, magic and more, so that at the end of the day they can perform their pirate hijinks to astounded family and friends.

Jacqui started her career as a school teacher, before being contracted to work with the famous Flying Fruit Fly Circus, then touring the world with Circus Oz. Having her own children brought her down to earth and, necessity being the mother of invention for mothers, she and Rhett created Circus in Education. This workshop is suitable for participants aged 6 to 12.

Find out more at www.circuseducation.com.au

The 2019 Clarence Valley plunge Art & Culture Festival runs from Thursday March 28 to Tuesday April 30
www.clarence.nsw.gov.au



Charly and Merindah



The pickled local white fish is a standout



The restaurant has lovely reminders of France throughout



On stage at the Moulin Rouge. Image courtesy of Merindah Byrne



So Fresh, So French

The online search function reads: *Sorry, we could not calculate distance from "Yamba, NSW" to "Paris, France"*. This is not an algorithm error. This is because Yamba has actually moved closer to Paris and the proof is clear to anyone who dines at Yamba restaurant, The French Pan Tree. What has caused this tectonic shift? The ground-moving power of love, that's what.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Photography by Elize Strydom



Diners enjoying an evening meal at The French Pan Tree

Chef Charles-Etienne Pret  t or Charly, as he is known, was busy living a classic Parisian life: running Cuistance, his restaurant beside the Louvre, holidaying on the coast and socialising with the myriad creative folk who flock to Paris for an artistic life like no other. One such artist was a young Australian dancer from Yamba, Merindah Byrne, in Paris to dance at the legendary Moulin Rouge.

They met and fell in love on the streets of Paris...so romantic, but not even Paris can replace home.

"I danced in Paris for 10 years, including closing a Lido show, which is an historic moment, so I was ready for home," says Merindah. "I wanted to be with my mum, who has always been such a great support to me, and Charly would do anything to spend his time fishing, camping and surfing."

Indeed, much of Charly's own childhood was spent on the west coast of France at his grandfather's farm, enjoying working in the vegetable garden and fishing. He brings this understanding of fresh produce to The French Pan Tree, always offering seasonal, local ingredients.

"We close on Tuesdays so I can be at the Yamba Farmers Market early Wednesday," says Charly. "What is fresh will guide what I prepare, using organic produce from local suppliers."

The French Pan Tree offers modern French dishes influenced by other cultures, particularly Japanese cuisine. "I include just one element that is different, to adapt traditional French recipes from my own knowledge and experience, making them contemporary."

On cue, Merindah brings us a dish called cevich  : fresh salmon

'cooked' in citrus juice. The fish ribbons melt in the mouth, bathed in a zesty juice aromatic with coriander, complemented by crisp almonds and a delightful cucumber and Granny Smith apple sorbet. It looks like art and tastes divine.

Charly changes the menu every day, and even the most popular dishes will only be available for a few weeks. "For example, I work with a farmer who raises free-range pigs. So, I start by making a pigs-head terrine. The bones I keep for jus. Then next I might do a rack, then the loin. Sometimes diners return because

they loved the rack they had the week before and I have to say 'sorry, it's gone – but I can offer you loin tonight.' Ask me Monday what we will serve Wednesday and I will say: I don't know!"

However, classics like confit duck and bouillabaisse are always on the menu.

Charly and Merindah's business partner Kevin, himself a Parisian, invites us to sample a few dishes. We share a beef tartare and pickled beetroot carpaccio with goat's cheese. All delicious, but the stand-out is the pickled local white fish with shaved fennel and cucumber, spiced yoghurt, sweet pomegranate seeds and an aromatic flavour that Merindah tells me is wattle seed. Every mouthful is different: the flavours are fresh, delicious and interesting.

Both Charly and Merindah are perfectionists. Before becoming a restaurateur, Charly was an equestrian, reaching the French National Show Jumping Championships. Merindah trained at the Adele Lewis School of Dance in Maclean, a respected dance academy that has launched many international careers. She was shortlisted for the Moulin Rouge at 17.

"They asked me to wait until I was 18. I thought they'd forgotten about me until January 2006 when I received a card wishing me happy New Year and hoping I hadn't forgotten about them!" Merindah laughs. Dancing in Paris was a dream for Merindah, who grew up in a completely self-sufficient home, running on solar panels, deep in the rainforest of Yamba.

"But my father always believed that I was going to be a dancer in Paris. He passed away before I went, but he knew."

There were many Australian dancers at the Moulin Rouge, contracted for their height, beauty, skill and work ethic. Merindah says she could have stuck with the Aussies, but she wanted to experience Paris like a local...with wonderful consequences. She and Charly met on Christmas Eve of 2010 and married four years later. Now he gets to experience her world and we get to experience their restaurant.

Kevin brings more dishes. I select the pork with creamy jus and a plum and native wattle seed condiment. My friend tries the confit of duck, then refuses to share, which makes it hard to write about. But I can report her comment: 'It is the most delicious meal I can remember, so no way am I sharing.' The pork was decadent.

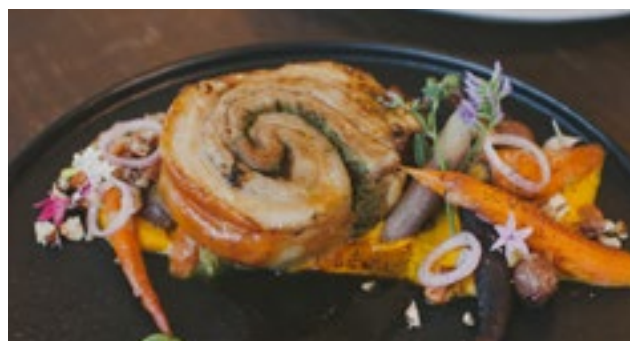
This is the excellence that garnered them Australian Good Food Guide Hats for 2018 and 2019, and the invitation to collaborate with the Head Chef of the prestigious Hotel SO/ Sofitel

Mauritius, to create the menu for their La Plage restaurant. From late April to mid May, Charly and Merindah will be in Mauritius, overseeing the menu launch.

Night has fallen and each table is now picked out by candlelight. Merindah and Kevin glide around in what Merindah calls her 'choreography of service', calling orders in French.

Where are we? We finish our gorgeous desserts and prepare to leave, although no one wants to go. Sauntering out onto the street we are surprised to find ourselves back in Yamba.

For bookings at The French Pan Tree, visit www.thefrenchpantree.com.au or call 6646 2335. Listen to Charly and download his recipes, on-air at ABC North Coast every second Thursday at 6.40am on Breaky Bites.



The pork with creamy jus, plum and wattle seed condiment



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What's trending this Autumn

Stylist Fernanda Gazal from The Evolve Company shares her insight on this season's trends.



Animal print

The trends are going wild this season! Tiger, zebra, leopard and snakeskin prints will be widely seen. You can find a versatile mix of accessories such as watches, cuffs and even a snake print card holder at Lovisa. Portmans offers a gorgeous leopard print top and skirt. Feeling bold? Go for the leopard print Dotti boots. Rockmans and Noni B also have glamorous pieces such as a kaftan and zebra print skirt. *'Into the Wild' pleated skirt by Portmans, Port Central.*

All featured fashion images and trends are available from the retailers of Port Central and Coffs Central



Head to Toe Beige

Beige is the new black especially if worn in a monochromatic outfit. The paperbag waist pant and linen cami from Sussan looks great as does the modern Bermuda short and puff shoulder top by Shona Joy from Coffs Central's Uptown Local. Jeanswest also offers the Reese casual jacket in pebble and the Celeste pullover in oatmeal. A classic check jacket is an ideal addition this season. *Outfit by Sussan, Port Central.*



Top Handle Bags

The structured design is luxe and sophisticated, making for the ideal day and night bag. Different styles for all occasions are available at Strandbags. For that final touch, wrap a beautiful scarf to the handle. *Guess Ann Marie Top Handle Flat Bag from Strandbags, Port Central.*



High Shine

Baby, it's time to shine! Glossy textures and metallic fabrics are a fun way to bring that special glow to every day. To play it safe but stylish, start with your shoes. For a smart yet comfortable look, you'll find beautiful old gold colour flats at Manning Shoes and for a casual weekend occasion, choose the cool and versatile sneakers from Rockmans.

Gold flats from Manning Shoes, Port Central.



Fernanda Gazal

Fashion Stylist, Personal Image Specialist and founder of The Evolve Company, Fernanda Gazal wears many hats. Her passion for diversity makes it easy for her to encourage people to embrace their uniqueness and use fashion to express themselves. Before starting her own Port Macquarie based business, Fernanda worked for global companies, magazines and social projects in South America.

Instagram @theevolvecompany
www.theevolvecompany.org

Turning over a New Leaf

Fall back into healthy habits: A resolutions list for Autumn

Words by Jen McCulloch from Coffs Coast Health Club



To see a change in your health you need to be consistent with your fitness and nutrition

Autumn is here and those resolutions you made in January now seem like a distant memory. But don't despair, you're not alone with a measly 9.2% of people achieving their New Year's Resolutions (according to entrepreneur.com last year).

With the kids now back at school, the holiday season over and the weather starting to cool a little, Autumn is the perfect time to get back on track with those health and fitness promises you made to yourself a few months ago.

You've probably heard it all before but to see a change you need to be consistent with your fitness and nutrition. To create good habits, often out of bad ones, you need to be structured in your routine.

Breaking bad habits

Firstly, you need to identify a bad habit and then try to change it. An example of a bad habit would be sitting down in front of the television and eating calorie dense chips. To change this, I suggest swapping chips for a healthier lighter snack, so you still get the TV time, but your weight loss efforts are not being jeopardized by doing so.

My challenge to *Coastbeat* readers is to identify some of your bad habits. Once you've done this, focus on changing just one or two to start.

Creating new habits

Good habits have a positive impact on your life and, once established, can often be as hard to break as bad ones. Creating new habits requires patience. Don't expect it to happen over a few weeks. An example of a good habit would be to take a glass of water to bed to drink when you first wake up. On average it takes someone doing something 66 times before it becomes a subconscious habit, so be patient.

Don't change too much at once

This is a common mistake and the reason most people fail. You start going to the gym five times a week, change your

diet to food you've never eaten before and don't enjoy, and you may even stop going out for meals or drinks with friends for fear of getting off track.

Then, you get to week three and binge on wine, ice cream and pizza because you're still not looking like a supermodel! I've observed that most people find it easier to work on good habit changes when not implemented all at once. Remember, one thing at a time.

Keeping it simple

The fundamentals of fitness and nutrition have hardly changed over the past four decades. We seem to be looking for complexity in places where it's not required. It's easy to overcomplicate things and then feel unmotivated or disheartened when you don't see results.

Keeping on

Don't be unrealistic about your goals and if you're unsure about what is achievable, seek advice from someone experienced. Also, don't compare yourself to others.

Everyone is on their own journey.

Focus on your progress

Stop concentrating on an end goal and instead focus on the here and now. Ask yourself - are you in a better place than you were three months ago? If the answer is yes, then know that your changes are having a positive impact on your life. Keep doing what you're doing!

Want to know more? For a free personal training and health consultation to see how you can implement some good healthy habits into your life, you'll find me at Coffs Coast Health Club, Moonee Market. Alternatively contact me on Ph) 0431 141 701 or E) jenloufitness@gmail.com



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Trainer \$49.99

Active Living with Lorna Jane

The team from Lorna Jane Port Central share their favourite sets, styles and accessories for a fun and active weekend in Port Macquarie.

Words by Suannah Wellham



The breakwall at sunrise. Image by Cain Pascoe

The Breakwall

Whether you love to tackle a park run or a beachside walk, visiting Port Macquarie's breakwall is a must for locals and visitors alike. The flat paths are ideal for experiencing all that our seaside has to offer including dolphin, whale or turtle spotting. My favourite activities are walking my dog or training with friends along the track, so keeping cool is essential!

Lorna Jane's must-have items: Lorna Jane Water Bottle and the Ventilation Visor, the ultimate accessories for any adventure.



Sea Acres Rainforest

Sea Acres Rainforest boardwalk

Walking and exploring the rainforest canopy on the 1.3km boardwalk at Sea Acres Rainforest Centre is a must. With such spectacular rainforest on our door step, weekends can be easily filled by exploring the boardwalk. This walk is suitable for all ages.

Lorna Jane's must-have items: For premium comfort and support we suggest our Precision Run Shoe. Designed with reinforced carbon plated soles for extra support, they make strolling or training easy.



The Lorna Jane Ventilation Visor

Indoor rock climbing, Centre of Gravity Indoor Adventure Centre

Centre of Gravity Port Macquarie offers a wonderful opportunity to rock climb in air-conditioned comfort. We love going to Centre of Gravity as a team as it caters to all fitness levels. With all the stretching you do, having a great pair of tights to move with you is advisable.

Lorna Jane's must-have items: Lotus Tights. These tights are designed with eight-way stretch and are perfect for indoor rock climbing as they move without limitation. They are available in multiple lengths.



The Lorna Jane Precision Run Shoe

Old Bottlebutt walking track

About half an hour's drive from Port Macquarie, Burrawang State Forest makes a terrific family outing. This lesser-known location offers picnic facilities and a 600 metre walking track set on course to see Old Bottlebutt, the largest Red Bloodwood tree in the southern hemisphere.

Lorna Jane's must-have items: Keep all your essentials with you in the Luxe Bumbag, our favourite accompaniment for this short trek.



Old Bottlebutt in Burrawang State Forest. Image courtesy of Forestry Corporation of NSW



Beach yoga is a great way to start the day

Beach Yoga

Where: Town Beach (most commonly through the Yoga Shala). Whether you're a beginner or an experienced yogi, yoga by the beautiful Town Beach is the best way to strengthen the body while you relax the mind. Our lives are often so busy it's lovely to do something that helps us to slow down and reconnect with ourselves.

Lorna Jane's must-have items:

The Traveller Yoga Bra is flexible and moisture wicking so it's wearable as both a sports bra and a bikini top. It's made from luxe ribbed fabric.



Stay hydrated!

Other must-haves from Lorna Jane for your active lifestyle:

- Many of our tights are offered in the Nothing 2 See Here™ fabric, designed to be light and breathable as well as squat proof. Team member and Port Macquarie based personal trainer Bernie recommends the fabric as its moisture wicking properties keep her cooler while she's being active.
- We love the Luxe Duffle Bag, an ultralight weight bag that converts from gym bag to overnight bag to tote. Durable enough to withstand daily use, this bag is handy for all activities.

Lorna Jane is located on the Ground Level of Port Central Ph) 6584 2022

For more information on the locations & activities recommended by the Lorna Jane team see www.portmacquarieinfo.com.au



Lorna Jane Port Macquarie manager Suannah Wellham



Spa owner Holly Jackson loves her work



endota have their own range of beauty products



'Surrender' facial with jade rollers



endota loves essential oils



Business partners Holly and mum, Lurrene

Surrender at endota

Beauty spas have come a long way over the last decade, with many trading harsh chemical treatments for organic products and soothing rituals. *Coastbeat* writer Geordie Bull was lucky enough to experience a blissful treatment with one such spa, endota – a company that promotes self-care and a deep connection to nature.

Words by Geordie Bull

Images courtesy of endota spa



The new endota spa at Coffs Central

Today, my job involves heading to the brand new endota Coffs Harbour for a facial treatment, a tough gig! The last facial I had was ten years ago when I endured one hour of what felt like sandpaper being rubbed over my face, before emerging looking like an angry tomato. Fortunately, the minute I step into the beautifully furnished endota spa, I know I'm in for a dramatically different experience.

Holly Jackson, the lovely co-owner of endota Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie, greets me as I arrive, offering me a mug of lemongrass tea. She lets me know that I'll be treated to the 'Surrender' spa package, a delicious 75-minute facial/massage combo. Yes please!

Holly describes the treatment as a 'sensory journey' involving a jade stone massage to "help infuse the serums and assist with lymphatic drainage" and a scalp massage, followed by a foot rub.

Looking around the beautiful new spa, it's clear that attention to detail is a high priority for endota. According to Holly, the company focuses on natural ingredients and self-healing and has formulated its own cutting-edge products that deeply nourish the skin, including an Organics line (which will be used for my treatment) and a New Age range that harnesses the latest technology to soften the aging process.

Before the treatment begins, therapist Emma tests my skin and informs me that it is "quite dehydrated". After 36 years in the sun and a couple of morning espressos, this information doesn't surprise me. She then allows me to

choose my own essential oil from a tantalising line-up. I select 'calm' and settle in for a relaxing morning.

The treatment begins with a back and shoulder rub, finished off with warm jade stones and a jade roller, which feels heavenly – even better than a hot stone massage. Following a beautiful foot rub, it's facial time. As Emma cleanses, exfoliates and moisturises my skin, I enjoy the delightfully cooling sensation and fresh cucumber aroma - no sandpaper in sight! She finishes the facial by gently running cool jade stones over my skin. I could seriously get used to this.

After an invigorating scalp massage, it's time for the treatment to end. Emma performs another reading of my skin and gladly tells me that its hydration levels have significantly improved. To be honest, I can feel it. She hands me a sample of my chosen essential oil and a card with an inspirational quote on it, and I skip off to meet my husband for lunch, feeling like a new woman.

Considering myself a facial convert, I know where I'll visit next time I want to relax.

Subscribe to Cb online at www.coastbeat.com.au for your chance to win 1 of 3 \$200 endota gift cards!

Visit endota spa Port Macquarie at 40 Williams Street, Port Macquarie. Ph) 6584 7888. Visit endota spa Coffs Harbour on Level 1 of Coffs Central. Ph) 6638 9430

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Gloucester Waste and Recycling Centre
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Tuncurry CRC
Tip Road, Tuncurry

Bucketts Way CRC
6839 The Bucketts Way, Tinonee

Raleigh CRC
Short Cut Road, Raleigh

Nambucca CRC
711 Old Coast Road, Nambucca Heads

Macleay Valley CRC
638 Crescent Head Road, Kempsey



For more information and opening hours visit www.midwaste.org.au

Only household quantities accepted 20kg or 20L maximum container size. Please transport your materials carefully.
Dangerous goods and items other than those listed will not be accepted.

This project is a NSW EPA Waste Less, Recycle More initiative funded from the waste levy. Visit www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Coastbeat Party

In February *Coastbeat* celebrated in style with a belated 1st birthday event at Coffs Central. Guest speaker Di Morrissey spoke of her love for the north coast and guests were entertained with music by local duo, Jazrol. *Coastbeat* featured interviewees from the past five issues chatted with writers, photographers, readers and advertisers. It was a wonderful evening.

Photography by Brendan Ray



L to R: Mandy Hart, Gareth Owen, Lisa Owen & Ann Jackson



Andrew and Sandi Pratley with *Coastbeat's* Yvette Harper (centre)



Depot, Ootoya & Sotto Zero Gelato all provided delicious food



The Food at the Terrace area was transformed to create a fantastic event space, perfect for a cocktail party



Kev Shanahan with daughter Carly



L to R: Rachael Pensini, Bridgette Vartiainen, Albe Falzon & Robyn Wren



Cameron Bloom & Danielle Wallace



Caroline Harada (l) & Meagan Van Anen



A gorgeous array of cocktails by Sugarmill Restaurant & Bar



Guest speaker Di Morrissey (centre) with bcu staff (l to r) Kerrie Byles, Vicki Love, Leonie Kennedy & Michaela Pleasance



The event was beautifully styled by the team at Coffs Central



John & Leanne Watson



Depot Chef Scott Hardy prepares food out on the terrace



L to R: Nikki Sinclair, Chris Winn & Steph Kesby



L to R: Jess Simpson, Lucy Sittzenko & Gia Crowhurst

To enquire about Event Hire, please call Gia Crowhurst on Ph) 5622 8900 or email gia@gowings.com

I love the Macleay Valley Coast

The 8 stories below provide an insight into our Local Legends and why they call the Macleay Valley Coast home.



Michele Atkinson, The Slim Dusty Centre

While most people have heard of the iconic Australian musician Slim Dusty, not everyone is aware of how popular he remains. Kempsey's Slim Dusty Centre was built to change that – and to educate and inspire the public on the life and times of one of our nation's most popular artists. According to manager Michele Atkinson, The Slim Dusty Centre attracts between 16,000 and 20,000 visitors a year (not including functions and conferences), a number that she believes is a testament to the impact Slim made in his lifetime.



Ben Marks, South Kempsey Corner Store

In 2016, Ben returned home to Kempsey to join his parents in creating The South Kempsey Corner Store, a café and general store that has earned a local following for its great coffee, delicious food and communal atmosphere. For Ben, the more relaxed pace of life in the Macleay Valley and the friendliness of its people more than compensate for the demands of running a busy café. "I work a lot but it doesn't feel like it because I love what I do. I really enjoy meeting new people, forming relationships and having great conversations."



Andy and Lauren Reichel, Valley Electrical Refrigeration & Air Conditioning

Andy and Lauren Reichel have long nurtured a special bond with the Macleay Valley – a place where they met, married and started their business. While the couple began their married life in the Hunter Valley, they dreamed of returning to Lauren's childhood home of Kempsey to raise a family. Starting a small business was another dream the couple had – a dream that relocating to the Macleay Valley made possible. Since the couple moved to Kempsey two years ago their business has taken off, winning a Macleay Valley Business Award for Best Start-Up.



Yvette and Oliver Cooke, Fredo Pies

When Yvette and Oliver Cooke bought Fredo Pies in August 2014 they hit the ground running. The couple purchased the well-known brand aware that the bypass would soon cut off the traffic flow that Fredo Pies had historically relied on – a gamble that has since proven its worth. Frederickton is a long way from the corporate lives Yvette and Oliver lived in Sydney before they bought the business. Yvette was a television producer and Oliver worked as a corporate advisor, two occupations that, though different from running a pie shop, gifted the couple with the skills and confidence to build upon the established Fredo Pies business.



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Some incredible people and businesses have chosen the Macleay Valley Coast as their home, including CEOs, marketing professionals, dynamic entrepreneurs and talented designers. Although they are different in many ways, they all have something in common - their love for the Macleay Valley Coast.

Like to find out more? The full version of each story can be found on our website along with 20 other equally inspiring and interesting stories.



Nancy Pattison, Indii Swimwear

Nancy Pattison is a quiet achiever whose actions speak louder than her words. In the last few years the South West Rocks local and proud Dunghutti woman has managed to create a successful swimwear label whilst holding down a part-time job as a community engagement officer for the Red Cross in Kempsey. During the warmer months, Nancy runs an Indii pop up store in the South West Rocks CBD. In her non-existent spare time, she's also organised an Indigenous model search and funded Saltsista, a surfing workshop for local Indigenous kids.



Tony Mayne, Big 4 Sunshine Resort

When Tony Mayne purchased the Lagoon View Caravan Park in 1999, he could see its potential to be transformed into a holiday park guests would remember. Over almost two decades, Tony has invested more than \$10 million into the South West Rocks park - rebranding it to create the BIG4 Sunshine Resort, an innovative and award-winning destination that enjoys immense popularity. Tony's story provides insight to his journey on how he made the park one of South West Rocks' biggest attractions, which includes the addition of Shipwreck Island water park.



Fiona Welsh, Macleay Options

While the story of local business Macleay Options' phenomenal growth has been told countless times, what is not often reported on is the inspirational ethos that the organisation is grounded in, and the smiling faces of people with disabilities who are employed to do work that brings them joy. This, says marketing manager Fiona Welsh, is what makes Macleay Options a successful and sustainable social enterprise. Fiona and the team are confident Macleay Options will become an industry leader in disability support and services – blazing the trail for social enterprises who want to stay true to their core values.



Shonel Everson, Mahalo Interiors

Shonel Everson has her grandmother to thank for the creative flair that makes her West Kempsey homewares store, Mahalo Interiors such a delight to walk into. "My grandmother, June Kemp, was a well-known artist in Kempsey and she started teaching me to paint and draw when I was five," Shonel says. "She even took me to art classes with her! It's always been my passion to search for beautiful things," she says. "I basically stock the store with everything I love. Because I've lived in the community for a long time I know most of my customers and a lot of them trust me and my style."

RIPPED OFF



Jon Campbell, Robert Moore and Ozzy Wrong join Gerry Wedd in looting and pilfering from the images of photo-journalist John Witzig



"Gerry's been doing it for years... it's about time someone else got in on the act."

Robert Moore

Ripped Off

Iconic photographs of sun-bronzed surfers gazing seaward across empty beaches have become as synonymous with Australian culture as Parisians dancing beneath the Eiffel Tower for the French, or couples kissing in Times Square for the Americans.

These images do not appear by chance; they require an acute eye to recognise the importance of the moment and point the lens. Such a photographer is John Witzig, who first started documenting surf lifestyle in the 1950s. John's substantial body of work is being revisited in *Ripped Off*, an exhibition to be held at the Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery throughout Autumn.

Words by Zacharey Jane

Images from *Ripped Off*



Artist Gerry Wedd at work in his studio. Image by Andrew Cowen

The exhibition is a re-imagining of John's images by artists Robert Moore, Gerry Wedd, Jon Campbell and Ozzy Wrong, who have been given access to his substantial back-catalogue. John Witzig is also contributing.

"John is so much more than a surf photographer," says Robert Moore, artist and exhibition curator. "His work from the 1960s and '70s helped define surfing culture and the surf outsider lifestyle, and still informs our culture today."

John Witzig spent his early years surfing the eastern seaboard and photographing his friends. With film-makers Albe Falzon (see *Coastbeat* Spring 2018) and David Elfick, John founded *Tracks Magazine*, the internationally renowned 'bible' of surf. "John captured the rawness of the Australian landscape and people," says Moore. "The beach breaks things down: wind, sand, salt. No rainbows and flowers, or the gentrified coast of today. Then, it was hard-living fishermen and farmers. John captured the strength and the honesty of the lifestyle, with the surfer as a fringe-dweller."

Ironically, these 'outsider' images are now considered serious social documentary, something that Witzig regards as "cause for some amusement." He is quick to point out that *Ripped Off* is not about his work so much as what the other artists do with it.

The catalyst for *Ripped Off* was Gerry Wedd's appropriation of Witzig imagery. Wedd designed for Mambo graphics in the 1980s and '90s and the satire of Mambo informs his strikingly beautiful ceramics, contrasting traditional medium with social commentary.

Robert Moore was also a Mambo artist. His work still features utes and dogs, but now in a looser, more abstract style on board and canvas. For *Ripped Off* he has rendered Witzig images as impressionistic paintings, capturing the mood and tone of the originals.

Artist and surf-hound Ozzy Wrong produces loud and proud social commentary in paintings, text pieces, film, animation, clothing and surfboards, working in a weird zone where space fantasy meets surf psychedelia, with a lot of love in between.

Jon Campbell is a Melbourne artist and musician known for his abstract renditions of Australian colloquialisms. His big, colourful canvases, posters and lightbox images take the clichés of Australian pop culture and turn them into art, asking the viewer to stop and consider who we are through what we say.

All of the artists featured are collected internationally and have works held in the major Australian galleries. They have selected the Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery because, Robert Moore says, "Witzig surf imagery captured the lifestyle of this area. This exhibition is a celebration of John's work, by the surf artists who have been inspired by him. We all have a connection to John's work, and we are all fans."



Vase by Gerry Wedd

Come be inspired yourself at the Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery *Ripped Off* exhibition from March 8 to May 4, 2019
- www.coffsc coast.com.au/event/ripped-off

What to Catch When

With thanks to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Here's an overview, just for *Coastbeat*, on what's best to catch along our coastline throughout the year



Lower North Coast - Forster to Port Macquarie and surrounding regions

	BEACH	OFFSHORE	ESTUARY	FRESHWATER
MAR - MAY	Bream, Whiting, Tailor	Dolphinfish, Marlin, Teraglin Kingfish, Spanish Mackerel, Spotted Mackerel, Snapper	Dusky, Flathead, Luderick, Bream	Australian Bass
JUN - AUG	Tailor, Mullaway	Snapper, Kingfish, Pearly Perch	Luderick, Bream, Mulloway	Closed season for Australian Bass
SEPT - NOV	Tailor, Bream	Snapper, Kingfish, Pearl Perch	Dusky Flathead, Whiting, Bream	Australian Bass
DEC - FEB	Bream, Whiting, Mulloway, Dart	Dolphinfish, Marlin, Snapper, Kingfish, Cobia	Dusky Flathead, Bream, Whiting	Australian Bass

Mid North Coast - Coffs Coast and surrounding regions

	BEACH	OFFSHORE	ESTUARY	FRESHWATER
MAR - MAY	Bream, Tailor, Whiting	Marlin, Spanish Mackerel, Spotted Mackerel, Wahoo, Cobia, Teraglin	Bream, Mangrove Jack	Australian Bass
JUN - AUG	Mulloway, Tailor	Spanish Mackerel, Kingfish, Pearl Perch, Tusk Fish, Snapper	Bream, Luderick	Closed season for Australian Bass
SEPT - NOV	Mulloway, Tailor, Bream	Kingfish, Snapper, Pearl Perch, Tusk Fish	Bream, Dusky Flathead	Australian Bass
DEC - FEB	Bream, Whiting, Mulloway, Dart	Dolphinfish, Marlin, Yellowfin Tuna	Dusky Flathead, Mangrove Jack	Australian Bass

Upper North Coast - Yamba to Byron and surrounding regions

	BEACH	OFFSHORE	ESTUARY	FRESHWATER
MAR - MAY	Bream, Tailor, Dart	Spanish Mackerel, Spotted Mackerel, Wahoo, Marlin, Cobia, Longtail Tuna	Bream, Luderick	Australian Bass
JUN - AUG	Tailor, Mulloway	Snapper, Pearl Perch, Tusk Fish, Mulloway, Kingfish	Bream, Luderick	Closed season for Australian Bass
SEPT - NOV	Bream, Tailor, Mulloway	Snapper, Mulloway, Pearl Perch, Tusk Fish, Kingfish, Marlin	Dusky Flathead, Bream	Australian Bass
DEC - FEB	Bream, Whiting, Dart	Marlin, Spanish Mackerel, Dolphin Fish, Longtail Tuna	Bream, Dusky Flathead, Whiting, Mangrove Jack	Australian Bass

Stormriders
Volcom Idle Crew
Tee \$50.00



Stormriders
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Cap \$39.95



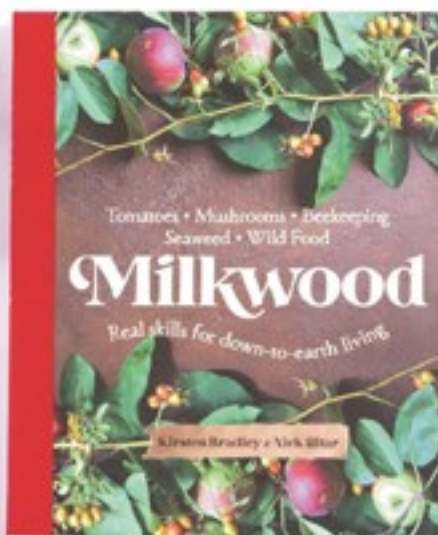
Sunglass Hut
Polarised Raybans
\$225



Connor
Darwin Chino
Stretch Shorts
\$49.95



Chemist Warehouse
Calvin Klein 100ml
Spray \$39.99



Book Face
Milkwood book
\$45.00



Prouds
Pulsar
Watch
\$299



Stormriders
Globe Mahalo
shoes \$99.99



Connor
Ananas Sock
\$7.99



Organics
MattR
Kombucha
\$5.00



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Great Lakes



El Palmo Pacificano
23 March, Pacific Palms
f El Palmo Pacificano



James Reyne Live
29 March, Taree
mec.midcoast.nsw.gov.au



Forster Triathlon Festival
30 March, Forster
f Forster Triathlon Festival



Aussie Ark Tour
30 March, Barrington Tops
aussieark.org.au



Marina Prior & David Hobson
12 April, Taree
mec.midcoast.nsw.gov.au



Easter Powerboat Spectacular
19-21 April, Taree
f 2019 Easter Powerboat Classic



360 Allstars
1 May, Taree
f mec.midcoast.nsw.gov.au



Ladies' Raceday
18 May, Tuncurry
tuncurryforsterjockeyclub.com.au

Port Macquarie



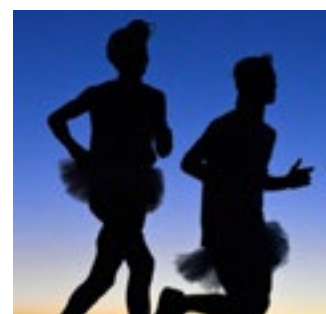
Jackie Deane: Drift
23 March - 22 April, Port Macquarie
glasshouse.org.au



Laurieton Multisport Challenge
31 March, Laurieton
laurietonmultisportchallenge.com.au



Wauchope Show
26-27 April, Wauchope
wauchoapeshowsociety.com.au



Bright Night Run
3 May, Port Macquarie
ap.ironman.com



Ironman Australia
5 May, Port Macquarie
ironmanaustralia.com



Heritage Festival Port Macquarie
13-19 May, Port Macquarie
pmhc.nsw.gov.au



Slice of Haven Festival
26 May, Laurieton
sliceofhaven.com.au



Port Macquarie Brickfest
27 May, Port Macquarie
f Port Macquarie Brickfest

Macleay Valley



Ocean Deep by Robyn Jackson
10-28 April, Gladstone
robynjacksonartist.com



Loaves & Fishes BBQ
19 April, South West Rocks
macleayvalleycoast.com.au



Kempsey Show
30 April - 1 May, Kempsey
kempseyshow.com.au



Crescent Head Malibu Classic
23-25 May, Crescent Head
Crescent Head Malibu Club

Coffs Coast



Ripped Off Exhibition
8 March - 4 May, Coffs Harbour
Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery



Ocean Film Festival
26 March, Coffs Harbour
jettytheatre.com



Dorrigo Easter Art Exhibition
18 - 27 April, Dorrigo
artscouncilofthedorrigo.com



Harmony Festival
31 March, Coffs Harbour
coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au



Beachside Radiology Ocean Swims
7 April, Coffs Harbour
villagesports.com.au



Japanese Fest of Children's Day
5 May, Coffs Harbour
coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au



Clay Stories Exhibition
10 May - 13 July, Coffs Harbour
coffscoast.com.au



Bellingham Readers & Writers Fest
7-9 June, Bellingham
bellinghamwritersfestival.com.au

Clarence Valley



Eat Street Grafton
23 March, Grafton
eatstreetgraffon.com.au



plunge Art & Culture Festival
28 March - 30 April, Grafton
clarence.nsw.gov.au/plunge



Gate to Plate Masters Expo
30 March, Yamba
gatetoplate.com.au



Maclean Highland Gathering
19-20 April, Maclean
macleanhighlandgathering.com.au



Maclean Agricultural Show
7-8 May, Maclean
www.macleanshow.org.au



Grafton Agricultural Show
10-11 May, Grafton
www.graftonshow.com.au



Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic
11 May, Grafton
www.graftontoinverell.com.au



Australian Stock Horse Show
18-19 May, Grafton
www.ashs.com.au

Byron Bay



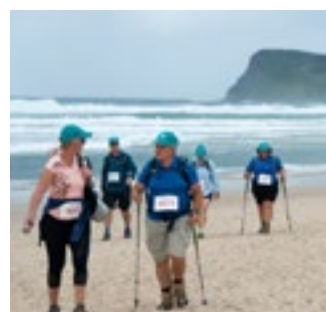
Bluesfest 30th Anniversary
18-22 April, Byron Bay
www.bluesfest.com.au



Byron Bay Triathlon
11 May, Byron Bay
www.byronbaytri.com.au



Mother's Day Classic
12 May, Ballina
www.mothersdayclassic.com.au



Ballina to Byron Charity Walk
26 May, Ballina
www.coastalcharitywalk.com.au

Saturday 30 March, Yamba
Treelands Drive Community Centre

REGIONAL MASTERS EXPO

Foodie heaven returns to Yamba!
Discover artisan regional products, made
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Free samples, master classes, cooking
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of the Grafton Regional Gallery.
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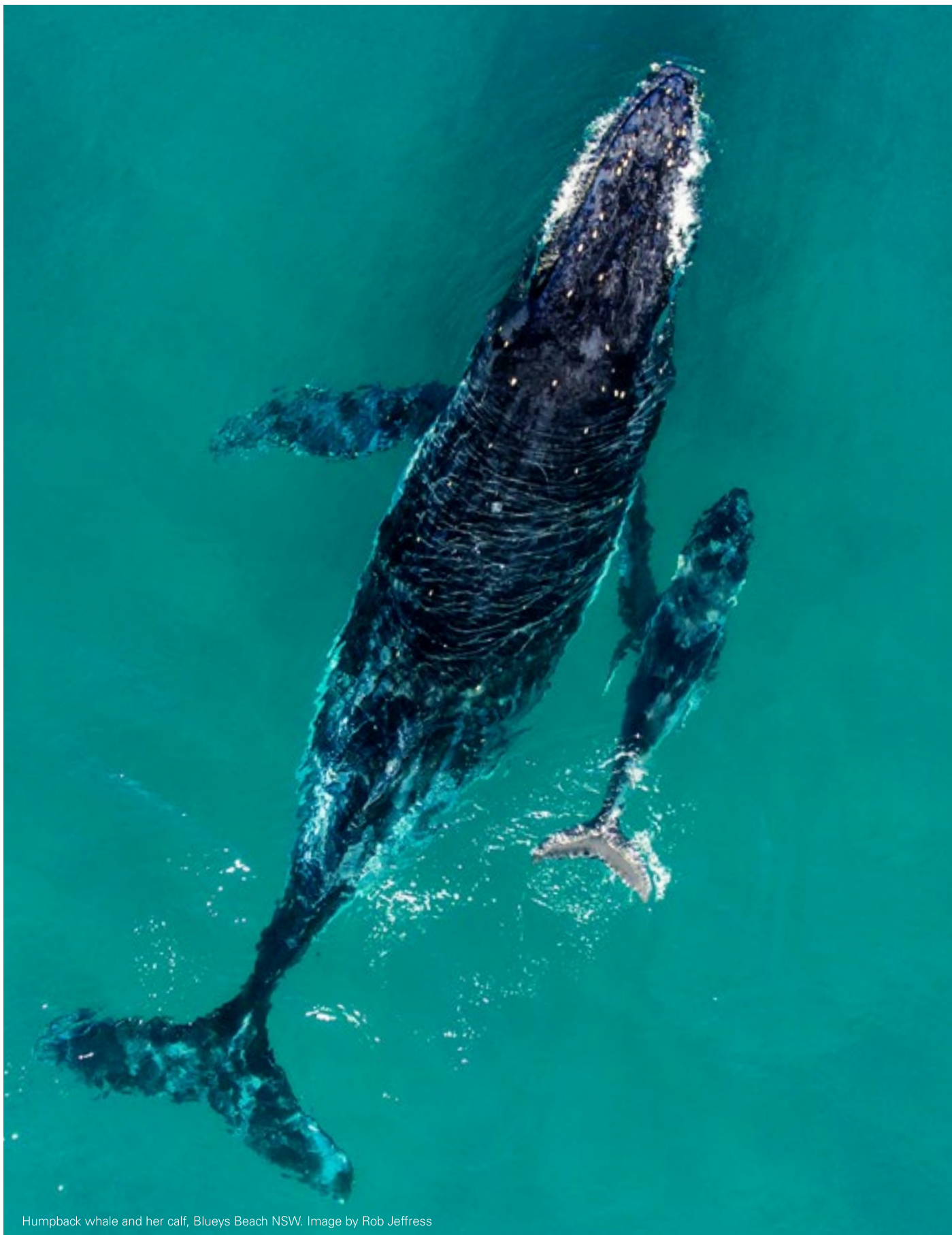
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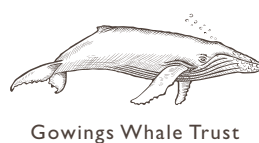

**big garden
furniture**



Humpback whale and her calf, Blueys Beach NSW. Image by Rob Jeffress

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 www.coastbeat.com.au



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