BWV

TOP SELLING MAGAZINE IN BRAIDWOOD

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Women in and around Braidwood

(Some) women in and around Braidwood

Welcome to this women's issue of *BWD*. My partner Alison and I, together with our resident friend Maggie, came up with the idea after thinking about stories for future issues.

I suggested a feature on the clubs and groups in and around Braidwood. [This might very well be in the next issue.] Anyway, as we were preparing a list of people to contact for the clubs and organisations story, an interesting theme emerged.

Most groups, clubs, organisations and loosely affiliated assortments of odd bods in this region are run by women. Perhaps it's the same everywhere.

So, the women featured in *BWD* #9 may not represent as accurate a cross-section of locals as you might like, perhaps you're one of the many I missed asking, but that's life. A few people who I would really have liked to include were too busy, or for some other reason declined.

Here is a standing offer: if you have an interesting story to tell, there is space available in these pages. [Most of the time even a male tale will do.]

Advertising is a bit down this issue and I'm mighty grateful for the support of those businesses that grace these pages. I know many town shops and services are doing it tough right now.

There are calls from people in town for Braidwood to organise itself an advocacy organisation like a chamber of commerce. It's a good idea. Regardless of whether the good ship Palerang hits the IPART rocks and disintegrates, to be washed up on neighbouring shores, Braidwood will need a strong voice.

That's the trick, the voice. There is not ever one voice, there are many voices and quite often they're all saying different things. We need a town group that allows for, encourages even, the many and varied interests that drive our people.

We all have at least one thing in common — a liking for living here. Hopefully that is enough to get us through the other stuff.

Paul Cockram

PS: Not all the people pictured [at left] are specifically featured in this issue.

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ROBIN TENNANT-WOOD
Book shop owner, political writer, wary wombat's friend

Whither radical politics?

A feminist lament on the 'mainstreaming' of the Greens by Robin Tennant-Wood

If, as Aristotle contended, "man is by nature a political animal", then politics is inherent in all our interactions. When the proto-Green parties emerged in 1972 in the form of the United Tasmania Group and the New Zealand Values Party, they promised to give a political voice to nature. They intended to challenge and redress environmental exploitation by the government-corporate machine by taking them on at their own game: politics.

Politics is about only one thing: power. Who has it, who doesn't, who wants it, and how they intend to get it. By throwing their hat into the political arena, these new groups, which later evolved into the Tasmanian Greens and the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, were tacitly agreeing to long-held rules of engagement.

Some years ago I worked on a research project that included a statistical analysis of the gender breakdown of candidates for political parties. Yes, I know, I need to get out more. At the time the project leader, a well-known feminist academic, said to me, "minor progressive parties have more women as candidates than men because women are mugs — they'll always put up their hands for a good cause. Watch though, as soon as a party starts to look publicly saleable, the blokes will arrive and take over." Not surprisingly, we found that the majority of candidates for the Greens in the early days were women.

There is an historical and spiritual connection between women and nature. We refer to Mother Earth, or the goddess Gaia. Traditionally women are 'of' nature while men are 'above' nature. The late philosopher and Palerang resident, Val Plumwood, wrote about this in terms of 'dualisms', in her seminal work, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Dualisms are pairs of opposing terms such as: technology/nature; outdoor/indoor; tamed/wild; manmade/natural; political/personal. A gender can be ascribed to each term in the pair: the first in each of these is masculine and the second is feminine. Val went further to say that the masculine term is given social precedence over the feminine. Thus, technology is perceived, socially, as superior to nature, outdoor work (meaning where one leaves the home to go to work) is superior to indoor (house) work, tamed animals are more valued than wild, and so on.

Taking my lead from Val Plumwood, I would add another dualism to the list: mainstream/radical. For the first 20 years of green politics, they — the parties and their supporters — were radical. They were breaking new political ground. Yes, they were ridiculed, stereotyped (one cartoonist regularly depicted the first Greens senators, Dee Margetts and Christobel Chamarette, as the Gumnut Twins), abused and derided.

> The media mocked them, the major parties dismissed them, the public ignored them. They were radical.

Most of their elected representatives were women and while they were dealing in power politics, their aim was not personal power. It was to gain the best possible outcome for the environment. In a game where gaining power is the ultimate goal, to use power for another purpose was radical.

While we were all distracted by the prime ministerial revolving door, the Greens quietly hammered the final nail in the coffin of radical politics. Greens leader, Richard Di Natale, reshuffled the portfolio responsibilities of his team in an ongoing push to 'mainstream' the party. In so doing, New South Wales senator, Lee Rhiannon, was dumped from her higher education responsibilities. This portfolio and the politically crucial equal marriage one, have both been assigned to incoming South Australian senator-designate, Robert Simms, who will be replacing retiring Senator Penny Wright. In a nutshell, all the heavy duty portfolios for the Greens are now held by men: prime minister and cabinet, health, foreign affairs, treasury, employment and workplace relations, finance, trade, defence, attorney general, schools, higher education, and LGBTI and marriage equality. The blokes have arrived to take over.

Why 'mainstream' a party? In order to attract a wider pool of voters. How is this 'doing politics differently'? It isn't. This is a cynical exercise in power-grabbing. The Greens are playing by the established rule that their rusted-on supporters, while they may be disappointed, will stick with them, while more moderate voters will see them as a viable alternative to the major parties. Electorally it will probably work. Ethically, they have sold the radical principles on which the party was founded for 30 pieces of electoral silver. With the male domination of the party comes a masculine view — and use — of power.

I do not believe that this 'mainstreaming' would have happened under female leadership. There is still a place for radical politics but it is a feminine domain.

On several occasions while he was leader I heard Bob Brown say, "we don't want to keep the bastards honest, we want to replace 'em!" The tragedy is that they are not replacing, but becoming, the mainstream parties they once opposed.

JO PARSONS and KRISTY MOYLE
New mothers

Mum'n'mum

Jo and Kristy talk to *BWD* about the birth of their daughter Indigo.

Would you like to know how babies are made? [laughs Jo] Well, it didn't happen the usual way. This baby was made with lots of love, effort and kilometres on our car with the assistance of a donor from the U.S.

[K] This process has taken several years. To start with there was the promise of a donor friend and that didn't work out. Then we tried with one of our friend's family members, but after nearly a year that didn't work out either. In the end we decided to go to the Canberra Fertility Clinic because we didn't want to waste any more time. Having already invested considerable time trying to make a bubby, we wanted to try and preserve as much of Jo's youth as possible. We decided to act a little bit more quickly and went with an American donor through a corporation known as XYTEX.

The donor is a paramedic, a fireman and has lots of wonderful characteristics that we both identified with. We did try via IVF using Jo's eggs and the donor's sperm a couple of times, but that wasn't entirely successful and we didn't get a bubby that way.

The great thing is, that although we don't have a producer of sperm in this relationship, we've got two producers of eggs. When Jo's eggs weren't plentiful enough to provide the necessaries for a bubby I was able to step in and undergo the hormonal processes involved in producing eggs — I became Jo's egg donor. It was quite entertaining in many ways and could be quite harrowing in others.

[J] Indigo has the right to access the sperm donor's information when she is 18. He consented to abide by Australian laws, which state that when a child turns 18, legally they are able to access information about the donor. In Australia you can only use donor sperm from somebody who consents to this process. It is interesting, because it actually limits the number of donors available. There are quite a few men who are happy to donate their sperm but they don't want to be contacted when the bub is 18. And in Australia, there just aren't that many donors out there.

When we got pregnant we informed

the U.S. company that we had a pregnancy. We are also obliged to disclose that Indigo has arrived. We can also register on their website if we would like to get in touch with the donor now — if he then chose to register his interest on that website, we could exchange details and she might get to meet him before she is eighteen. But it's up to him — we'd definitely be interested to meet him. For now, legally, Indigo is my child — not even Kristy's.

[K] Because I became Jo's donor too.

[J] Both of them are donors to me under the law, and that is where it stands until Indigo's birth has been registered with the government. On the birth certificate I will go down as parent one: mother, and Kristy will go down as parent two, and that's when she gets rights as a parent.

[K] I'd better behave, basically — I want to stay in the good books!

[J&K] We've been together nine and a half years. We got married two years ago, on the 30th of September. We have just had our second anniversary of marriage. We had to go to New Zealand to get legally married. Same-sex marriage became legal in New Zealand on 19 August 2013. They sang the most beautiful customary song about family when they introduced it — it was a really special moment.

On our last night in New Zealand after getting married, we were having drinks outside the hotel and we met this amazingly wonderful man who was one of the men responsible for introducing the bill and gaining the support to pass the same-sex marriage equality.

[J] He was a happily married heterosexual man, a beautiful man.

[K] We had the most wonderful time with him. Just understanding the warmth and the wonderful nature of the people behind that process made us really sad to leave New Zealand because we felt that we were really valued and our relationship considered sacred there.

I'm a pretty staunch feminist, and I didn't entirely even buy into the concept of marriage at the time. Jo took me to New Zealand and wooed me, in order to convince me. And after it happened, I started thinking more intently upon it as a social and political message as much as anything else. I then started thinking about how the movement towards equality for people of colour in the U.S. was partly precipitated by the legalisation of interracial marriage. The role of marriage has often served as an important political and social vehicle to combat inequality.

[J] I am a bit old fashioned in that way. I really value the idea of being connected and supported by marriage. I wanted us to be married when we had a baby.

[K] I have begun to understand that this is an important thing for us to prove to people; to reinforce to the world that we are every bit as deserving and every bit as capable of having a wonderful, loving, fulfilling life together. That deserves to be respected just the same as for everybody else — regardless of our genitals! It's a bit offensive really when people want to reduce it to something as simple as that.

[J&K] One of the main reasons that we are still, occasionally, found to be making reference to being lesbians is because the rate of youth suicide is substantially higher among kids who identify same-sex attracted.

It's so incredibly important that young people recognise there are people who are absolutely joyously and bountifully living a wonderful existence.

And that they can be contacted and are visible in little communities like this. So whilst we don't go out of our way to always be on about gayness, we are proud and open about our relationship and our 'gayness' so that those young people have a role model — it is just so important that we make them feel loved, accepted and perfectly normal!

[K] Braidwood is an amazingly supportive community. But we are very much active in the community too, so I think you get out of something what you put in as well. The wonderful thing about Braidwood is that everybody here has been really open to our enthusiasm to be a part of this community. I don't feel that they see us very much as different because of sexuality. They probably do from time to time, but I feel like I interact with people as a human being who cares about this place.

[J] And with our beautiful Indigo, there's been so much love. So much excitement about this little person; so many people just doing the most remarkable things for us — people that we don't even know that well. One beautiful local woman knitted us the most beautiful little vest and gumnut baby hat. You know, just the most beautiful gestures of kindness and love from a community.

I have never felt more at home than we do here, or safer, to be who I am. It is a very safe place to be who you are.

We now have the most amazing and magnificent little human being, born on 4th of September; very calmly brought into the world in a water birth at Queanbeyan hospital. We received wonderful service at Queanbeyan, a wonderful midwife and a great doctor. Indigo was 50 centimetres, 3.3 kilos, cute as a button and wonderfully healthy.

[K] ... and entirely beautiful. What is really lovely is that we have people commenting on how she actually looks a lot like Jo, and also like me. We wouldn't be remotely surprised if that was true because she has the life blood of Jo as her Mumma, plus a bit of genetic input from me, her other Mummy.

We are a family. We don't think that it is necessary to have complementary pairs of genitalia in order to successfully raise a family and we feel as though the rest of the village of Braidwood is very much with us and very supportive. We are so excited that Indigo will be raised within, and often by, the most wonderful village in which either of us have ever had the privilege to live.

MERRILYN SIMMONS

Musician and enthusiastic exponent of social singing

Joybelles

Merrilyn strums her stuff

I thought it would be just nice to have a women's singing-for-fun group, because there are a couple of other options in town for people singing, but I wanted to just do something a little bit different. I do enjoy women's singing groups, so it started off at the beginning of the year, and we limped through winter a little bit because the numbers were small.

It's tricky over winter, it's hard to get out — I find it hard myself — but often, after you do and have a sing, you feel great and you feel glad that you did. As the weather's picked up we have had more people come, and it is all about singing for fun, so all the songs are taught from ear and memory.

Occasionally when there is a few more words I'll do a sheet, but it is not like looking at the sheet while we are doing it because it is more about singing in the moment. I did some training around that way of leading, but it also suited me really well because I am not a classically trained musician.

I read music a bit, but I approached it much more experientially by doing it — and it seems to really work — particularly when you choose a repertoire that is not too wordy and has a tune that will stick in your mind. That approach has a sort of instant success built into it.

So people who like the idea of singing but are a bit nervous, as lots of people are, can come along, and because of the repertoire they can get that instant success and their confidence grows. I really like that about it and, being in a group, less confident people can just sort of blend into the background for as long as they feel they need to as they find their voice.

[BWD] What is it about singing, especially harmonic singing, that makes the spirit soar?

That is really interesting. I have always loved harmonies, I know in my own songwriting there has always been at least one, maybe a couple of harmonies, so it is something that really resonates, I think, with harmonies; they can sometimes make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, it is really interesting, so I guess it is something to do with sound and soundwaves and all that kind of stuff. But the other thing is that when you are singing, you are using your body, mind, and spirit. So it is an amazing emotional activity. When you get a group of people together, creating something which is always more than the sum of the parts, it's fantastic.

The soundwaves wash over you, it feels really good. You feel like you have achieved something.

You can arrive quite tired, but by the end of an hour of singing together, and it tends to be pretty well song after song after song, there is not much mucking around or over-analysing. It doesn't work for me to teach that way. It works for me better if I know the songs in my head, and then it is like that call and response — more a traditional way of teaching.

When you think about the tradition of music making as a family activity, people sat around the fire or pianola or whatever and just sang and made up harmonies. I like the idea that music is not something that only certain people do, it is something that human beings can do.

If you can talk, you can vocalise on some sort of level, and so it is almost like returning something to people that's been taken away by the, "I can't sing, I did try and sing but they told me to stand up the back ...". Whereas when you have a group and you are doing a repertoire that is relatively simple but sounds nice, success is built in. People can start to see themselves differently, as singers. They can see, "actually I can".

There are people who are on the edge sometimes, and I have a call out like, "come on girls". I guess this whole approach is to try and make it as accessible as possible, and that's what it is about. I love that, I love it when people sing out with confidence and develop, yeah.

LORINDA WILKES

Health professional and social savant

Reasons to be Cheerful Part 1, 2, 3...

Lorinda reckons Braidwood's a funny old place

NOT SO LONG AGO I was asked by *BWD* editor Paul Cockram to write something for the magazine. I was a little reluctant as he was after a piece on the professional life I lead which is fraught with the potential for someone in the community to raise their hand — or their ire — and shout "she's talking about me" which could see me out of a job, so here is my parallel story. Life when I'm not at work.

I've been in Braidwood since 1988 moving here with my first husband Andy and our 10 week old daughter Ella. Andy was the first male RN at Braidwood Hospital, which was quite an interesting time. Moving here wasn't in our plan but, unable to get a job on the south coast, we landed here and when the matron discovered we were both nurses she said, "you won't get out of this town in a hurry" and for me she was absolutely right.

'Blow-ins' is what we were and I remember being told very early on that you have to die here before you're considered a local. I also recall Andy saying about the eclectic mix of people in the area that you could be a six out of ten weirdo here and no-one would take any notice. Not sure if that's entirely true, I'm sure someone would notice and have something to say about it.

I was lucky enough to meet a great group of women at playgroup and we formed a bushwalking group affectionately known as the 'dirty mothers'. Our creed was 'no guilt and no talking about our kids or partners' when we walked all over this beautiful part of the country. Once a month or so we met at the Monkey Duck Café (now the Albion) and took off for a day of fun, laughter and food and then once a year off for an overnight walk to various longer walks such as Pigeon House mountain (slept in the caves up the top) Nadgee Nature Reserve and up Mt Gulaga behind Tilba Tilba. These women were part of the reason I settled so well here and came to love this place. My second daughter Peta was born here in 1993 during my involvement with this group and I wasn't quite so much of a 'blow-in' then as her father was a fourth generation local. Thanks Mel, Robyn, Cheryl, Rita, Suzanne, etc.

Arts and culture were the alternate lifestyle around here as opposed to farming and I love that side of town too. Cafes; galleries; festivals; interesting people and events. The second major group attachment I would make here was with the Talla Dancers. Six women who loosely formed a dance troupe doing belly dancing at different places around the area such as National Folk Festival, Cobargo, Illawarra and of course our very own Music at the Creek. We were known as Talla Belly as there was also Talla Folk who covered traditional folk dancing. We had a hoot, made our own costumes (most of the time) and enjoyed each other's company every Friday night for 'girlies night' which always included good food, champagne and laughter. We persisted for 10 years, finally hanging up our shimmy belts in 2008 and calling it a day but we remain good friends still. Thanks Lesley, Michelle, Erica, Lesley and Sonia.

2BRW provided another outlet for me to have a bit of fun. My good friends on 'Gloomy Sunday' were the amazing hosts of an excellent program and they happily let me join them once a month to talk shop. We started with body parts, them playing themed music, eg. knees and then me chatting on about things that could go wrong with them. We soon progressed to the show 'Disease de Jour' first Saturday of the month which went for many years as I worked my way backwards through the medical dictionary picking out all the things that were either interesting, disgusting or just plain hilarious. Pity the wowsers who thought it was all a bit beyond the pale and got us thrown off the air. Educational radio at its best. I don't know if I've ever had so much fun and learnt so much. Thanks Chris, Michael, Saul and Tina for the best music ever.

Scrabble group was another delight which kept my brain exercised in the nicest possible way. The Paris end of town would host the boards and the competition was fierce especially when the annual word-off went down. I am the proud holder of all the trophies Erica Mordek made for the annual scrabble championship. There are four on my shelf; consecutive years; but I am now a little less practised in the fine art of wordplay. What a lot of fun we had though, laughed our heads off every time. Those times were precious and still make me smile. Thank you to the players who provided another great group to be involved with. Dirty word scrabble was a particular favourite for me. Thanks Paris, Reg, Sue, Erica, Pat, Robyn, David, Chris, Michael and others.

The latest group to bring a smile to my face is the 'Dig-hers' which formed amongst great friends at Mongarlowe where I moved in early 2007. We gather at each other's houses every three to four weeks and garden. It's amazing how much can be achieved when six or seven women put fork and shovel to the dirt for 2 hours and digher garden. We are also happily taking off for weekend escapes to the coast to indulge in favourite pastimes of good food, champagne and fun. Bit of a repetitive theme I hear you say but something has to balance the job I do for a wage — not always a lot of fun I can tell you. Thanks Kath, Carol, Hannie, Cindy, Ali, Michelle and Sky by default.

My three grandchildren are another reason to be cheerful — when they're not running Richard and I ragged. Ella's boys — Dante and Marius visit regularly from Canberra and they love it out here. Room to run and shout and throw things and play in mud and bird watch and have adventures and stay off their devices and ride their bikes and just be boys. Peta has a daughter called Ruby who I wish I saw more often but Melbourne is just a little further away.

So find reasons to be cheerful in your life; some things aren't a lot of fun and certainly don't make you cheerful but other things are good. Look for the little things that make you smile. I get it looking at my garden, hanging out with my friends, getting out into the bush, all sorts of ways.

JEMMA SLUSSER

Young mother, teacher's aid and student

Back to school

Jemma explains how she's back in the classroom

As part of my studying for a Diploma of Community Services I need to do 240 hours of work. I am studying online through Sydney TAFE. I chose Braidwood Central School where I work as a teacher's aid. I love it so much I am now thinking about becoming a teacher.

I have been a single mum for six months too so I have been extra busy. But it's good to get out of the house sometimes, you know, even to go to work, it's good.

My son Elijah goes to day care at the Purple House in Wallace Street.

I love the daily routine of being a mother, it's fun. Hectic, but fun.

My job as a teacher's aide is pretty much setting up for daily activities, helping the kids with their basic writing, maths, just basically whatever the teacher wants me to do. I just help out.

I am thinking of going to uni to do a Bachelor of Education. I am thinking of doing it part time from a Canberra uni. It will take me longer, but it is a bit hard to do full time with a little one — I hope it works out. I think with part time you go one or two times a week or a fortnight, and then the rest is all online, so yeah, a bit of juggling to figure it out.

I am either going to do education or counselling — but I am still thinking about it, because I would like to go welfare-related, you know as in welfare worker, working with children. But — I am still thinking, it's all up in the air I suppose.

PEG JOB

You'll have to read the story

Be kind

Susie Edmonds asks Peg about love, life and Braidwood.

I was born in a little country town called Bingara in Northern NSW in the lower Nandewar Ranges, off a big cattle and sheep station called Keera. Dad was the teacher at the one teacher school on this large property and Mum the daughter of the head stockman. So I come from rural stock.

SE: Is there anything from your childhood that helped shape who you are now?

PJ: Yes. Living in little country towns to which I actively wanted to return and grow old in — and the travel bug, to travel within Australia. I travelled a lot overseas when younger. Those two and I think, a bit of obsession with taking on 'causes'. My father wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* all through his life protesting about something or other. He questioned what government was doing, and why. He wasn't conscious of himself as a radical person; he just thought a citizen had the responsibility to express his concerns.

Did this shape your political views at all?

Not the nature of the views but certainly the need to protest. I've given up active protesting, except with words. I want to focus more inwards now.

I was intrigued to hear you went to Cuba. Can you tell me how that came about?

I wanted to travel overseas. My partner Jonathan, who became my husband, wanted to go to Africa and I wanted to go to Asia. So we compromised on Latin America. What we wanted to do was go somewhere that was trying to do interesting things politically and socially.

Some Cubans came to Queensland where we lived at the time to discuss their sugar cane industry. In Cuba they were experimenting in many ways after their revolution in 1959 — literacy and numeracy were being taught throughout the country by teenage school/university kids, for instance — and we were very impressed with Che Guevara's writings and speeches about the 'new man'. Now I'd object and say the 'new person' but the new man was to be someone who was not like the 'capitalist' man. Che Guevara's writings about this are still worth reading.

So we negotiated with them and agreed that we would travel to Cuba to live and work. It took nearly another full year to put the trip in train, but finally in 1971, off we went across the Pacific Ocean on an unstabilised ship, crewed by Italians (great food), in a tiny four-berth cabin. I was twenty-five and Jonno was twenty-eight and we had two little children aged three and five, from his first marriage.

I was probably rather more idealistic and left wing than Jonno, but he was always up for any adventure, the crazier the better. He was a chemical engineer and the Cubans wanted him to work on sugarcane bagasse, which is what's left over after removing the sugar, and turning it into pulp and paper.

I worked in the geography department at the University of Havana. Jonno's research for this led to the UN putting a pilot processing plant in Cuba and I've been told by a number of people that a plaque has been placed in honour of this contribution in Lenin Park which, curiously, I helped build in my voluntary work. Every worker in Cuba is encouraged to do voluntary work as well and I chose to work on the land (every Sunday morning 6-12), and one of my assignments was moving rocks aside to make a large park on the outskirts of Havana, named for Lenin.

What was your time there like?

It was all very confronting, and we both grew up fast. They put us in a hotel because our sponsor was overseas at the time and they had to wait until his return to allocate us the promised apartment. We met some of the people who

Jonno, Freya and Sebastian at Prado, La Habana, Carnival 1972.

hijacked planes out of the U.S. or Canada who were also housed in hotels, since the Cubans really didn't know what to do with them.

Our four months at Spanish language classes in Australia were, of course, inadequate; it might as well have been Japanese, because the Cubans swallow all the consonants. We muddled along and wrote long lists of new words each day, comparing notes at night.

The food was pretty plain in Cuba. Beans and rice were basics and all else was luck or excess from export needs. Everything was rationed. Once a week you could collect your greens — what ever was in that day was what you got for the week. That might be a bag of avocados and that's all. We didn't starve at all; I just don't think I was a good enough cook to do a lot with this — the lack of herbs and spices, onions and garlic, even tomatoes much of the time. The children got milk every day as every child under seven was entitled to a litre of milk a day, and each of us had a modest ration of meat I can't remember now. It was an intensely interesting twenty months, living there. Superb rum was cheap of course, wine was Chilean and had to be paid for in dollars, so we didn't buy it.

We were each paid the standard rate for professionals, 250 pesos per month. Rent for everyone was ten percent of one's salary. All medical treatment was free, as was education in 1970, even in one of the poorer countries in the world. (It still is, I believe.) They have developed their social system internationally into something quite magnificent. They are usually the first to send in medical personnel after an emergency anywhere, as after the tsunami in Indonesia for example. They have already trained 800 medical personnel in Cuba for Timor l'Este since independence; doctors, nurses and paramedics.

I have a great admiration for Cuba, but it isn't perfect and naturally, it made lots of mistakes. This was not helped by a total embargo (from 1961) on all imports from the USA or anything else that contained components made in the USA. So Cuba re-invented almost everything, even mimicked Coke to go with their wonderful rum (Bacardi was Cuban, and the family left the country with the revolution in 1959). Personally, I think Fidel Castro was one of the giants of the twentieth century as a political and social thinker, and for putting into action ideas to help the people in his country.

Where did life take you then?

We went off to England — London first and then a little village called Woodhouse Eaves in the Midlands, where friends from Brisbane lived — for nearly a year, and the novel I started in Cuba I finished in England. It was very bad. With my high school French and my Spanish I worked as an inspector of European tourist resorts for UK's *Which?* magazine. (*Choice* is modelled on this.)

While I was doing that, Jonno had a friend at the London School of Economics, who gave him access to a computer. Jonno was a polymath, constantly inventing projects and schemes. On this occasion it was towing icebergs from the Antarctic to provide fresh water to arid regions, and we came back to Australia so he could pursue this research in Adelaide with a bunch of other wonderful, like-minded creative people (maybe nutters to you?).

I was invited to be a tutor in geography at the University of Adelaide. In the Adelaide hills we bought 10 acres, built a home of jarrah timber and, full of hope and excitement,

Peg and Freya at Bacuranao beach, near La Habana 1972.

had our son in 1978. Six weeks after our son was born, Jonno was overcome with pain and months later, finally diagnosed with stomach cancer, which had by then spread everywhere. We then moved lock, stock and barrel to his parents' home on the outskirts of Brisbane and he died about six weeks later, in my arms.

How was it being a single mum at that time, after losing the love of your life?

I think I was a bit of everything at once. But there was no possibility of not going on and coping because I had a baby of 8 months old I was breastfeeding and two traumatised children who'd now lost both their birth parents. I enlarged the strength I'd found coping with Jonno's dying and then the resilience to go on just surfaced I guess, because it had been pretty thoroughly tested.

So this idealistic young woman had become very grown up I gather?

I think I became grown up in Cuba. But I didn't lose my idealism. That was a big growing up experience because although not easy, it was wonderful. So exciting, you can't imagine. All cultural or sporting events cost $1 (peso) to see: movies, theatre, ballet, opera, puppets, soccer, you name it!

You went back to university to study, didn't you?

Yes. After a while we (the three kids and I) moved to Sydney to share a house with old friends. I worked part-time for ACOSS and at the same time I started going to the University of NSW to study Spanish to bring my language skills back into play.

Then I got hooked into the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society and the Resource and Action Committee for Latin America, ready to get back into causes. Sydney had a strong network in the Latin American community and I knew lots of refugees.

That's why I can't bear what is happening now in Australia, because I know what refugees go through. I kept studying and came out of University with a PhD in Latin American Literature. This was a study of Mexican women writers, which meant I had to spend time in Mexico meeting them, reading their work and absorbing their lives. I arrived in Mexico with my 9-year-old son just after the horrific earthquake of 1985 which killed probably 45,000

people. From the buildings that had collapsed, shreds of curtains waved from the rubble.

I'd been accepted at El Colegio de México, which had the first Women's Studies program in Latin America. It is an elite, almost entirely postgraduate institution; the only undergraduate degree is in international relations, where the diplomatic corps is trained.

What an interesting group of women were in this Women's Studies unit — not feminists in the way I understood the term at that time, but fascinated by women writers, as I was. I met many of these writers, which was marvellous, and some of them I corresponded with for years afterward. It was a very intellectually exciting couple of years and very challenging because I still had a young child to care for as well. (The older ones were already adults at university themselves.) I had job offers from Mexico and the US at the end of my stay, but at that time Mexico City was so very polluted I didn't think I was justified in keeping my son any longer in that environment. I certainly didn't want to go to the U.S. because I had loathed their foreign policies ever since I lived in Cuba and saw what had happened to those in Central and South America because of those policies.

So back in Sydney again, I had the most wonderful and enchanting 16 months writing up my doctoral thesis.

Would that have been one of the profound events that shaped you?

Probably the most profound thing that happened to me was to meet Jonno actually. The most interesting man I've ever known which is why I am not with a man now. I've known some lovely men but in terms of being interesting none could compare. Now I don't want to spend the rest of my life with anybody. I was thirty-two and he was thirty-five when he died.

What are your feelings about death?

I'm not the least bit afraid of death. Dying can be a bloody pain literally, but I like the cycle of life, I like the seasons which is why I live here. And it pleases me to go back into the earth. I want to be buried here standing up or wherever I drop. I don't believe in an afterlife or a higher being. I believe in connections between humans and the earth.

There are two things that make me who I am, I think. The first is that I think you make your own contentment in life, it has nothing to do with your surroundings or what happens to you. We all go through similar experiences in life, and they can make you stronger, even if distressing you for a time. But I wake every morning with gratitude and look out the window and hear the birds and think I am the most privileged person on earth. I've thought that for a very long time.

Partly I was pushed into this position because I had to deal with kids growing up, and do it alone, which is hard. But it also dates from when Jonno died, and I adopted this attitude consciously. I decided to look positively at the world because I had this beautiful young child who was so happy and giggled all the time, delighted by sunshine, splashing water. It was an obligation at first and is now my automatic response. I am in love with life, in all its forms, and this makes me contented, every day. I wrote a book about Jonno's dying and published it. That helped a lot through my grieving.

Tell me about your feelings of connection with the earth?

Well I think we are absolutely crazy not to acknowledge that we all have this connection in some form or other. I

also think you have a particular place and environment that is yours, in which you are comfortable.

I know where mine is. It's not this particular one, I don't particularly like granite country. Mine is further west, it's inland, Not quite where I grew up — though I keep returning to my birthplace — but it is right under my skin.

It can be many places within Australia but it's the same kind of country, it's the semi-arid country, that's my place. I described my recognition of it once: when I go over the crest of the hill out of Port Augusta in South Australia, heading north to Alice Springs, my heart opens. That's the only way I can describe it. It literally does. It's a physical thing, I can feel it open with the surging joy that tells me: I'm back. Home. That's where I first noticed this but I don't have to go that far anymore for this to happen. Even north or west of Cowra I feel this.

I also adore the sky in Australia. I could not live in England, it nearly busted me the ten months I was there on and off — it felt very grim. I adore the Nullarbor, it is just so beautiful, with its huge sky. I like to see a long way to the horizon. It's an invitation, isn't it? It's one of the reasons I go travelling. I need to go back and be nurtured. Braidwood is not really my place but it has lovely people and of course it is close to quite a lot of my small immediate family, and my mum who is nearly 94 is just three hours away.

So tell me about your relationship with your mum?

Well, there was a period of my life from about 14 when I thought she was really stupid and didn't know anything. I was a really nasty little so and so, unkind and selfish. I regret it because it wasn't until I reached full adulthood that I began to appreciate who she was. She had little formal education and I was quite snobby about education, with no good reason.

I was given the gift of a good brain, just as others have been given the gift of beauty or sporting skill or excellence in golf (dammit!), but I didn't do anything to earn this brain. Mum didn't have the opportunities that I did, many of which she gave me, but she knows a lot of stuff I don't know and she's a far better cook. And a terrific prize-winning golfer.

Was she a major influence in your life?

Oh yes. Mainly as something I wasn't going to be, initially. She was a very warm and loving person but as I saw it, she pandered to my dad. Now I know she was just being clever, she would say yes and then go do what she wanted to do anyway. At the time I'd think, don't let him get away with this, that or other. You know — a school teacher, and male; he was a very good teacher, but authoritarian. But Mum is a resilient woman, tremendously competent, and conducts her life like a pro these days. I admire her immensely.

It is important for you to keep busy? To use your brain?

I like to use my brain certainly, I do cryptic crosswords and I read at least five books a week. I've done that since I was a very little girl. It's my favourite thing to do because you can go into another world by reading, so that whatever is happening in your world you can escape, throw off. It gets you through things I think. I walk a lot, do yoga, play golf

regularly, and in summer swim laps, three mornings a week at 6 am.

So what do you plan for the next twenty years?

Well, I still think I have some writing in me. A lot of people keep urging me to put together the journal I write on my travels. I send it off to about forty people, friends and relatives. I drove around Australia by myself a couple of years ago. I go off regularly in my campervan for a month or three, and I sent forty thousand words back from that big trip. Anyway it's all sitting there and I should probably work on that.

So, what advice would you give to younger women about how to get through life when it's tough?

Take risks! Try. Think it through. People think I do things impulsively but I don't at all. I think about things for a long time. Then the moment comes and I think now it's time, or I think I am never going to do that so let that one go. For many years, I also made five year plans. I'd sit down with pen and paper and ask myself where do I want to be in five years time? Work out where that was and what I wanted to have done.

That's how I've managed to lose a husband (and many friends to death), raise three kids, do a doctorate, write a novel, carry various jobs, do voluntary work of a range of kinds — all these things at the same time. It's a way to get through troubles. Will I feel like this in a month, will I feel like this in six months, will this matter in a year? Five years? You continue until you can say if it isn't going to matter then, why not save yourself the worry right now and stop worrying over things you can't do anything about? You'll make mistakes, you won't learn anything if you don't, forgive yourself and allow others to forgive you too.

A lot of woman are terrified of getting older…

Dance! Sing! Skip down the street! Smile at everybody!

When you get up in the morning and you feel miserable, go out walking with a big smile on your face, greet absolutely everyone you see and pretty soon you won't feel miserable at all and you might have made three or four other people a lot happier by having such a beautiful smile to take on their way. It works! It works a treat!

Or go and play golf because when you look at that ball sitting there, you can imagine it is the last bugger who bothered you, and as you swing into a resounding thwack! that carries a beautiful shot to the green. You can think, "good riddance! you [insert your own word here], you're GONE!"

Any last thing you'd like to pass on?

Yes, yes. The quality I most value in others, and I didn't always think this, I used to sneer about it a bit, is kindness. So be kind. Even when you don't want to, put yourself out for others and be kind. Stop your car when you see someone in trouble by the side of the road, don't drive past. Just small kindnesses. If you notice someone isn't coming out much as usual, go knock on the door and see if there is anything wrong. Make them a pie or do the shopping for them, anything, because there are a lot of older people in this town and a lot of us live alone. Greet them as you walk by, don't act like you're in Sydney.

The other thing is I am super conscious of my faults. Some I don't seem to be able to do much about, like things just keep bursting out my mouth. So a piece of wisdom I could pass on to younger people is, don't always say what you have just thought. Wait a bit. It might come out more kindly.

BRONWYN MCGRATH

Supermarket manager, born and bred local

Groundhog Day

You fill it and then you've got to fill it again

The supermarket is like a living, breathing thing. It's hectic from whoa to go. That's why it's like Grounhog Day — you go round and fill everything — and then you think, "oh well, it's time to go and do it all again".

It is a bit of an extra nightmare at the moment — the warehouse in Sydney collapsed in the hail storm about six months ago. While it's being re-built our orders have been coming from interstate and sometimes it's been a bit hit-and-miss getting our orders.

We're very locally focussed and we employ about twenty-five people, some full-time and some casual. If people support us by shopping locally, spend their money in town rather than out of town, we can put back into the community and that's a good situation for everyone.

For example, if we're out of something you need, we can take your name and give you a ring when it comes in.

For people who need it we can home deliver. Elderly people or someone sick in bed at home can ring up and we'll take their order. Some people come in and do the shop and we deliver it later. It's not a service that we advertise but it is there if it's needed.

THE GREEN ARMY

Local environment and heritage conservation projects underway across Australia

Chloe Stuart

I've enjoyed making friends and knowing that we're helping to make a difference to the landscape. I think it would be fun if this led to a career in land management. Snakes aren't a big deal anymore we've seen so many snakes on the job so far. We've also come across many frog species.

Tiarnah Hodgkinson

I've worked before on the wetlands in Goulburn to regenerate the bush. I had a bit to do with that when I was a bit younger. Ideally I'd like to get into ranging or wild life conservation — along those lines. I'm interested in the fauna more than the plants, but it's all part of it I guess. We've adapted and overcome the snake problem, although I did step on a brown snake the other day — but it was pretty chilled, pretty docile — it was cool that day.

Nicole Polley

What the Green Army has meant for me is a job outdoors. I want to be a ranger, I'm an outdoorsy type of person. I come from a farm — we have a horse stud.

Chloe, Nicole and Tiarnah.

Su and Kath with some new plantings.

SU WILD-RIVER

Environmental activist

Down to earth

I have been an activist since I was in year ten, I led several then, about sexism and things like that and was into various movements, and I have been an environment professional since doing a university degree back when I was 20. I am 46 so it's been more than half my life dedicated to environmental activism.

Since I burned out as a grass root activist I have been more able to do professional work where you actually get something back. It means working inside the system rather than from outside.

But since I moved to Braidwood I have been able again to get into grass roots activism, I think because I felt such a strong connection to the place here. The community has made it possible to do a lot more volunteer work in the environment like 'Friends of the Mongarlowe River' for a long time, the local Greens and things like that.

> I think Braidwood has the most precious and wonderful community with so many smart, educated, connected and creative people.

When I say creative, I don't just mean the artists, although I love the degree of artistic community here, but also people being creative with their rural properties and with their houses — the way we get along even though we are very different. There is an amazing diversity in the community, and I think having kids at the local school really helps to bridge different views because you end up being friends on a regular talking basis with people who have different views and that's great.

I feel very lucky to have six acres on the edge of town with really deep topsoil, in the old granite country. We are doing a permaculture conversion on the top two acres, with grazing animals down the back, we are not really farming that, we have got orchards and a lot of fruit producing trees going in on the top two acres, and extensive vegetable gardens.

We grow them every year using no-dig garden techniques and just using permaculture principles. All the herbs we use every day grow right near the house and those you don't use every day grow further away. I have got a little bit of garlic, just like a lot of people, and chooks too.

Because I commute and I don't sell produce at this stage, the farming, the food production is really for my mental health [laughs]. We don't do more than we can manage easily but in the design of permaculture, each garden becomes easier to manage over time. It's working pretty well.

I have a strong survivalist instinct so I feel that what I am doing is learning how to grow food and putting in infrastructure for the long term, out of a sense that the easy access to food and fuel and water is not something that I can expect is going to continue.

Braidwood is a great place to do this kind of endeavour, because so many other people are having a go at being self-sufficient as well. What that means is if my tomato crops fail, someone else's are OK and I can buy tomatoes from someone else, locally.

I'll be bottling all of my tomatoes and sharing information on how to save seeds and preserve food. I love it that there is a general interest and acceptance that it is a worthwhile activity. It is really fun just to talk about it.

My family here is me and my two children, Myrtle and Tally, they both go to Braidwood Central School and then there is Tim McCann to whom I got married earlier this year. Right now we have also got Kath McCann here, Tim's sister. She comes up about twice a year and spends the weekend. Kath is the permaculture designer for the place and she helps out with mulching and weeding, and steering us forwards, because it is not very much like the original plan. I guess we've got the bones from the original plan, but the actual detail is quite different from what it was on paper. We move forwards very organically, very much whatever comes along next is the right thing to do and so that's what we do [laughs]. Whenever Kath comes around the garden always looks fabulous for a long time.

CHERYL HANNAH, KELLY STURGISS and DENA PHARAOH

Gallerists galore

Words by Yolande Norris, a Braidwood-based writer and arts producer

When I arrived in Braidwood just over a year ago it struck me as a town with a huge number of independent, intelligent, creative and hardworking women. I couldn't be sure that this was just my perception or perhaps a magnification of Australian women everywhere, but whatever the case, it has been a surprise benefit of joining the community. One micro-study of this apparent phenomenon exists in a collective of entrepreneurial women behind the understated shop front façade of 84 Wallace Street.

Like me, Cheryl Hannah spent years regularly travelling through Braidwood from her home in Canberra. Artists in the area were a particular drawcard, and she and partner Dr Helen McKenna would visit at least annually to see exhibitions by makers such as ceramicist Suzanne Bellamy. On a visit in late 2004 they saw that the building at 84 Wallace was for sale, dilapidated but full of promise and potential. This was the pull towards setting up in town more permanently, as was the inherent opportunity for Cheryl to realise one of her life-long ambitions, having been an avid art collector for 40 years.

FyreGallery was established as a boutique fine art gallery, with a focus on works on paper and textiles. Cheryl presents two major exhibitions a year and likes to support artists to hold solo exhibitions, some of whom don't necessarily have the resources to get their work out in public. She commissions these shows well in advance and keeps in touch with them as they are making work in what is very much a collaborative process. The remaining time she operates from her office and stockroom at the rear of the gallery. She also trades online in highly collectable Patsy dolls, as another project and passion, and works with a wide range of overseas galleries to share art and artists internationally. Running a private gallery, Cheryl is unconstrained in what she pursues, with true independence to 'set the taste and set the pace'.

The gallery dream had long been postponed, while Cheryl chose qualifications in international relations and strategic studies and went on to pursue a career in the public service. Working hard over two decades she had the opportunity to travel the world, look and collect, think about art, while gathering the financial backing to get started.

Meanwhile, in 2010, Kelly Sturgiss was busily establishing her own business, with a mission to showcase contemporary art in Braidwood. Kelly's family reaches back a full seven generations in the region, including daughter Pepper. She went away to study art, but returned driven to follow her passion in the town that she called home. An exhibiting artist in her own right Kelly has decided she wants to stay in Braidwood and give back to the community via her wide range of skills and learnings.

Stur Gallery was established, and after an early shift of venue Kelly found herself at 85 Wallace Street, across the road from Cheryl. Though she knew little about business she navigated her way with her own taste and instinct, managing a full exhibitions program as well as a shop stocking hard-to-find brands she admired and the work of creative locals.

When the building was sold suddenly in 2012 it looked as though Stur might be over just as it had begun to gain momentum. It was the point at which Cheryl, admiring Kelly's work representing contemporary art in a regional area, approached her with an innovative business proposition. Stur Gallery inside FyreGallery.

The 'one location, two gallery' model is not entirely a new invention, and other examples can be found in similar initiatives in London, emerging as a response to the global financial crisis. From Cheryl's perspective the arrangement is about making the best use of the facilities, while still maintaining her model of two shows a year. Kelly has use of the space for the remainder of the year for a subsidised rate.

It offers each a 'colleague' with whom they can share ideas, offer information and advice while gaining added visibility for each business. It certainly takes effort, good communication and forward planning, but ultimately provides the opportunity to make the space work for all involved.

> Like Cheryl, Kelly has many strings to her bow.

Alongside running the Stur Gallery and Store she teaches art workshops and piano, maintains her own art practice as well as offering professional photography and graphic design services. This way she gets to do her thing while also being present for her daughter's childhood. What may be lacking financially is balanced by a high quality of life and creative satisfaction.

In the twice-yearly changeovers to make way for the FyreGallery program (April and November) Kelly finds opportunity to revamp and reinvent Stur, the most recent example being the addition of dressmaker and designer Dena Pharaoh to the creative/cooperative mix. It's a maturing of the model, making one space on the main street work for three individuals and their respective endeavors.

Dena arrived in Braidwood of January this year, and Kelly laughingly admits to literally chasing her down the street so that they might meet. Her hunch about their compatibility was correct, as they discovered they were the same age, have lived similar lives and share the same tastes.

Above left: Dena Pharaoh and Kelly Sturgiss, Below: Cheryl Hannah.

Stur had always been a big undertaking for Kelly, requiring her to be in the store every day while also raising a child as a single parent and studying for her masters. Dena, stepping back from a professional career in Sydney and keen for a change, came into the mix at the perfect time. She now shares the day-to-day running of Stur while offering her dressmaking services from the premises. The duo help one another with their children, weaving their creative pursuits around a seven-day business week and the eternal 3pm school pick-up.

There is a beautiful stagger to the intersecting of these lives. Kelly with her lifelong connection to the town and community, Cheryl's decade of contribution to it, and Dena coming up on her year-long anniversary in Braidwood. Three women, doing separate things, coming from different places at different times in life, but getting there together.

It's no secret that life can be tough for a business owner in Braidwood, but thanks to the trickle-down of subsidised rent, the diversity and flexibility of the operations it houses and the vision of all involved, 84 Wallace Street can remain vibrant and relevant. It's a story of the strength that can be found in intergenerational support and the sharing of resources. Cheryl has had opportunities to accumulate the capital that enabled her to buy a commercial building, and to establish a business with a level of security behind her. She is the first to recognise that for a raft of reasons many women don't always get that opportunity. Now she is interested in being the person who gives a hand up to those coming behind, in investing in something cooperative and collaborative.

She points out that through clever partnerships "we are not beholden to anyone but ourselves, because we own the means of our own production." Kelly agrees, and is spurred on by the growing realisation that she and her contemporaries "are the future of the town. We're the present and the future and the past. We are the people." In each of these cases, it's women doing it for themselves.

You can read more Yolande Norris work at uselesslines.wordpress.com

CATHERINE BELL
Doula

Rent a sister

Catherine on map reading for motherhood

I'm a doula of sorts, which is a birth support person. It's a little bit like 'rent a sister'. If you haven't got a sister or a mum that's comfortable with birth, then a doula fills that gap. Doulas support the partner also, to learn about what to expect during the birth,

I facilitate this by helping people put together a plan of action called a 'birth map'. A birth plan feels rigid, like a house plan, it has to follow particular instructions, which can cause people to be quite anxious if things don't quite fit what that plan is going to be, but a 'birth map' gives you detour points, gives you options. If there is a road block you know which way to go.

You might be planning a natural birth but at some point something crops up that means you have to deviate from that path, but it is OK because you understand what that road block means, and you have already worked out what that detour is going to be, so you can accept intervention on your own terms. This kind of preparation means that the risk of postnatal depression is significantly decreased. I call myself a 'birth cartographer' because of the mapping side of things.

Catherine with Elessar, Anarion and Elanor.

[BWD] How long have you been doing this for?

[CB] I started in 2010, so it is just over five years now. I've developed from being simply a birth support doula, to seeing that the real benefit comes in the preparation.

Often women aren't given all the information and all the options, so that's my job. I make sure they know all the options, and can make an informed decision. This process is really important because people feel respected which lowers the risk of postnatal depression and increases the chances of breastfeeding and bonding well with their children.

Becoming a parent is a seismic shift, particularly if you are a full time working person, and switch to stay-at-home — whether it is for a few months, a year or a complete change. It's a massive shift; society tends to look at you differently when you are not working and that can come as a real shock to some people.

> Their sense of self worth can feel affronted: "suddenly I'm not important enough, I am not earning any money, I am not contributing to the tax system; all of a sudden my opinion doesn't matter." But it does, because you are raising the next generation.

Motherhood is such an important role, but if they haven't felt respected through that transition it can be very difficult for them to find that role as a comfortable place. The birth preparation process supported by a doula helps people find their feet. I like to spend time making sure they get ready for beyond the birth.

One of the best things you can do for a family is take them a meal or fill their freezer with healthy meals. It is really awesome to take out that meal and heat it up, then the whole family can enjoy a nutritious meal. And they remember they are surrounded by support, and have people they can call on for help.

That's really important, and it makes a massive difference. It's little things like that often are not thought about, because you usually get about fifteen minutes with your midwife or your doctor — the appointment is very much about measuring your tummy, measuring your blood pressure, measuring this and measuring that.

It is all about numbers, and then the day comes and you are on the clock.

> They are measuring how long it is taking you, your dilation, your heart rate, numbers, numbers, numbers.

Once the baby is born you cannot measure how much a baby is taking, so a lot of people will turn to bottles because now you have got numbers, and this reliance on numbers takes away a woman's ability to trust her instinct as well. My job is to make sure women understand normal biology and have a way to find other resources as well.

Here in Braidwood, often you have to travel to get to the support places, usually Canberra or Queanbeyan, and that's inhibitive — it's a long trip, especially if you have a baby who hates the car.

It once took me four hours to get home from Canberra; that was big, because I am not going to let him cry, so you stop, you have another cuddle, then you go for another five minutes, OK you stop and have another cuddle and you get there when you get there, but that's also stressful.

Are you attending to women postnatally or are you just preparing them prenatally to be able to cope better after?

Mostly I am preparing them prenatally, but what I also offer is breastfeeding support, usually that is over the phone but here in Braidwood it is so easy to get together and have a cuppa or have a play at the park so the older ones can run around. Just have a chat about what's happening, what options you might have. It might cover things like normal sleep, is what is happening normal, is this teething or is there something else going on. I can then suggest specialist services if needed.

What I'd like to see in Braidwood is a parents group with a difference; one that you can join during pregnancy and access through your early years as a parent. As you become more experienced you become a mentor for the other parents in town — creating a community in a constructive way.

It would be great to have a meeting place, somewhere where parents can just drop in and hang out together throughout the day. The library is a good option but if you have got older kids, and they are having a restless kind of day it is not always so good.

The park is great for hanging out once you have got older kids. Our park here is better for three or four plus, it is not a very good toddler park, because there's a lot of the things that are too high to get to but they can still run, they can still get around, there are shady trees in the park so in the summer you can at least get out of the house and connect with other mums, and that's really important, so I'd like to be able to facilitate something like that.

SIMONE DILKARA

Compost Manager

Bugs in the beds

Simone loves her bugs. She carefully nurtures them and then sets them free to merrily munch our waste

I'm from this area originally. My mum was school teacher at Bungendore for many years. I grew up with farms and I loved the dirt, the horses and the gardens so it's always been a passion of mine.

Eventually I ended up with a job in project management looking specifically at how to get nutrients out of the waste stream and back on the farm. So for me working here at Landtasia it's a dream job, I love the challenges we've overcome.

To take household 'waste' and turn it into a useful agricultural product is just so incredibly rewarding — I love it. There's so much to learn about farming — every stage we get to raises another series of questions.

When the truck from Braidwood, Captains Flat or Bungendore arrives, it tips out garden organics and food-waste onto the hard-stand area. We also receive commercial food-waste from the Canberra/Queanbeyan area as well.

Deep underneath the hard-stand area are impermeable layers so that there is no connection between the composting process and the ground water.

Then we pick out the rubbish, bottles, plastic bags and anything else unsuitable for composting before spraying the pile with water and our microbe mixture.

After the moisture level is right we push it into a pile and cover it with a weighted tarpaulin so that nothing can blow away. It sits there and ferments for six weeks during which time we check its temperature each week. This gives us an easy way of checking what's going on in the pile.

Within 24 hrs the temperature climbs to over 65°C and stays around there until it reaches the fermentation stage where it will stabilise at around 55-60°C. It's quite a hot process.

It's not a zero oxygen process we use, it's a fermentation process mostly, but it's never completely aerobic or anaerobic. The inoculants we add are used so that once the pile has had its first flush of biological activity, the easy sugars are gobbled up by the bugs, the oxygen level starts dropping which leads to a fermentation process rather than a rotting process.

After six weeks we pull off the tarp and break the material apart using a hay-grabber on the tractor. We've found it to be the perfect implement for the job. We move the material that was on the outside in to the middle, mixing it all up.

We pile it up and cover it again for another six weeks. After that we bring in the screener and separate the larger bits for further fermenting. The fine material is piled and covered again and we monitor it until the temperature drops to around 30°C.

Then we run tests for CO^2 respiration and ammonia and these tests tell us when the compost has become mature enough to send samples off for independent testing. It's tested for heavy metals and the like and put through a series of artificial seasons to check that nothing germinates.

It takes about six months from go to whoa — from the truck arriving and dropping the garbage, to the certified compost ready for the farm.

At any one time on site we have a finished pile, a pile of oversized material, one finishing its second stage of fermentation and a couple of younger piles, one up to six weeks to two months old and one that's just had new material added to it. We build large piles to achieve the critical mass needed to keep heat and moisture in the piles.

We now have vegetable growers buying our compost and the positive feedback we receive from them makes the whole job worthwhile.

Top: Simone with the finished product, Right: With Co-worker Dave.

CATHERINE MOORE

Supporter of the environment, artist, hermit

Brush with the bush

Palerang Councillor and Greens candidate for many years

Growing up in a then undeveloped, slightly remote leafy Sydney suburb on a block that sloped down to a creek in a gully must have given me my love of the bush. And having my grandparents two minutes walk away, with chooks and a vegetable garden, instilled in me an early feeling for self-sufficiency. I swapped university in Sydney for art school in Canberra, and that's how I ended up at Charleys Forest, with a brief sojourn at Hoskinstown along the way, in the pink stone house made from rock quarried on the property. Somehow, it wasn't quite remote enough, and when I had to move, Charleys Forest presented itself almost immediately and I have been there ever since.

In primary school I started going with my father to Saturday morning Royal Art Society classes round the harbour. He had taken up art in his thirties, when he was convalescing from hepatitis. Further back, on my mother's side, my great great uncle was a contemporary of Arthur Streeton and Sidney Long and some of his wonderful oil paintings and watercolours still survive, although he died young. So art has been there from the beginning and is an essential part of my life.

When I first moved to Charleys Forest, with the intention of being a hermit, I lived in my tent, and it was while I was listening to the radio and watching the micro-life in the creek that I started to think more about democracy, and politics. Sydney swimmers had complained about pooh in the surf, so a deep ocean outfall was proposed by the then State Government.

To me, the idea of sending sewage out of sight, out of mind, out to sea was not only an irresponsible waste of a potential resource, at a time when much of our soil was being blown away in huge windstorms, it was also polluting our oceans. So I wrote to the relevant Minister expressing my concern, but the letter mustn't have been read properly, and the response I received from the bureaucracy reassured me that all would be well as the sewage was being pumped out to sea.

Some time later the Welcome Reef Dam proposal for the Shoalhaven River reared its ugly head and I was incensed that ...

> people's livelihoods were suddenly in limbo because the population of Sydney, growing all the time, seemed unable to practise water conservation ...

and instead, a river hundreds of kilometres away from the potential beneficiaries was going to be damned so that city could continue to grow and consume without restriction.

While all this was happening I was wishing there was a Greens party like there was in Germany, and then, in late 1992 I saw the announcement on the news that the Australian Greens had formed and I made contact the next day.

I can't help believing that most people want to look after the planet, live in harmony with each other, have the opportunity of genuinely influencing how and what political decisions are made and be part of a system that cares for people and ensures that their basic needs are met. That's what The Greens are about, and if the other parties take it on, all the better. It's not about who achieves those goals, it's about making sure they happen.

SUSIE EDMONDS

NARG Communications Officer, writer, *BWD* interviewer extraordinaire

Native wildlife in drastic decline

Susie sounds a warning

If you were to evaluate the status of Australian native species would you think we were doing a good job? If your answer is yes, then you will be in for a shocking surprise. Our very own Department of the Environment, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), has listed many species as Critically Endangered: 7 fish, 5 frogs, 8 reptiles, 11 birds, 6 mammals — the Leadbeater's possum and Christmas Island potoroo being the most well known of this group — and 24 'other' animals including a native bee, several native snails and even a lobster and two crayfish.

The state of decline in native wildlife is now at the point, according to the latest figures from the Federal Government's own website, where we have 61 species on the Critically Endangered list. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) puts the figure as high as 90 at the time of writing.

What should not surprise you, however, is the major cause of this decline: human impact. We know this impact is due to loss of habitat from land clearing, changes to the administration of burn-off and water flow, predation from invasive species, unsustainable management of resources, and climate change.

A recent study conducted by Berkeley, Princeton and Stanford Universities states "the earth has entered a new period of extinction (with) vertebrates disappearing at a rate 114 times faster than normal". The BBC Science and Environment report states "more than 400 vertebrates have disappeared since 1900 and such loss would normally be seen over a 10,000 year period". It quotes Gerardo Ceballos, the lead author, saying, "If it is allowed to continue, life would take many millions of years to recover and our species itself would likely disappear early on".

A 2014 report by Stuart Pimm, of Duke University, goes further: it states that the current extinction rate is more than 1,000 times faster than in the past, not the 114 times of the other report.

Prof. Hugh Possingham, an ARC Laureate Fellow in the Mathematical Department and School of Biological Sciences at the University of Queensland, said in 2012: "due to minimal resources, we will have to choose which species we save". This idea seems to me to already be reflected in Section 178 of the EPBC Act, where the list has the following categories:

- extinct
- extinct in the wild
- critically endangered
- endangered
- vulnerable
- conservation dependent

So how does one choose and who will do the choosing? It usually comes down to what we value as a society. Sadly, this often means only the cute and cuddly, but it need not.

We already recognise the massive decline in koala populations throughout Australia. What of insects such as bees or butterflies? Would you save a bee and let the butterflies die out? Or perhaps save a hammerhead shark but let the white pointer go? These are not easy choices, yet these decisions are already being made every day by our government, and by us.

What of our local region? A quick 'Google' of endangered species in the Braidwood region found eight birds including the Glossy Black Cockatoo, six marsupials including the Spotted Quoll, three reptiles including the Rosenberg's Goanna, three bats, and the Green and Golden Bell Frog, all listed as vulnerable. We have been recording the savage decline in both the northern and southern hairy-nosed wombats, with the northern wombat now in the Critical Endangered category. One surprise for most people will be the decline in bared-nosed wombats, previously known as the common wombat.

Many people have the belief that we have a plague of wombats. This is wrong on two counts. Firstly, our region is in what is commonly known as a 'hot spot', meaning we live in a productive wombat area. Secondly, these wombats are in the decline due to the same habitat loss as other species; however, wombats also suffer a painful and debilitating disease known as Sarcoptic Mange.

A new website, WOMSAT, generously supported by The Emirates, has begun an excellent initiative to map the whereabouts of wombats on the eastern seaboard. Here you can participate in the recording of wombats: where they are, burrows located nearby, and their mange status. This is an important program that needs your help.

Another way you may wish to assist native animals is to join your local native animal group. All manner of courses are available, from basic rescue to full-time caring of animals. Basic rescue assists with information about the correct thing to do when you come across an injured or orphaned animal, and how to check a pouch for babies should the mother have been killed.

Many animals die a slow, painful death after a vehicle collision and babies are often put through the excruciating pain of being eaten alive by maggots, or dying slowly from starvation, or from the cold or heat. You can assist these animals by phoning your local group as soon as possible. A volunteer will get to the animal and if it is a female with a baby, the little one may be saved.

There is so much you can do even on a local level to help stop the decline of all native animals. Have the number of your local wildlife rescue group already in your phone: then all you need do is press a button. It's that simple.

Susie Edmonds is the Communications Officer for the Native Animal Rescue Group in the Braidwood region.

www.narg.asn.au
02 48461900

JUDIT KOVACS

Refugee, artist, web designer, volunteer

Who do you think you are?

Never one to be shy with words, Judit wrote the story and the headline

I think that everybody's character is influenced by the environment and their experiences, and I am no different.

I have memories of the Second World War and I don't like war movies. I can still taste the fear I felt as a child during the Cold War and I feel the same when the news is about North Korea. I lived under rampant communism, experienced its might first hand — as did my parents and grandparents who were punished for being teachers (so I became a teacher) — and escaped it James Bond style with my family. The youngest was only three.

We lived in a refugee camp and went through all the checks before Australia accepted us. We arrived with $2.70 to our name — so I support justice and equity and reject oppression and discrimination.

I have no religious hangups but prefer forgiveness to revenge. I worked as a house keeper and on an assembly line while I learned English. We were in Darwin during Cyclone Tracey, where I taught art and PE in a school. We stayed there as volunteers for cleaning up until we transferred to Canberra in 1975.

Then followed a career in teaching art, design and technology, and a career in the public service, working my way to the SES, running sections of Departments, leading task forces, representing Australia in the International Labour Organisation and the public service as an employer in the industrial courts. And little things like writing the employment legislation for a country, being part of the team and writing the first ever enterprise agreement, collecting public service medals — things of the past.

I have only happy memories of the last five years of formal employment at the Sydney Catchment Authority — commuted on Mondays and Fridays so I can drive the road with my eyes closed — and a lot of people there are still friends.

We are very proud of our three children; published poet, ballet teacher and artist/manager and, of course, our six very smart grandchildren, some in Braidwood but well on their way to becoming games developers, scientists and mathematicians. Others are at the moment far away, dancing with a ballet company in Romania.

Braidwood

We came to here by choice. We wanted to leave urban life behind and fell in love with 'Clocker's Old House' in 15 minutes. Made new friends and have the best neighbours one can.

My secrets

I admit to one — if I am asked to help, I do. If I see there is something I could do for a cause, be it the arts, heritage, tourism or the community — I put my hand up and try to do my best. I have been involved with BRAG for a long time in various capacities, from creating calendars to annual exhibitions in the National Theatre to working with Gilly Burke and getting the grant to purchase the Arts Centre. Cheryl called for volunteers for Braidwood And Villages Tourism Inc — I ended up redesigning and running the website (has been replaced by the current one), volunteering in the Visitor Information Centre and creating the 2007 Heritage calendar among other things. Dennis Dempsey asked for volunteers to help with celebrating our 175th birthday. I had the fortune to work with a bunch of wonderful people — Bronwyn, Maryanne, Michelle and Chris, Yvonne, Richard, Merrie and Mary Mathias. I am proud of the heritage path. I created the Araluen calendars — as a volunteer.

Today

I am still a member of BRAG; I am the President of Southern Tablelands ARTS; I am on the Boards of the Goulburn Regional Conservatorium and Palerang Council's Business Advisory Board. I design and run the website braidwoodnsw.com to promote Braidwood.

I design websites, make graphics and do them for Braidwoodians at very special Braidwood prices. I am told that I am a good cook. And there is just no time for photography or painting — one day, when I retire ...

CAROL WILLIS

Women's Refuge crisis support worker

Domestic terrorism

DV is killing Australians

Australian police deal with an estimated 657 domestic violence matters on average every day of the year. That's one every two minutes.

> So far this year 63 women have been killed as a result of domestic violence.

The funding for refuges in NSW was cut by 40% last year, when 'reforms' were bought in. For the refuge in Queanbeyan it meant programs for women and kids that had been running for years were unable to continue.

Staff numbers were reduced and the refuge is no longer staffed at nights and weekends. The days are often too busy with court, medical, Centrelink, housing or numerous other appointments for the women to sit and talk to the workers. It's the extra face-to-face time, now cut, that provided the chance to do that.

The role of a refuge is first and foremost to provide a safe and secure environment for women and their children escaping domestic violence.

Most refuges have a time limit for crisis and accommodation of about eight weeks, but as public housing has become harder, we often have women at the refuge for many months.

A typical day at the refuge would go something like this: Staff would arrive at work and have to settle in a family that a night worker had brought in — through the police, hospital, family member or a concerned friend.

The first priority is to make sure they have enough food. A crisis payment is available through Centrelink — that can be applied for by anyone who has had to leave their home. So if you are helping someone in that situation, that is a good first step.

The culture at Centrelink has improved greatly over the years. They are very helpful and have social workers available. Often a benefit also needs to be applied for at Centrelink, so you would do that.

Is English their second language? If so, an interpreter will be needed for all communications, ranging from hearing their story to helping explain Australian bureaucracy — courts, Centrelink, what happens in a refuge. It's a hard enough job for those who speak English, let alone if you don't.

If the women don't already have a domestic violence order, a refuge worker will take them to court, either in Queanbeyan or Canberra. As part of Molonglo Support Services we run the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (funded by legal aid) which helps women at court in Queanbeyan, Yass, Goulburn and Cooma.

All the courts have a safe room for women attending court. In Canberra they can go to the legal aid office at the Magistrates Court. In both cases it means they don't have to sit in the open area and wait, usually feeling vulnerable and exposed, because after an interim DV order is served, they have to return to court for the final order where the other party can contest the order.

Very few women arrive without medical problems either physical or psychological, so appointments would be made, or a worker would organise to take the woman to her next appointment.

Housing needs to be assessed. Are they leaving public or private rentals? How is the rent to be paid? Is the partner still there? Are they able to return with a police escort to get their belongings? If not, what documentation needs to be replaced?

Are they permanent residents in Australia? A lot of women have come from other countries and aren't entitled to benefits and have no income whatsoever. Appointments are made with Immigration. Immigration have an allowance for domestic violence to help women in this situation and Centrelink will usually grant them a special benefit.

Kids need to be enrolled in school — it helps them to settle in and have a routine. Fortunately the nearest school in Queanbeyan is great with our clients and they go out of their way to make sure the kids are OK.

If there's a need to talk to someone, the refuge offers a 24-hr on-call, outreach program that is also an important part of their community work.

And sometime during the day you would hear the story, heartbreaking and often without hope and you will hope that it can be turned around.

Rosie Batty calls it domestic terrorism; and maybe with a name change might come the necessary funding to keep helping the women who need it. The power of imagery is such that many countries' attitudes changed towards Syrian refugees after a photo of a drowned child was published.

Yet our domestic violence crisis has been happening for a long time. What images do women need to change the attitude of the politicians in power in this country to stop the deaths from domestic violence?

ALISON ALDER

Artist

Alison in her studio with Trent Walter.

Prints on paper

Emily Kiddell interviewed Alison for *IMPPRINT* magazine and kindly allowed *BWD* to reprint it

Alison Alder spent her childhood in north-western Sydney and later moved to Canberra with her family, where she studied printmaking under Mandy Martin and Jörg Schmeisser at the Canberra School of Art.

She was a founding member of the now legendary print studio and gallery Megalo, in Canberra, and a key figure in the iconic poster collective Redback Graphix, based in Wollongong and later Sydney. After a brief stint in Melbourne, she also spent more than a decade living in the Northern Territory, mainly in Tennant Creek, where she worked with Aboriginal organisations such as Julalikari Council to research and develop community art and cultural programs.

Alison returned to NSW in 2004, and to Megalo in 2008, where she was director of the studio and gallery until mid-last year when she left to take up a position as Head of Printmedia and Drawing at ANU.

[EK] In your recent body of work,* Death of a Broadsheet*, you've manipulated and re-contextualised images of politicians sourced from online and print news media. In bringing process to the surface in this way it seems you are asking us to consider what decisions have informed their original presentation, that publically presented information is rarely neutral. Can you talk about your process in developing this body of work?

[AA] I keep scrapbooks filled with pictures of political figures cut from the newspaper. Not all political figures, but most political figures. I was thinking about how we relate to politics or political figures through the media and how that's changing with the opportunity for more images to be presented that are not managed by the subject. I'd been copying pictures from my scrapbook and blowing them up and increasing or changing the colour, asking myself: 'what if this person was presented like this?' I printed on a continuous length of tissue paper, which sort of rolls down a table and then pile on to the floor as the news cycle endlessly rolls on. I wanted to give the audience an opportunity to develop their own opinion about the characters depicted in the news feed.

I've realised how much I love screenprinting. I love the mark on the paper, the ink and the surface combined with the intensity of the colour. I've got to the point now where I feel liberated, able to just do what I want to do. I don't care what happens to anything, I don't care about selling the work, or about it going anywhere, I just love printing.

> I love that thing of: you lift up the screen and you see it on the paper and sometimes you're not quite sure what's going to happen.

It has been an ongoing engagement that hasn't diminished. In fact, I feel even more excited by printing now than I ever have, which is a bit funny. *Death of a Broadsheet* enabled me to think about the work more as an object — as a news feed, a process, a cycle — rather than a static 2D image.

In your thesis* Out There and Outback *you write: 'The images printed in daily broadsheets of the living conditions in the outback are artful. Life in the bush can be so bizarre that it can be difficult to recognise what is art directed and what is genuine documentation.' How did the time you spent living in Tennant Creek change you as an artist?

Well, it had a huge impact on numerous fronts. One would be that prior to moving to the Northern Territory, I'd worked at Redback Graphix and I always felt like the junior. I worked with some fantastically amazing artists there who were just so tops, but I

didn't ever feel as though I'd found my own artistic voice or my own way of working. It wasn't until I moved to Tennant Creek that I found my own aesthetic.

I worked at the Julalikari Women's Art Centre, which is a CDEP employment program, and then I worked on developing the visual art exhibits and program at Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre. I had the opportunity in Tennant Creek to work with some really amazing people and wonderful artists — young and old.

Also, Tennant Creek's a pretty crazy place and lots of interesting people come through and work on projects. At Nyinkka Nyunyu I worked with graphic designers, architects, filmmakers, sound recordists, naturalists and geologists. My life was broadened out from my life in Sydney, where I didn't have any friends who weren't artists, for example. In Tennant Creek my friends were environmental scientists or doctors or midwives or naturalists.

It opened up my world so immeasurably, not to mention being welcomed into another culture. It opened my eyes and made me feel more confident in my own skills. You have to be resourceful and resilient in the face of some pretty tragic community circumstances in a town like Tennant Creek, but it's also very joyful. I think I just grew up. My children were young and it was a good place for them to be; Paul Cockram, my partner, was publishing a magazine about life in the region and that was really great as well. It was sort of like the meshing of direct action and life rather than just talking about it.

What were the circumstances that informed your early interest in politics?

I guess it's from my family. My father worked at Garden Island Dockyard and my mother was a primary school teacher. They met in the Sydney Bushwalkers in the late 1930s and were heavily involved in the early conservation movement. They were both big travellers, self-educated and very intelligent and, because they got married quite late, they had lots of friends. My mother had lots of women friends who were single — I guess from the war, not having had the opportunity to marry perhaps, I don't know — who were all engaged in their occupations and curious about life.

We used to go camping all the time. The first time I went to Ayers Rock, as it was called then, was in a Vauxhall sedan on the dirt roads when I was two. The table was always a place of

'Death of a Broadsheet' at Megalo Print Studio + Gallery, May 2015.

big discussion and my parents were very social. They lived in a beautiful house that they built themselves in Sydney, on a bush block in the north-west. My father bought this land because a friend of his, Marie Byles, the first female solicitor in New South Wales, encouraged all these young people in the Sydney Bushwalkers to buy land as a conservation strategy.

Do you think that art is necessarily a political act?

Yeah, absolutely. I don't think you can avoid that. Often people say to me: 'political art's rubbish'. But all art's political because all art, no matter what the content, is making a comment about something and that's just what politics is: it's making a position. Everything has a position.

Do you think the screenprinted poster still has the same impact that it did have in the context of activism?

Not in the same way. It's not as if you see screenprinted posters up on the street like you did back in the 80s because there was no other way of communicating events or services at that time.

> When people see screenprinted work on the streets they respond to it because it does have a grittier, stronger look.

Last year I designed and printed a poster for the ANU Gender Institute. They asked for a screenprint because they were hoping that by putting it up around the ANU, the city people might notice it more and come. I don't think it was because of the poster, but they did have to change venues three times because the event was so heavily booked. [whispers] I think it must have been the poster. [laughs]

Back in the early days posters were made cleverly: you'd get seven colours on a poster by only printing four colours and using overlays. Or you could use the same stencil and block parts out and print it again. Screenprinting a poster is not expensive. I think it would be cheaper than getting something digitally run out at that size and quantity. It is still a valid artform, lots of people are collecting posters and there are lots of young people making them too.

Can you talk a bit more about duality and tension in your work? The recent work, for example, both celebrates the nostalgic aspect of print while also highlighting the fact that it's important to respond to one's time and place.

When I lived in the Northern Territory I learnt not to jump on the bandwagon about issues or concerns that aren't your own. People make a lot of work because they think they should nail their political colours to the mast, but sometimes it's not really their own issue. I want to make work about stuff that's important for me and perhaps, for that reason, a little more nuanced. I don't want to be an ad agency for the Left (although I still am at times), which is something a bit different, more like what I did at Redback Graphix. One of my first jobs at Redback, in 1984, was to make work for the Kembla Coal and Coke's Miners' Women's Auxiliary. I didn't know anything about coal mining or miners or women's auxiliaries or life in a small mining village. I remember being very nervous meeting those women and trying really hard to make a work that they would approve of and be able to use constructively.

When I look back at my work I think how I could have made everything just that much better if I did it again. Often I jump into ideas without too much thought, just a burning desire to get the work made. Perhaps a little more time for reflection would be good but then again perhaps that would cause indecision and then nothing would get made. It is what it is, and if there's one thing I have learned it is to not worry about things that you can't change but to work hard on the things that you can.

Imprint *editor Emily Kiddell.*

REBECCA THISTLETON

Hair stylist

Rebecca at work on Kristi Morrison.

I was always good at doing things with my hair, and I have always been really creative. I guess, because I love people and I love getting people what they want. I have been doing it for nineteen years.

I left school in year 10 but with an apprenticeship to go to. I knew what I wanted to do, so leaving in year 10 was the appropriate thing to do to get started back then.

These days, kids tend to go to year 12, and do their apprenticeships after that. Now I think I would have done year 12 maybe. I think it is important these days. I am certainly going to tell that to my children. If they are keen to do a trade I think I will still encourage them to go through to year 12. It is important to get that further education I think.

I've been here three years. I have got quite a good clientele, but a lot of people still don't know about it, so I guess it will be good to get it out there as well — yeah, some people are still discovering me.

There is definitely a lot of work in town which is great. I was worried about that when I first started up in Braidwood. There is a lot of event work as in weddings, formals and things like that around town. I have a lot of people come here to get married. I think it is a bit more affordable than getting married in the city.

I'd say probably 70 percent of the weddings I do here are for people from out of town.

The majority of my work would be maintenance; upkeep of colours and styles, but a lot of that is wedding and formal styling work. We have more female clients than male but I still have quite a big male clientele as well.

Four or six weeks is generally what people book in advance for. I work on an appointment basis so I am not a walk-in salon.

I try to keep up my education a bit as well by going to courses in Canberra and Sydney at least twice a year. From that I can keep up with new products that are out on the markets — colour products, styling products. Sometimes I go along to education courses for inspiration, to keep inspired and stay motivated and to learn new and upcoming techniques so I don't get stale working on my own.

I remember a couple of years ago a girl coming in and asking me for balayage foils and I had no idea what she meant. Actually she just said, "can I have some balayage?" And I said yes, that's no problem at all, and I went over to my desk and I Googled 'balayage' and realised that I had been doing it for a long time, I just didn't know the name. So I guess that you can get caught out a bit if you don't stay up-to-date with the latest trends.

Google is great. Every time somebody sits down and wants her hair cut, and they are not quite sure what they want, I suggest that she just Google 'short hair styles' or whatever she is after — and just wait for the image to pop up.

BRAG WOMEN'S ART EXHIBITION 2015

I know what I like

Gail Nichols

Dena Pharaoh-Pezzano

Redefining the dictionary

Judit Kovacs likes to brag ... sorry, likes BRAG

She reports on the 2015 women's show

Miriam-Webster defines brag as a noun. 'A pompous or boastful statement; arrogant talk or manner'; and for an adjective I've found the definition as, 'Archaic; usually fine; first rate'. And if we go and look at the synonyms:

'bluster, bombast, braggadocio, bull [slang], cockalorum, fanfaronade, gas, gasconade, grandiloquence, hot air, magniloquence, rant, rodomontade (also rhodomontade)'.

A visitor to BRAG's exhibition would have found that work displayed by its women members redefined the meaning of boastful statement — BRAg can brag about the work of its members.

Chelsea Pharaoh

Sixty-three works of art by artists young as 8 and young as 80, showed a range of talent and a variety of medium for expressing views on the subject matter — 'Not Alone'.

BRAG members, yet again, took up the challenge to support the campaign to change attitudes and voiced its opposition to domestic violence. Artists expressed their opposition directly through their works of art, like Fran Ifould, Kylie Dominick and Vera Sapov or simply by offering works of art for sale so the profits could go to the Louisa Refuge supporting the region.

Recounting in detail one's experience at walking through the exhibition would not do justice to the displayed works of art — not to mention that it would be a very subjective reflection risking to commit injustice by omitting a name or art work — and I am committing a sin by mentioning some. The standard of exhibits is very high.

Included are works by award-winning artists and many surprises. For example, I must mention that one could expect a salt glazed ceramic bowl from Gail Nichols but one could not pass by her exquisite rag rug depicting Bobs Creek Culvert without admiring the colours and the composition. Or Dena Pharaoh-Pezzano's 'Reclaim your Web', Gwenna Green's 'Cold Feet' earthenware or Julie Baker's 'Warrior Woman Apron'.

My favourite was Chelsea Pharaoh's 'Nothing is the Same', in metal and wood. Considering her age, one can only admire her talent. One day we can all say, "I was there when she started".

Rest assured, if you missed the exhibition or want to re-visit it or want to buy any of the works still available, you can walk through the virtual gallery on the website:
www.bragart.com.au

Gwenna Green

Julie Baker

KATE MITCHELL

Pub owner

"The usual?"

Kate keeps them coming

My family bought the Braidwood (Commercial) Hotel in 1985. I did primary school in Braidwood, high school in Victoria and college and uni in Canberra. I started working at the Hotel during the school holidays cleaning and doing paperwork and then behind the bar from 1998. I grew up watching 'The Year My Voice Broke' being filmed on site and playing the pub piano that Mick Jagger played at the hotel during the filming of 'Ned Kelly'.

By 2005 I had accidentally ended up running the show and somehow decided it was so much fun that I should buy the Majors Creek Pub as well. Since then, there has been no going back and no time (bar a period of 5 years when I leased out the Creek Pub) to consider anything but the day to day running of two seven-day-a-week small businesses.

I work on all aspects: cleaning, ordering, bed making, running a postal service, paying bills, bookwork, organising staff, serving customers, working on my counselling and skills of diplomacy, getting the party started or finished — and then getting up and doing it all again the next day.

Small country pubs are more of a lifestyle choice than a job. You spend a lot of time at work so you need to enjoy what you do, which can be very easy when you're sitting up at the bar having a beer with the Sydney Swans or recreating a scene from Coyote Ugly. It's incredibly rewarding to be able to provide an environment where people are comfortable to have a good time.

> Of course you get your fair share of assholes. That will always happen when you strike someone who should not mix their personality or bad experiences with alcohol.

Thankfully most of my customer base are good people who all have something to contribute to the friendly and easy-going atmosphere of the public bars.

Busy nights are great obviously because (hopefully) you're making money but quieter nights are often more enjoyable for me because I get time to enjoy the company of my patrons. As I expected, there's been a little less time for all that since I had my daughter Ellie in August 2014.

Over the past year the Suzi Q song "Bit Off More Than I Could Chew" has sprung to mind a number of times and I am now making moves to get my work/life balance under control. Unfortunately with so much on your plate it's hard to get job satisfaction because you don't have the time to do things the way you'd like to. You also don't get enough time to go bush or enjoy how the rest of the world does things!

HOLLIE B

Cosmic woman, sacred space weaver, mama and R.E.b.E.L.

Being a Woman of the Red Tent

Hollie has been facilitating Women's Circles for twelve years.

Can you imagine a world where women feel comfortable to discuss the issues closest to their hearts? Can you imagine what it would be like for our daughters to grow up in a society that does not shun the big, common, beautiful and traumatic situations that we all experience as we grow? This is the world we aim to create with the Red Tent.

Circles of women have been coming together since pre-history to support each other as mothers, sisters, and elders. Once a sacred part of cultural practice, shifting later to smaller non-formal gatherings, and recently returning to organised events, popularised by the Red Tent Movement.

> Always, throughout time the Women's Circle has been a place where the women of a community would come together to empower one another in shared space.

Together in Circle, we acknowledge that we are all equal, although the journeys that led us here may be very different. We create a supportive space to share and grow, initiating ourselves into the deeper meaning of connection; individually, environmentally, emotionally and politically.

The Circle provides us with an authentic, intentional space to share our stories, or witness the stories of others. It reminds us that we are not alone.

Each woman present is honoured for the part she plays in the co-creation of the space, either through speaking or listening. This is why women's circles have been called Secret Women's Business, for it is a place where women find nourishment through integrity and trust.

A carefully facilitated space for women allows us to speak to topics we may not have the opportunity to be present with in everyday life. Everyone's life is busy: caring, nurturing, working, creating ... in the Circle you are allowed to simply Be.

And here's the really cool thing. When women share stories in facilitated space, it opens up pathways outside of the Circle. Women return home, to work, to wherever they belong in the community and the authenticity ripples outward. So that it is not only the women in Circle positively impacted, but everyone she touches.

Some people might feel confronted with all this talk of authenticity and sharing. Sharing yourself so fully is outside the box of common society. We've been taught, "if you don't have something nice to say, say nothing at all" and "don't air your dirty laundry in public..." Yet, throughout my years as a facilitator and circle goer, I have seen that it is the most empowering experience of all. To connect with others in a space of non-judgement and acceptance is liberating.

In everyday life, often we keep our feelings inward for the fear of being told to "toughen up", or "it's about time you moved on" or whatever well-meaning advice others will give. In a Red Tent, we don't give advice. We listen. Our reality shifts. We learn things about the world we could never imagine.

In my years of facilitating, no two Circles have ever looked the same. It's simply a safe space created by caring people with a commitment to empathy and compassion. Being in the Red Tent allows questions and concerns to surface, and puts things into perspective.

When individuals experience this kind of personal healing, we have greater power in our own lives. The healed individual takes their healing out to the world and is an active part of healing entire communities.

My Red Tent spaces are not happy, hippie, self-help circles. We don't sing Kumbaya. I facilitate spaces for women to Be, and to feel supported in that Being. In these spaces it doesn't matter who we are at home, what we do at work, what we have to do tomorrow. We just get to Be exactly as we are — in that moment — without apologies. And we get to do it in a supported space.

The essence of the Red Tent is the commonality of Being Woman. In one woman's story of pain, or hope, or joy, or loss, we find something of our self. And we grow. That is true healing. That is how we fill our cup. Whether you are the Story-teller or the Witness. There is something for every woman in the Red Tent.

I hope you understand now, what it is to be a Woman of the Red Tent. We are empowered, wise women of great strength, even through vulnerability. I invite you to join us.

Hollie B. has been facilitating Women's Circles for twelve years. She has been a significant supporter of the world-wide Red Tent Movement, and is well known in Australia as a presenter on the Women's Mysteries.

Find Hollie B. at: instituteforselfcrafting.com or facebook.com/redtentinthewood

SUE LYONS

Retired teacher, yoga instructor

Teaching passion

Susie Edmonds caught up with Sue and ended up recording her life story starting from childhood

I was born in Chester in the UK in a very small nursing home right in the middle of the city where a lot of my family and friends were also born. I had what I thought were very elderly parents, my mother was forty when I was born and my father was fifty-seven. I thought I was brought up quite strictly; in that era we all were. I had lots of friends in the neighbourhood, so we used to go out and play games all the time and we didn't have any restrictions on what we did.

I went on a lot of bike rides, things you would not be allowed to do at that age now. I used to walk to school when I was seven, three miles through the city and around the city walls and nobody ever thought anything about it.

[SE] Which of your parents would you say was the stronger influence?

[SL] I think I'm more like my father in the sense that I followed a career, which is not the same but similar, that I have always been very interested in analysing things and planning — that type of thing. My father was in the army and ended up working with Winston Churchill in the war office. He liked working in teams.

It's difficult because my mother was also extremely good at sport and wanted to train as a PE teacher but had appendicitis and wasn't allowed to go. She played cricket for the south of England, she was very sporty, and really they both were. I suppose it was natural for me to be sporty as well. I had a half brother and sister, quite a bit older than me, who weren't particularly sporty, so I think a lot of that influence came from my father.

What in your life has been a major part of shaping the person you are now?

Well, my father died when I was twenty-two and my mother when I was twenty-three, so I had an amazingly tough ten years after that, trying to find out who I was without them being around.

I would say my mother for her kindness, and I have always felt the most important thing in life is to always be kind to people. So that's something I don't find difficult to do. I was brought up that way and I thank my mother for that. And my father for the direction he took and the way his brain worked, I suppose.

Your profession is as a teacher?

Yes. Always. I trained as a teacher of physical education and art and specialised in dance. Taught for six years and then went back to study dance in more depth and then went into lecturing and university training teachers to teach dance. Wrote a book on dance, wrote a book on women's lacrosse, coached the England and Wales women's lacrosse teams.

What fuels the fire of your passion for teaching?

I think it's treating people differently, learning how to treat people as individuals, seeing those individuals make progress.

Working against the system as well as with it because that's not always the way teaching has gone. Trying to stand up for a different way of teaching because I did actually spend my early years at a school that was very child centred. I was at a Froebel school, where we didn't sit at desks, we did a bit of writing but not much, we built African huts, we did gardening, cooking, and painting.

It was all about children learning at their own pace and learning through different media. So when I was eleven I got quite a shock having to go sit at a desk and it's only now that I realise I was probably quite dyslexic so I did find school, apart from the practical

Sue (at back centre) with her women's yoga group at BRAG.

subjects, I did find school quite difficult.

Where has your passion for teaching taken you?

I taught for six years and then I went to St Mary's College, Twickenham that is now St Mary's University, to lecture in dance and be responsible for the dance department. There I was able to teach teachers other aspects of physical education. I was there for eleven years, met Keith there, my husband, had the children whilst there.

I went to Surrey University and worked on something called *Personal Construct Theory* that is named for a man called George Kelly who wrote a reasonably well-known book called *Man the Scientist*. He was a clinical psychologist whose theory was that everybody's baggage was different and so you needed to treat everyone individually. Of course, I latched on to this because I thought this was fantastic.

He discovered a way of trying to understand how language could be shared rather than you going on forever using the same word but not ever knowing if your meaning was the same as mine. He established something called a repertory grid which enabled you to work out on a scale of one to ten what the meaning of that word was, if it was a crucial word for you, what that actually meant. That gave the background and the theoretical approach to my PhD which was about improving the quality of dance teaching, or any teaching in fact.

I worked in the London borough of Richmond with all the PE teachers in secondary schools there. They came to dance classes with me for a year because most of them felt that they didn't have enough material. But the main thing was, using George Kelly's theoretical base I got them to ask three questions of their pupils. What do you think dance is? What do you think about when you're dancing? How do you feel when you're dancing?

Asking those questions opened up for them an understanding of who their pupils were and what they thought about dance. Prior to that they were teaching, not knowing if the pupils thought dance was something they simply saw on television or when they went to the ballet. Everybody had a different view.

It sounds to me, how it settled in you was the perfect combination of mind and body …

I was uncomfortable writing in an academic style but I explained all of that in the thesis and said I was

Sue, while England Lacrosse Coach, being interviewed in the U.S.

coming at this from a practitioner point of view and it all sort of fell into place.

Ok. So how would you answer those three questions?

Well I suppose what dance is and has always been for me is the ability to move freely in any way you want. You know to enjoy rhythm if it's important, to enjoy non-rhythm if it's important. I have always enjoyed the opportunities just to move!

Is it like a language?

Yes. Very much so! Yes because I learnt through the Rudolf Laban system of being able to be very clear. He analysed movement and so I grew up understanding the movement analysis even before I went to college.

And question two?

What do I think about when I'm dancing? Well I actually don't think very much when I'm dancing. For me it's more suspending your normal thoughts, yes.

And question three?

Feeling free, liberated, and flexible. I love the way your arms and legs can cut through the space. I love that.

So talk about the mind/body connection. How does that work for you?

When I'm teaching I'm not one of those people who talks about spirituality or about separation of the mind and body at all. I feel and I know that if you work on your body you are working holistically. You know, it's because I believe so strongly that if you work on your body you change your mind, if you work on your mind, much harder to change your body.

So the whole essence of Hatha Yoga is it's the one form out of all the forms of yoga that chooses to work through the body and so there is no other explanation necessary. Yoga means 'yolk of mind and body' and that's very clear to me. Most of the people I have find it the same. Many I have taught for eight years since I started in Mongarlowe.

I teach in Canberra once a week. Some of the people I originally taught there are now in their seventies and eighties and one of them is in a retirement centre. So I go and teach all these seventy, eighty, ninety year-olds once a week. You know, that's one of the most rewarding things of all teaching those people. To see them walking again you know, to see them being able to stand straight, seeing them be confident to do things physically. Over the years you build up their physical strength.

How did meeting Keith change your life?

I met Keith three years after I'd been at St Mary's and life changed dramatically. You know I had a sports car before I met him and I was sort of all over the place really. He was very much a stabilising influence. I always knew I wanted children and had been thinking about being able to be more sensible and settle down. We have always got on extremely well and we help each other enormously.

How has having children changed you or indeed has it changed you?

Well it must have changed me because they are the most important things in my life and always were. More important that any part of my career. I don't think I have really changed as a person, but the responsibility obviously is enormous and trying to make sure that you were not just looking after them but giving them the kind of opportunities that you would like them to have. So we constantly responded to their needs and the things that happen to children. You know, when some of those things happened we have either moved or done something to make it right. We are both incredibly dedicated parents and grandparents. We enjoy it!

Would you call yourself a feminist?

There is no way that I am not a feminist. I really was too busy doing things to fight for the right to do things. I wasn't political in that sense and I didn't ever have the time because I was forging out pathways and doing things that would enable women to follow.

Were you conscious of that at the time?

Slightly. I think I helped make women's sport more professional. I think I helped raise women's sport out of: "oh well lets just have anybody we can find because coaches aren't that important" type of attitude. So I would say that I was involved in a lot of change. In everything I did I was involved in change.

Speaking of change, getting older, how do you feel about that?

Most of the time I don't notice it too much because when you are surrounded by young family, young children, I think you just do the same things you've always done. Looking after the grandchildren is not much different from looking after your own children.

I notice it sometimes when I am teaching yoga. I notice I just can't do that position any more but I think because I have taught yoga for forty-seven years it's meant that I have kept supple and strong both physically and mentally. Yoga for me is both physical and mental.

Do you fear growing old?

Not really. Fifteen years ago I was told I had an auto-immune disease that attacks my muscles and collagen and everything else. I was told it was likely I'd be in a wheelchair. So I was fearful, but as a result of being fearful then, I would say I am not fearful now. I think you go through that. It's a glib thing to say but I don't fear death.

Obviously there are elements of death that I would not want to happen too soon mainly because I would be fearful of how my relationship with my granddaughter would be as we are very close and I'd rather not die before she understands death. That would be my main thing. I don't have any doubts that my children would survive very adequately but the grandchildren — we're all very close. I think it is so much harder for people who are left behind. So my fears would not be for myself.

What makes you laugh?

Lots of things. Ah, grandchildren, of course. People in general make me laugh. You know, I really enjoy life and I feel I'm at a stage now where all I do is yoga or look after the grand children. It is a beautiful life. I don't do anything that I don't really enjoy doing. I mean, I have had times where I thought life was caving in on you but not now. That's one thing I like about getting older. That you can cast off the things you don't like and there's nobody to say you can't. I think if you live in the country you have to be prepared to live a simple life if you choose not to work. You have to learn to do without all those material things that once you might have thought were important, but as you get older they become unimportant.

Did you meet anyone along the way who was an influence?

Oh, I'm still meeting people who are. You know, you do meet people all the time and you think, ah yeah, there is something about that person that I'd like to capture or remember.

What do you enjoy about Braidwood?

Having the family here of course. I like living in Braidwood because I like being able to have that give and take in a community. I like to walk out and know I can meet somebody and you can go for a cup of coffee if you want to.

I suppose having enough people who share similar views to you. There seem to be quite a lot people with that and I suppose because I teach yoga, those people and I gravitate together. I don't always end up being close to all the people I teach yoga to because sometimes being a teacher separates you. But having said that, my closest friends come from that pool. And I meet new friends all the time.

In a way that was one of the hard things about moving to Australia: having people who know me now, but not that fifty five years of my life. So in a way you have to let go of many of those things.

I have always enjoyed living close to the centre of things. I like the location and being able to walk to everywhere. I like the idea that there are things on that you can choose to go to or not and you don't have to go to everything.

We love community. Keith works with the hospital community and he is very excited about community and optimistic. You have to be optimistic. You have to think that what you do can lead to something better, otherwise why bother. We don't think that things will make great changes because of what we do but little by little, in our tiny way we can contribute to something.

Any last piece of advice for younger women?

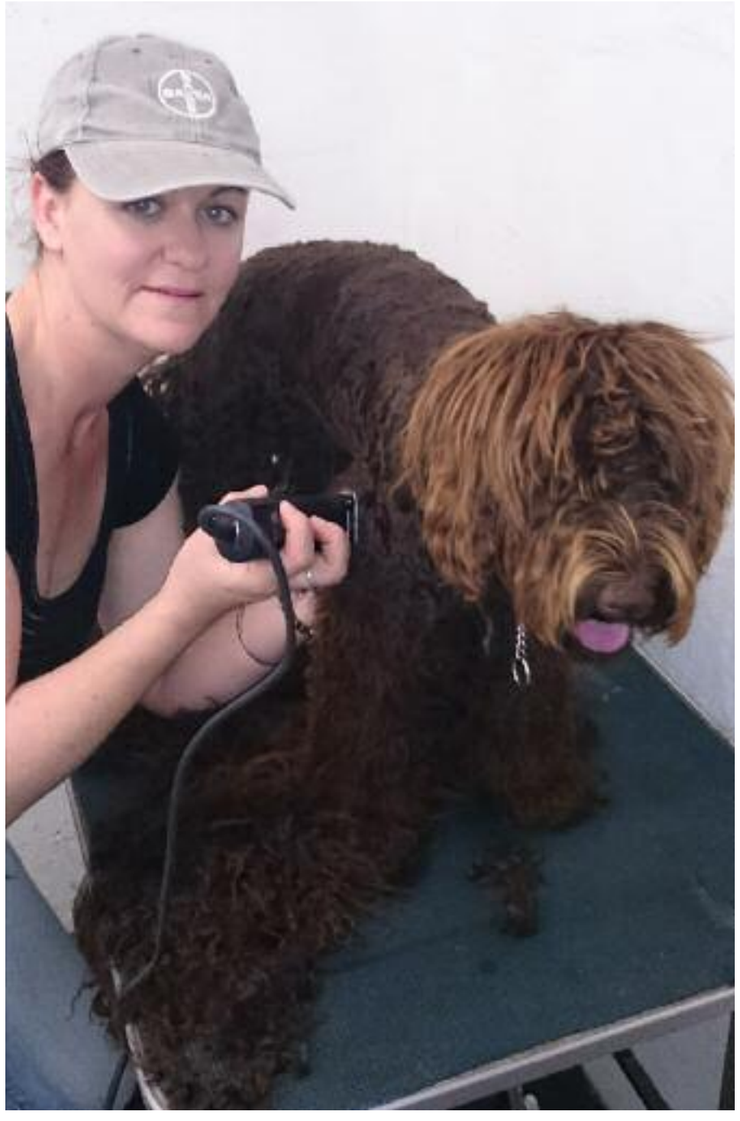
Well life has changed so much, I think it is so much harder now. I think what I did was I tried to push down all the doors and I would say the opposite now. I'd say, find a different door to go through. I think that most of the things that were barriers to me were easier to push down. You could become more professional in women's sport; that was possible. You could work longer hours if you had a husband or partner who was supportive. I think it was about having the courage to do that. Whereas now, I think it is finding a door that's right for you and finding the key. Not pushing it down but finding the key and carefully unlocking it.

I think the life of my youth was so much less restrictive and demanding than the life they're going into now. You know, it was important for me to have a PhD because it validated me in the physical area and it gave me credibility and it gave the subject credibility. Nowadays, everybody has the opportunity, if they're willing to work hard enough to get that, but it doesn't give validity to anything any more. It seems the only way people can get anywhere today is to work unsociable hours. Everybody is forced into working too long hours, completely destroying family time. They just don't seem to have the opportunity to have a career and to have time to be with your family, which is what I had.

I suppose my advice is to look at developing your own personal skills and going down your own route, take the risk of going your own way. Not necessarily trying to outdo everybody else to get to qualifications, get skills. Obviously the two go together but the skills for me are the important thing. It is skills that enable you to exist in a world.

SALLY ROBINSON

Pet groomer, animal behaviourist, artist



Before and after.

Snip 'n clip art

I have always liked being around the animals and working with them. Throughout my life I have owned horses, dogs and cats. Prior to owning and running the grooming business (Devine Paws), I had nine years experience in a Wollongong salon clipping and grooming all different breeds of dogs and cats. During my time at the salon in Wollongong, I was taught by a master groomer all the different types of breed clips.

With the experience I have gained, if a breed clip is requested by a customer I am able to deliver whatever clip they want. I have also studied dog training and psychology and I am certified in these areas.

This particular knowledge helps me when I have a dog coming to the salon that may have had a bad experience. I can also help the dog overcome its fears and that improves the behaviour next time they come in.

You can get bitten occasionally but it is all part of the profession. You just need to spend more time with those dogs to change their attitude towards having a haircut and bath.

The summer months are the busiest time and in winter things slow down a little bit, but I still get plenty of work to keep busy.

When it does slow down a bit I can make pet portraits at the customer's request.

ROBYN CLUBB

Farmer, boards member, investment enthusiast

Funding future farms

I come from the land — near Cooma. I grew up on a cattle and sheep grazing property, Angus cattle and merino sheep. So although I worked in finance for about 20 years, I have come back to my rural roots.

[BWD] What do you think is the challenge of the moment for the rural sector in Australia?

[RC] I think the biggest challenge, apart from climate change which is obviously the biggie, the next biggest one is access to capital, investment capital because you can borrow a certain amount of money, usually up to 50% of the value of whatever you are buying. That's typically the bank's loan terms, you have to have equity, you have to have equity in farming.

You can start up with equity but if you want to grow, if you want to buy another place, you can't just finance it from debt. So it's finding investors, or sufficient other funds, or off-farm income; or it's finding partners to invest with you.

It could be forming cooperatives to share a farm together or to plan a venture together or a big corporate enterprise — it's all about finding capital. That is the biggest challenge.

There has certainly been a big debate about foreign investment, but it is not just that, it's looking at things like the future funds, the Australian future funds, which in its charter, in its investment policy, can invest up to five percent in agriculture. I think there is a big opportunity for investors who are prepared to be there for the long term. I think it is a great investment for superannuation funds to match their long term liabilities, but it is also a great investment for non-farming people as well. I think we have to sell it better.

What can be done to make agriculture a better bet for investment?

I think Australians show incredible innovation and ingenuity. We are the world's most efficient farmers, that's been forced upon us; so things like drought management techniques for example or better use of water.

In the rice industry, they have their efficiency of water usage by over 60% in ten years. We are now the most efficient producers of rice in the world in terms of water usage. It's all about productivity and efficiency, but it's also about finding the right products if you like, the right produce, the right commodity to match a particular area.

So if an area is becoming drier, or it's becoming colder or hotter, or wetter — which is happening all over Australia — then we need to be adapting to that new environment and growing the right things.

We need to grow food to feed Australians and we have this fabulous reputation for growing clean green food. We're one of the most regulated countries in the world in terms of food quality, work health and safety, etc. That's a major selling product, so we do have to do it better, and we just have to be more adaptable, which I think we are. I think Australians are very adaptable.

The biggest issue I think for Australia is investment in research — and then committing to investing in research for the longer term. Our governments tend to run hot and cold on investment in agricultural research. They don't have a long term view.

AMANDA VARDANEGA

Marathon runner

Keeping fit

I run to keep fit and healthy, I've got young children so I like to keep up with them. Also because of my job. I'm National Sales and Marketing manager for MSD Animal Health and I do a lot of travelling — so airports, hotels and restaurants.

Jogging I can do anywhere at any time, it keeps me fit and healthy — and for me it's a great stress relief, like meditation. I've always enjoyed running and after I had my two children I got into competitive running.

I've run a couple of half marathons, one in Canberra at the Australian Running Festival with a time of 1:42:37. Then in Yass I was the 3rd female over the line with 1:42:15. I've done the 14 km City to Surf in Sydney with a time of 1:04:40. I just beat that in the Canberra Times Fun Run, also 14 km with 1:00:01.

ANTONIA THROSBY, LIZZY HALL, KATE STEVENS

The three schmoozers ham it up

'THE SHELTER OBJECT'

An exhibition by Lizzie Hall

Power

Lizzie talks to *BWD* about what drives her

Well, I'm not going to talk about how motherhood affects my art practice — everyone does that. It not that it stops you from working, just from networking — the schmoozing.

My whole art practice was kicked off by the first thing that happened after I left art school — 9/11. [The destruction of the World Trade Centre buildings on September 11 2001.]

This substantially altered the course of where my whole art practice was going to go because that just seemed like insane men making very poor decisions for everybody else. So it all became that.

And the term 'collateral damage' became a guiding feature of my art. It wasn't about that when I was at art school, then all of a sudden it was — it can be quite oblique.

It's all about f*cking power, y' know. Power on a macro scale and power on a micro scale.

Left: Close-up of crushed weetbix + PVA cast in a Canberra brick mould.

Photo by Kelly Sturgiss.

'The Shelter Object' was the name given to the concrete bunker built around reactor number 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant to contain the radioactive material that was released after it exploded in 1986.

Isolation and containment are pivotal to the construct of our national identity. Do the barriers which are constructed through nationalism and xenophobia protect us from something outside or do they harbour poison within?

Are aussie kids just weetbix kids?

HORRORSCOPE FOR THE SPRING MONTHS 2015:

To allow for the vagaries of the universe and interpretive inexactitude, it might pay to read everyone else's stars as well.

GEMINI

Do not give your power away this week which is not telling Essential Energy anything they didn't already know. In fact when you receive the bill you'll be feeling your whole life is quite highly charged and with considerable emotion.

CANCER

Wheels will be turning in your life this week but those skateboard wheels will remain still. You may wonder how come what started out as a good idea so quickly turned into a Rec.

LEO

Pluto is in Capricorn, the kids are eating popcorn, the old man's into hard porn, feral cats rutting dusk to dawn, any wonder you're feeling forlorn? The hall carpet's looking worn, Facebook just a yawn — geez, where's my life gorn?

VIRGO

They say Herschel, now Uranus, is a symbol of radical thinking, or maybe the source from where a lot of pub talk emanates. That's a terrible joke and I think I should have sat on it.

LIBRA

Venus is wearing blue jeans and Palerang is heading for Queanbeans. An aspect is described as partile when it is exact and a Fit For the Future submission is quite futile when the state government has already made up its mind.

SCORPIO

Do you want to give a sucker an even break? Be at the corner of Bowler St and Clyde St (unformed still) down at the Rec when the area is opened up. It's to make it more family-friendly but I've heard that a few local families got underway in those bushes in quite a friendly way.

SAGITTARIUS

Saturn in Sagittarius means you must duck and dive not drink and drive. Go to the pool, it's just across the road, almost the same; one's a watering hole and the other's water in a hole.

CAPRICORN

Down at the monastery the Abbott got the boot and no-one was more surprised than he. It's just amazing that most of the ingredients are the same yet the cake is expected to Turnbull better, sorry, turn out better.

AQUARIUS

An undecile might be heading your way if you were expressing one-eleventh of a circle, when two planets are plus or minus 32° 43' 07" apart. Of course if you're down at the pizza shop and they're trying to cut it like that, it's more likely to involve an imbecile. Don't order the Anarita, certainly not if it's been delivered to the 8th house because the driver is new to town.

PISCES

Conjunction can create intensity, stress and confusion — so can congestion, especially on a long weekend down the main street in summer. But is a bypass the answer, coronary or diversionary? If we discourage the yogi blues from rat running will that not do?

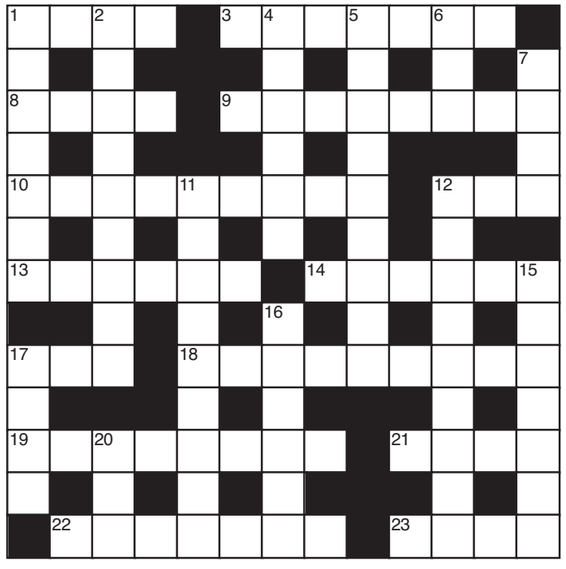
ARIES

Metatron is the Prince of the Countenance but metadata is the prints of your crawling through cyber-space. Counter-intelligence is more than just picking the faster queue at the bakery. Like Miss Emma's dancers you must stay on your toes. Remember, down at the ASIO bunker they are recording every website you visit and will soon be able to Spookle™ your name, your profile and match you with other like-minded trouble-makers.

TAURUS

The Seventh House governs marriage, business partnerships, harmony, disharmony and open enemies — much the same as the Upper House really. It looks like the rules might change to get rid of the fringe nutters and make room for more of the traditional nutters that you normally find in that pen of Paul Keating's 'unrepresentative swill'.

BRAIDWOOD BAFFLER #9



ACROSS

1. "There was a little girl and she had a little …?" (4)
3, 9 across. Celebrated in Braidwood on September 24 this year. (7,3,5)
8. In an elevated position (4)
10. A woman who officiates in sacred rites (9)
12. Away from (3)
13. Soft or delicate in substance (6)
14. Accommodated (6)
17. Belonging to a male (3)
18. Might keep 1 across in place? (9)
19. The current British one has been doing this for longer than any before her (8)
21. Rural business (4)
22. Extras; additions (7)
23. She did her 19 across, between 1702 and 1707 (4)

DOWN

1. Slang for an attractive woman – or toasted dough? (7)
2. Changes focus or direction (9)
4. Repetitions of sound bouncing back from a surface (6)
5. Unlikely chances of success (4,5)
6. ASX code for Ironbark Zinc Ltd. (3)
7. Leave as is (4)
11. Female name derived from the Greek for "crown " (9)
12. The female sex hormone (9)
15. Hours between sunrise and sunset (7)
16. Gestured: inscribed (6
17. Belonging (to a woman) (4)
20. Celebrated world-wide annually on 12 March (3, inits)

SOLUTION TO BAFFLER #8

T	H	E	T	O	P	B	A	N	A	N	A	
	E		A		O		S		L		N	
H	A	R	P	I	S	T	S		A	D	Z	E
	T		E		T		E		B		A	
S	H	Y				A	S	T	A	R	C	H
	E		A		T		S		M			
O	R	A	N	G	E		E	N	A	C	T	S
			I		D		D		N		R	
F	A	R	M	E	R	S				T	A	N
	B		A		A		A		S		I	
T	E	L	L		D	R	I	P	P	I	N	G
	T		I		I		G		I		E	
	S	E	A	S	O	N	A	L	F	A	R	E

Let's all get off the grid

We need to go off the grid. Not individually — but collectively. To do this we might need a revolution. Not that old thing with the proletariat rising up as one with their hammers and sickles and all that stuff; that has never been likely and is the fantasy only of people who sell strident newspapers in the rain outside Town Hall station.

No, what we need is a different way of dealing with the challenges of the future heading our way at an ever-increasing pace. Our governments, Federal and State are putting their faith and policy decisions in the hands of the free, read private, market.

But as usual, when there are captive customers, the rules keep changing to benefit the supplier at the expense of the consumer. When it was thought that more infrastructure was needed to guarantee the integrity of our power supply, the network companies were allowed to charge the consumer for future upgrades. As it happened, power usage failed to go up or went down.

Not batting an eyelid, apart from shedding as many jobs as possible, power companies switched their attention to retail deals. Churning (grabbing customers from a rival) took off with a dizzying assortment of tariff plans.

Research by St Vincent de Paul has found that it's the retail portion of a typical power bill that's risen the most.

As reported in the *SMH* the Society exposed this rort:

> "We have an energy retail market that ensures customers are paying over the odds for an essential service unless they annually dedicate time to compare energy plans and switch retailer."

No compassionate society allows its people to be screwed by not keeping up with trends in essential services pricing. It's bad enough with ever-more complex phone plans but to do it to electricity, a non-discretionary purchase, is unconscionable if not criminal.

This type of behaviour needs to be addressed by community action and here in Braidwood we're small enough, smart enough and remote enough to do it. If our governments are heading towards corporatisation at our expense then we'll need to collectivise to meet the challenge.

TIME & ENERGY

Into the future by Paul Cockram

Braidwood goes off

Here's the plan. We need a suitable site close to town and preferably near a high-voltage power line. We need to raise capital, with help from our community bank perhaps, to build a solar array big enough to power Braidwood.

We need a metering point where the net income or export of our Braidwood 'power station' is measured. If the plan does not at first include battery storage we'll be buying at night, but that's OK.

There are no insurmountable technical obstacles to a town connecting to the grid this way — only political barriers. The power companies won't like the idea of losing customers. The owners of the transmission lines won't like the extra complication of ensuring the integrity of supply. We may have to rent their poles and wires but that's fair.

In most community services, the bush plays second fiddle to the city — actually it's more like a second-hand guitar with a few strings missing if we're talking telecommunications. But there's something we have that will soon be in high demand — space.

It might come to pass that the grid will reverse itself in the years ahead. Instead of a relatively small but powerful coal-fired generator near the city feeding a radiating grid, a system of widely-spread solar, wind and whatever-else will feed towards the city.

If we're not just fooling around with this alternative energy jive, there's going to be a lot of land covered in solar panels. It's not that hard to do and it's easily scalable. We don't need to wait for a corporation to build really big power stations and then charge us for the product.

The raw energy input is freely supplied to everyone on Earth (subject to the vagaries of latitude). We don't need big brother to do it all for us in exchange for an eight-hour day's work making money for the man.

This is the exciting part of the energy revolution. The sun will transform the whole dynamic of energy security. The trees and the other green stuff seem to have it figured and here is our big chance to be as clever as them.

If we stuff about for too long though we will be, just like the trees, more or less deeply rooted.

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