

THE BIG FIX

Blue Mountains • Lithgow • Hawkesbury • Penrith

Issue No. 5 2018

www.thebigfix.org

Changing the Story

YOUTH EDITION

Blue Mountains Launches Australia's First Pluriversity



Students and teachers in the Permaculture Design and Social Enterprise Project

The Blue Mountains has long told the story of how its young people are forced to leave the Mountains to study and work, primarily because there haven't been enough opportunities for them there. But that story may now be about to change! Led by The Big Fix, a broad coalition of government, community groups, organisations and businesses are collaborating to launch Australia's first Pluriversity – a move which many hope will even begin to attract more young people to the area.

According to Lis Bastian, founder of The Big Fix Inc: "The Pluriversity is a creative way to involve the whole community in providing the education so many of our young people need, especially in those confusing years soon after leaving school." As Lis points out, while some know exactly what they want to do with their lives, many don't have a clue. A Pluriversity can offer them a range

of life and work experiences, exposure to many cultures, and an opportunity to spend time with diverse mentors exploring what the meaningful jobs of the future might be. "There are jobs that haven't been thought of yet," says Lis. "And what better way to vision the way forward than to bring together young people, our business community and organisations, and our inspiring community of artists and designers to brainstorm how young people can create the work they need to live fulfilling and rewarding lives in that future."

But a Pluriversity isn't just focused on work opportunities. It's also focused on learning how to live well, how to pick up the life skills not taught by school and university, and how to connect to both community and our land. With a learning-by-doing approach that will be flexible and affordable, the not-for-profit Blue Mountains Pluriversity hopes to provide a

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About The Big Fix Inc.

The Big Fix acknowledges the Darkinjung, Darug, Dharawal, Gundungurra, Wanaruah and the Wiradjuri peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The Big Fix also pays respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging, recognising their strength, capacity, resilience and deep connection to their Countries.

Inaugural Youth Edition

Welcome to the inaugural Youth Edition of The Big Fix magazine. In this issue we've invited young people to write stories and edit the magazine, and we've also written stories about what young people are involved in. We've covered some major topics such as: starting Australia's first Pluriversity; using art to save endangered carnivorous plants and to reduce plastic pollution; walking the Simpson Desert to process grief; transforming events with composting toilets; rewilding to save species from extinction; non-violent direct action for the release of children in detention; regenerative agriculture and helping our young farmers; volunteering for the Duke of Edinburgh Award; running a social enterprise cafe for young people with intellectual disability; incorporating aboriginal language in contemporary music; valuing the legacy of the Maltese in the Hawkesbury for 'future growing'; getting involved in citizen science for learning more about bees; a wilderness retreat for building resilience for activists; the greening of Penrith; an Education First residential program to support homeless young people to complete their studies; and a writing program at Varuna.

It is through our storytelling that we inspire our better selves and we are grateful to Create NSW for the funding which has allowed us to tap the talents of our young people to help us tell these stories.

Launch of our Hyperlocal News Template

On October 15 2018, The Big Fix launched a Hyperlocal News template with Blackheath Local News. Its goal is to create sticky communities that connect people and enhance everyone's lives at the very local level ... village by village.

Check it out at www.thebigfixblackheath.org and contact Lis if your village would like to jump on board!

Lis Bastian & Jack Coggins
Co-Editors



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Thank You to the Supporters of Our Youth Permaculture and Social Enterprise Project



Receiving a \$3,000 grant from Bendigo Bank in Katoomba
Left to right: Vincent Tropiano, Brigitte Mackenzie, Lis Bastian, Jack Coggins, Brooke Broughton

Our Programs:

Blue Mountains Pluriversity
Hyperlocal News
Daily Solutions Digest via social media and website
Weekly Solutions Digest via a free weekly eNewsletter
Quarterly Solutions Magazine (print and digital)
Blue Mountains Permaculture Institute
Blackheath Community Farm

Visit www.thebigfix.org for your Daily 'Fix'

Blue Mountains Launches Australia's First Pluriversity (cont'd)

rich and rewarding period of learning in young people's lives, and a way for many skilled and creative local residents to share their skills to support young people too.

The pilot program for the Pluriversity is the Permaculture Design and Social Enterprise Project currently being trialled from November 2018 to June 2019. This free program for young people aged 16-24ish, has been funded by The Big Fix Inc, Blue Mountains City Council, Bendigo Bank and Sydney Water. For the first time a Permaculture Design Course has been integrated with training in developing a Social Enterprise, and is being followed by six months of mentoring to help young people establish an enterprise in the Blue Mountains.

Participants include a home-schooled student, young people a few years out of school or just finishing university, and young people who haven't yet found the right fit in either work or education.

One of the founding students of the Pluriversity, Annabel Pettit, has said: "The Pluriversity is exactly what the Mountains

needs – I was so excited when Lis told me about it. It's going to help add credibility to that really important and often unrecognised process of trying a whole range of totally diverse and unrelated things before you decide to specialise in one particular area. Local education – I honestly don't know what's not to love about that! Already just through this first Youth Permaculture Course, I feel like we're getting this glimpse into what education could look like beyond high school and uni – we're learning so much in backyards, bushland and community gardens, and just having a whole heap of fun together in the process."

Another student, Saskya Clarke, had worked in and then managed a ceramics studio in Sydney for 6 years. She commenced a Bachelor of Design at UNSW, focusing on spatial design, before taking a university break at the start of 2016. She was assaulted whilst travelling overseas and has spent the past two and a half years in recovery from PTSD, working through and navigating the anxiety, grief and depression this trauma triggered.

"As a young woman recovering from PTSD I feel empowered

Blue Mountains Launches Australia's First Pluriversity (cont'd)

within the Pluriversity to explore the diverse nature of life which resides in and around us. The status quo does not support a holistic education and if personal suffering occurs it's easy to fall between the gaps. This is my experience and sadly the experience of many others who live with a mental illness. Through being involved with Australia's first pluralistic education system I have hope for a future where all beings can be nurtured within their communities and grow to their full potential."

Amelie Vanderstock writes: "A principle of Permaculture that really spoke to me is 'integrate, don't segregate'. For me, this Pluriversity Permaculture Course is knitting together what can seem like eclectic passions for science, experimental design, pollinators, artmaking and community organising. As a PhD student in 'science' at Uni, it's hard to find which 'faculty' I nest in. Is it biology? Sociology? Education? To address the systems-level issues we are facing, and to celebrate the diversity of experience, skills and interests in our communities, I think we need holistic,

connect with a mentor who is passionate in their field of expertise and can take an integrated approach to learning."

In the current program, young people have already built a food garden at Blue Mountains Food Services, complete with compost bay, pond, herb spiral and vegetable beds. All materials were donated by the community and the produce will be used in the Ben Roberts Cafe, which will now also compost all its vegetable scraps there. They are also designing the Co-housing Project being developed in Hazelbrook, and collaborating to design social enterprises that meet the needs of the Blue Mountains community. The program helps them to develop community-building skills and a whole systems approach to finding solutions for the many challenges ahead.

The alliance of community organisations supporting this pilot project includes The Big Fix, Blue Mountains Permaculture Institute, Blue Mountains City Council, Blue Mountains Food Services and the Ben Roberts Cafe, Blue Mountains Food Co-



Permaculture students finish installing an edible garden and pond for Blue Mountains Food Services in Lawson in under four hours!

systems approaches to our knowledge production and change-making with our communities. With this approach as the soul of this course, I can't contain my excitement to be one of the first seeds in the Pluriversity – and can already feel the growth in this experience that I want to share through my teaching!"

Beyond this pilot, the Pluriversity is now gathering the mentors, tutors and work experience placements to offer a range of flexible learning opportunities next year.

According to Lis: "Young people will be able to select mentors, do workshops or courses, try short or long work experience opportunities to build up a work record on their CV, or create events and other learning opportunities that help them learn-by-doing."

Painter Brooke Sanderson is looking forward to connecting with an artist mentor next year: "University has become an ever-increasing financial commitment and can often feel segregated from the real world. I'm excited to be given the opportunity to

op, Lyttleton Stores, Mountains Youth Services Team (MYST), Platform Youth Services, The Children's Garden Project, Blacktown Youth College and Katoomba High School.

Partners for the program being developed in early 2019 include Mtns Made (Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise), Varuna the Writers House, Penrith Performing and Visual Arts Ltd and the Rotary Club of Blackheath.

The Big Fix is now keen to hear from potential mentors in any field, organisations and businesses willing to offer work experience opportunities, and anyone wishing to share job opportunities with young people.

Lis also sees the Pluriversity creating jobs for many others keen to get involved in training and providing diverse and rewarding experiences. "It takes a whole community to help a young person reach their full potential," suggests Lis, just as the phone rings and yet another person makes contact to offer their support.

For more information visit www.bmpluriversity.org

Greening Penrith

When I think of the City of Penrith, what comes to mind are hot summers, indoor skydiving and having a great night out at Panthers Stadium, but not its environmentally-friendly council. My interview with Andrew Hewson from Penrith City Council, however, changed my mind.

Andrew is the Sustainability Education Officer and his team finds ways for Council to be more environmentally friendly. This means they have to get other teams “passionate about sustainability ... because they’re the ones who are going to have the best ideas to improve how they work, not us”.

For example, in the past, Penrith’s graffiti removal would

work like this: A truck would be filled with water which would then be sprayed through a high pressure hose to clean away graffiti. When they ran out of water, they would have to go back and refill the truck. This changed when the graffiti cleaning team had the idea to capture and re-use the water. Now they create a makeshift pool with sand bags to catch the sprayed water. They then use a pool pump and a sand filter to suck up the water, clean it and re-use it for more graffiti cleaning. This dramatically reduces the amount of water required and also saves time and petrol.

Some of Council’s great work is with Mountains View Reserve which is a regionally significant wetland, home to migratory birds that fly internationally. To help protect the reserve they planted around 100,000 trees which will create more habitat, shade, bush views, and cooler ‘microclimates’ as they evapo-transpire.

Andrew says: “The research that we’ve done around our heat and cooling work is that the more trees and green cover the better.”

This is important because on January 7 2018, Channel 7 claimed that, on that day, Penrith was the hottest place on the planet. The more trees that are planted, the more shade there will be to counteract Penrith’s summer heat.

In addition, Penrith Council has restored natural wetlands and built a man-made one as well. They did wide-scale bush regeneration where they weeded and restored native ecosystems. They have endeavored to make Mountains View Reserve a great environmental and community asset, providing lookouts and interpretive signs focused on biodiversity. This wetland is vital because it acts as a ‘biofilter’, purifying stormwater from the City before it reaches the Penrith Lakes. These lakes are not only home to a broad range of native species but also the IRONMAN 70.3 Western Sydney triathlon and international rowing events. Andrew says: “It’s a really critical link between our urban spaces and our natural environment, so we need to look after it for that reason. It’s a good example of looking at all the things holistically. By improving the environment we’re also increasing liveability.”

The Jordan Springs Community Hub is a brand new

community building that was built with active engagement from the disability access community and local residents “to make it a really high quality building that meets the needs of the community as a community facility”. There are no steps in the entire building

making it a great resource for all members of the community, whatever their mobility. The hall also has a commercial kitchen. “From a sustainability perspective it’s probably one of the best buildings in the region.” One of the reasons is because it’s built with Cross Laminated Timber construction. CLT is “basically just a fancy plywood” that also happens to be carbon neutral to produce. This

drastically reduces the industrial waste that is produced by most buildings. “There’s no waste in the production, so even all the sawdust and offcuts get mulched up and used.” The community building’s walls and roof are all made with the Cross Laminated Timber. “It’s the first community building in New South Wales to be built using Cross Laminated Timber, and only the second in New South Wales in terms of any building.”

Another feature of the Hub is that it has clever cross-flow ventilation which expels hot air. These louvre windows will automatically close when the air conditioning is turned on, to keep the cool air inside. It also has geothermal heating and cooling. “In simple terms, that’s a bunch of pipes that go under the ground and use the constant temperature of the ground to heat and cool the building.” In summer, when you get really hot air

temperatures, the ground temperature will cool the air, and in winter the below-ground heat will warm the room. This uses much less electricity in comparison to a traditional air conditioning system, so it’s much cheaper to run. Jordan Springs also has solar panels, a water tank, energy-efficient glass, water-efficient taps, and energy-efficient light globes, light-coloured concrete to repel heat, and trees to create shade.

“Knowing all the challenges that we’re facing in the world how do you feel about the work you’re doing?” I asked. “Positive, I think we’re making really great progress. It’s easy to get a bit overwhelmed looking at some of our challenges, but when you actually look at how much progress we’ve made I think we’re really on the right track.” Andrew compares looking after the environment to eating healthy food: “If you completely change your lifestyle and diet all at once you’re just going to fall off the bandwagon and start eating junk food. But if you make small continuous changes, and keep trying to be a little better, it will be more practical and sustainable. What we do is continually focus on finding our next opportunity to make these small changes.”

Joshua Wolterding



Andrew Hewson with Joshua Wolterding

“The research that we’ve done around our heat and cooling work is that the more trees and green cover the better.”



The Jordan Springs Community Hub

Lemongrove House

Platform Youth Services strives to provide support, shelter, safety, food and understanding for young people aged 12–25 in Penrith, Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains.

Their new 'Education First' service at Lemongrove House in Penrith is targeted towards young people aged 17–25 who are homeless and need safe and secure affordable accommodation, with a lifeskills program, to help them continue their education, be it HSC, TAFE or University. By providing an 'Education First' model within a residential setting Platform will be providing much needed support to those at risk.

For more information phone 4760 0800

Josh Wolterding and Meghan Winckle from Platform at Lemongrove



Varuna and the Writing Fix

In early 2018, we all participated in a series of young writers' workshops for high-school students, run by Varuna the National Writers' House and supported by Blue Mountains City Council City of the Arts Trust. Leading on from that, we formed a writing group, meeting monthly in Katoomba wherever we weren't thrown out of. We started in the dungeons of the Mountains Youth Services Team (MYST) and worked our way up the cafes of Katoomba Street.

Here are some of our thoughts about why we meet and write: "Why do I write? Maybe it's because I've been reading whatever I can get my hands on since a very young age, maybe I finally want to share my imagination and my stories with the world."

"Writing is something that can distract me from things such as study, while still being beneficial for education and creativity."

"I write to preserve the stories and characters I have learned from and known in my life. I write because it makes me feel lighter. I write to document and keep track. I write to reflect. Because I love it. Sharing writing is a beautiful, special experience, and one I haven't found before anywhere else."

The Varuna writing group provides a time and place in the chaotic thing we call 'life'. The enthusiasm of older, successful and passionate writers and people our age who are uncertain but full of ideas, urges us to keep writing.

The writing group has been enjoyed by all and we look forward to continuing next year.

The Young Writers' Group is run by Varuna, the National Writers' House, and meets monthly. For more information, email rebecca@varuna.com.au

Grace Cowles, Phoebe Fliegner, Aurelia Rummery

A Maltese Legacy for the Hawkesbury

What do Monica Attard, Joe Camilleri, Jeff Fenech and Shaun Micallef have in common? Apart from being well known Australians who have succeeded to the highest levels in their chosen professions, they all share a common Maltese ancestry. In the Hawkesbury, a strong and vibrant Maltese culture continues to thrive, with an ethic of hard work, a love of food and a belief that, above all, community is king.

In 2017, a talented young Chinese Australian writer and filmmaker, Roz Chia, began collecting stories about the local Maltese community for an oral history website she was developing called DiverseHawkesbury.net. She'd grown up in the Hawkesbury and some of her favourite memories were of "visiting the homes of people with surnames like Zammit and Quattromani" and of watching the neighbour's tractor "humming back and forth across the hill, coaxing hostile Wilberforce clay into soil".

Roz writes: "The first story I found was my hairdresser's childhood memories; the old Hawkesbury names of Galea and Micallef gracing the first article." Katherine Galea, owner of JR Hair Design in Richmond, recalls how a lot of her early memories were of the hard work she did on her father's market garden. "For us kids, obviously that wasn't the best fun in the world, spending our weekends picking vegies for the markets and the buyers and whatever else! It was hard work. We couldn't really have holidays because we always had crops to feed. In the mornings we had to water. We had to do all those things in the morning before we could consider doing any family activities."

Roz's second story was an "in-depth video article about the Psaila family from Londonderry. This full-length feature is a visit to a family farm, whose gracious owners take us on a tour of their life's work on the land, showing us typically Maltese crops and relaying a family story. I had not met Fred Psaila more than sixty seconds before the camera rolled. His openness in the video is authentic, and a true indicator of my ongoing experience of working with Maltese Australians across Western Sydney. We saw Fred's crop of prickly pear fruit, and my burning curiosity about prickly pear was the excuse I'd had to wander onto a stranger's private property that morning, asking to film the inside of his home and ask his life story."

Fred Psaila was born in Malta in 1944 and arrived in Australia in 1970 where he started work as a concreter. At that time, he and his wife lived in a garage with no toilet and no hot water, so life was hard. By 1973 however, by working 12 to 16 hours a day, Fred and his wife were able to buy land at Londonderry. They borrowed from the bank to pay \$18,700 at a time when wages were \$50 per week. To improve the soil, Fred brought trailer load

after trailer load of organic compost from Blacktown in a trailer attached to his beloved VW Beetle.

Today, Fred's hard work has paid off. His abundant garden produces, in season, sweet potato, zucchini, peanuts, shallots, capsicum, tomatoes and more. His mature carob trees provide sweet, edible seed pods; and his rabbits and prickly pear are the Maltese staples that are an important part of their culture. Fred demonstrates his prickly pear harvester, a tool he designed and built himself, and describes how the pads of the prickly pear can be peeled and eaten raw. They also make great food for cattle. Because Malta has no rivers, lakes or reservoirs, Maltese farmers have always loved the prickly pear because it requires no water to grow.

The GeriActivists: The Future Growers

Roz's video of her visit not only went viral in Malta but led to a warm introduction to the Maltese community group which meets regularly in Llandilo. It also led to the Maltese community

being invited by Illuminart to take part in a creative project called "The GeriActivists", funded by the Australia Council and Create NSW. It was produced using advanced 360° film technology at the Psaila farm.

Illuminart is a team of artists from Adelaide and the Blue Mountains who create stories in light.

As developers encroach on the Hawkesbury, Illuminart was keen to hear the stories of the market gardeners who'd fed Sydney for so long ... before their land

was likely to be taken over by housing estates and while their strong community was still intact. Through their project they've been highlighting that sustainable development needs to be about sustaining cultures as well as the land.

Illuminart's Blue Mountains-based creative producer David Ryan worked with a team to create a 360° virtual reality film in which members of the Maltese community were asked to imagine their community in 2068 – a future in which their positive legacy and heritage

could help counter their many concerns for their children and their children's children. Andy Busuttill from the band Skorba, composed a song with Maltese and English lyrics that brought together their ideas. It was sung by the Llandilo Maltese Cultural Association Choir singing acapella.

The soft launch of the *The GeriActivists: Future Growers* was at St Mary's library in early December and it will soon be available to view online at www.illuminart.com.au (NB. Prickly pears have been declared a 'Locally Controlled Weed' in NSW)



Photo of Fred Psaila by Roz Chia

"... sustainable development needs to be about sustaining cultures as well as the land."

Plants with Bite

Tall, crowding stalks and sharp, protruding teeth. A flash of a sour green and then ... snap! When thinking of carnivorous plants, fantasy-like images of large, sinister, Journey to the Centre of the Earth by Jules Verne-esque plants spring to mind. However, in reality, they are no larger than 30cm. And now, over 10,000 of these plants can be seen at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney in their new exhibit, Plants with Bite. The installation, that opened in October, is showcasing over 120 varieties of carnivorous plants in the magnificent Calyx building in the centre of Sydney, curated by Director of Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Jimmy Turner.

Turner, who previously worked with world-renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly at the Dallas Arboretum, had envisioned the exhibit to be like a “fantasy-world”, with “something for all ages”, including a three-metre tall robotic carnivorous plant that looms over you as you wander the grounds. This immersive, myth-like exhibition hopes to “blend the lines between art, experience, and science”, a reverie that will be available to experience until late next year. The interest for Turner in carnivorous plants originated from a childhood fascination, not only in their bizarre nature, but also in how they seemed instantly synonymous with the sinister. This boyish awe has translated into his direction of Plants with Bite, facilitated by the use of glassworks throughout the exhibit.

Collaborating with Turner for Plants with Bite are Blackheath glass-artists Keith Rowe and Kayo Yokoyama, who have created over 20 to-scale carnivorous plants from glass. These glass-replicas can be seen scattered throughout the installation, adding another layer of depth to the magical minefield that the Royal Botanic Gardens have created. Keith Rowe, who has been a glass-artist in Blackheath for 30 years, describes his process for creating these intricate glassworks as “comforting”, as he “manipulates the material” to create delicate, life-like sculptures. Rowe, who has previously drawn inspiration from nature to create his tulip series,

says the experience with Plants with Bite has been “exciting”, and is intrigued to see what the response will be as his work enters such a public space.

Also working on Plants with Bite is Greg Bourke, the Curator Manager at the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens in Mt. Tomah, who has been “fascinated with carnivorous plants since [he] was a kid”. This intrigue for Bourke is rooted in their unique evolution, “turning tides on the natural” by surviving in the harshest of environments through their predatory diet. Working almost like an “evil genius and henchman” with Turner, Bourke’s work is more concerned with the research and conservation of carnivorous plants, with 200 species native to the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains acts as a “biodiversity hotspot”, and many carnivorous plants can be seen in Blackheath around the bushwalks along the escarpment trail. Although carnivorous plants are well-protected in the greater Sydney area, they are highly threatened in Western Australia due to mining, and are susceptible to poaching in South-East Asia, causing the research into their habitat protection to be of high priority to conservers like Bourke.

Throughout their time in modern fascination, carnivorous plants have been presented as dark and monstrous, but in reality, are as fragile as the glass Rowe and Yokoyama have used to romanticise them. Exhibitions like Plants with Bite are hoping to steer attention towards strengthening Australian-led efforts to conserve and protect these logic-defying plants, and as these plants grow into maturity over the next year, more events will take place at the Calyx to spur education on the subject, such as Greg Bourke’s talk and tour of the exhibit in February of 2019. To donate towards research and conservation of carnivorous plants, visit the Royal Botanic Gardens website.

Eleni Vergotis

Keith Rowe’s glass ‘Plants with Bite’



A Journey Through Grief and the Simpson Desert

Everything comes in waves. The surface of a lake, patterns in weather, the transmission of sound, light, the ocean, raw emotion. Physicists even speak of the wave-like properties all particles display at the sub-atomic scale. Shockwaves, the ripples of sand that fan out under my every footstep. Beyond, the blur that twists the sharp edge of land and sky into a ghostly flickering fire – heatwaves. The ups and downs of life, and here, the endless rise and fall of one sand dune after another ...

What brings me to travel through, of all places, the Simpson Desert? The world's largest area of parallel sand dunes in what is the driest region of Australia. What made me choose to don the backpack and cross the very heart of such an 'empty' place? Am I crazy? Do I want to die? Those are the sorts of questions asked of me before making the journey last winter, and many times since.

But I am not alone – throughout history, adventure of all kinds has been sought by a passionate breed of people who set out to chase the unknown. If it weren't for the boundless curiosity of humanity we would not be in such an age of great creativity and discovery as we are today. True perhaps, that without it we may not have inflicted so many far-reaching and complex problems upon ourselves, but neither have we ever had so much constructive power to solve them. So my desire to explore is simply what makes me human, I just chose to take it further than most seem to in modern times. But it's not the only reason for my 'big walk'.

I've always been a strong believer in getting away from the house and seeing what's really out there. My parents, though separated for as long as I can remember, took my three siblings and I into the bush from before we could walk. We visited their special places in the Blue Mountains, and became familiar with our own. We grew connections between each other, all bound to the land of our upbringing. That is home for me. It makes

me wonder though, what does it feel like to abandon a care for place? Virtually floating in dark, lifeless space chatting to Bob somewhere over there about the ticking of time and the moments of waste. I can only feel sad for people who think this way, and even sadder for the world they betray.

I think mum felt the same before she eventually succumbed to the ovarian cancer that had gripped her during my last three years of high school. She was as impassioned an activist as they come, tackling the big environmental issues with her heart and soul – knowing the future would be her children's to bear. I couldn't have asked for more. It was during year 12 for my brothers and I, when we knew her chances were slim, that mum picked milestones she wanted to still be around for – birthdays, our trial exams, car licences ... The last one she had listed was our graduation ceremony. But the months leading up to it she spent in and out of hospital, gradually fading away.

It was around this time she passed on to me a couple of adventure books that my grandma (her mother) had lent her to read. One in particular, on an unsupported walk across Australia, got me thinking. And so, on that last day, mum arrived at the school hall in a wheelchair and sat through part of the ceremony before rushing back to hospital. She missed seeing us on stage but it didn't matter, she'd made it. Of all days, it was that afternoon that I got my red Ps, and later the family went over to visit her. You could see she was ready then, had seen us through – a peace seemed to radiate. Shocking to me now – as only through writing this have I realised – I don't even remember the final words I spoke to her. I do know, however, one of the last things I said did include: "Love you mum, I'll see you in the Simpson Desert."

I'd already told her my plans to take a gap year and make a solo West-East crossing of the desert. She couldn't have and wouldn't





have said no. After all, it echoed the kind of spiritual journey both her and dad undertook during the Great Blue Mountains Heritage Walk of 1992. I guess what I was trying to assure her was that I intended to get up and do something meaningful with life. I wanted to have the strength and resilience she had shown and taught all the way to the end.

The other thing is, being a triplet, you always get lumped together. 'I' just doesn't enter your vocabulary. It's always 'we'. While there is something quite wonderful about such companionship, there comes a time when trying to be three is too much. So I decided to go it alone. And anyway, no one I would have chosen to travel with had quite the same commitment to going.

More importantly, the trip was about being connected with the landscape, so whether I had a friend or not was no concern. What so many people don't realise is that the very sand out there is my friend. The spinifex out there is my friend. The rattle-pod grevillea, the hopping mouse and lizard, the dingo and grasswren are my friends. We just happen to speak different languages – unless you learn to listen. The icy nights, the searing days, cloudless skies, the wind and rain – all good companions of mine. For without them we truly would be in a blank and lifeless space.

It is with this understanding that I shout out to all those that have not yet seen the Wild side of Earth, it's not too late! We are nature's greatest imitators, our very sustenance entwined with the life around us, our every inspiration a collection of experience from our surroundings. In our quest for sustainability we are really just coming back home, rediscovering forgotten kinship

and wisdom. In her last days, I promised mum that I would "one day have a really good garden", but she said: "You already do."

So I stepped out past the fence and away from the dusty old station track with a mental picture of all I loved and left behind. It would be eleven days before I saw another human being, seventeen before I walked into Birdsville on the other side; but the words of my dad still rang in my head: "Alone but not lonely." I knew pretty well

what I was in for, and in essence got what I expected – a damn tough but incredibly fulfilling walk! In a lot of ways I came back feeling not too

different, maybe a little older, a little scruffier and with a few more stories to tell. I suspect others looked at me somewhat differently though; maybe it's my far-away look, that extra twinkle, because you just never know ...

Early rays atop the dune strike hardened points of frozen canegrass, and
Scatter rainbows through the air.
The dingoes howl the dawn that paints the deep red sand –
Somewhere, somewhere;
While the rattle of the rattle-pod waves the wind across the land.

Milo Morrison-Jones

"... the trip was about being connected with the landscape, so whether I had a friend or not was no concern. What so many people don't realise is that the very sand out there is my friend."

Rewilding Lithgow at Secret Creek

Walking through Secret Creek Sanctuary in Lithgow is like entering a time before colonisation – where else do we walk right alongside pademelons, wallabies and potoroos? Before entering the sanctuary, I had never even heard the words ‘pademelon’ and ‘potoroo’. Well, when Charles Darwin visited Lithgow in 1836 there was probably a potoroo under every bush!

Trevor Evans, the founder of the not-for-profit Australian Ecosystems Foundation, which runs Secret Creek, would love this to be the case again, although his biggest passion is helping to prevent the extinction of the endangered Eastern Quoll – the rarest quoll in Australia. The first step to achieving this is through education, so that people like me may learn what a potoroo or a quoll actually is, and then learn to care, and start to reconnect with native species. Once a month Lithgow High School visits the sanctuary, and local volunteer groups come to walk the dingoes! Evans also hosts International Student Volunteers and exchange students in a fully self-sufficient cabin – most recently a Zoology student from Cambridge.

From the hand-built verandah of the cabin, Evans points out the ruins of the one-room house where the Pow family used to live. His grandmother once lived nearby too – before it became a mine. Twenty years ago, after being one of the 300 coal miners laid off from Clarence Mine, he was persuaded by his grandmother to buy this land back and restore it. He now lives here with his children and grandchildren, and his daughter runs a vegan cafe here.

Evans has a background in science and ecotourism, and has built wildlife sanctuaries for Dr John Wamsley, the conservationist known for protesting the laws that protected feral cats which were killing native animals. At a tourism award ceremony in South Australia, he wore the pelt of a feral cat on his head, leading to controversy, and ultimately resulting in a change in the law!

Many of the native animals that Evans protects can't survive in the wild as it exists today, because they can never coexist with introduced species. He explained how feral cats and foxes are eating our lizards, geckos, frogs and small mammals. Foxes give mange to wombats, and cats spread a brain parasite to quolls called toxoplasmosis, which is as dangerous as it sounds! These creatures are unable to thrive outside of the fenced area that Secret Creek provides. Even breeding within the sanctuary comes with its challenges, because the tiny insectivorous Eastern Quoll only breeds for the first two of its three-year life span. If one year of

breeding is missed, then the whole quoll population could be lost. The only wild quolls you will still find in the Blue Mountains are the kind that probably keep chicken owners up at night – the larger, aggressively carnivorous Spotted Tail Quoll, also known as the Tiger Quoll. The Eastern Quolls under Evans' care are the prey.

So how can we 'rewild' Australia? "Every British tourist needs to take one fox back to England with them," is Evans' suggestion! A fair trade. He says: "We need to take responsibility for what we've

done to them [the native species]. It's our fault for bringing in foxes and clearing so much land." On a small scale, Evans stresses the importance of keeping your cats locked inside, and in the bigger picture we need to be considering the attitudes of the politicians we elect in relation to protecting our ecosystems.

It doesn't take long at Secret Creek to see how varied Evans' work at the sanctuary is, and the different measures that he takes in order to allow the native animals to thrive. Installing floppy fences around the Sanctuary has made it impossible for cats to enter the 10 hectares that the sanctuary covers, and he recently returned from a trip to Tasmania in search of new genetics for the quolls. The genetics need to be rotated in order to keep the endangered species healthy, so different sanctuaries across Australia all contribute. Trevor also puts a lot of work into creating habitat. With volunteers he's planted around 400,000 trees!

All of this work and more led to Trevor

Trevor Evans holding an Eastern Quoll

Evans being titled Australian Geographic's Conservationist of the Year in 2010.

So where does the Sanctuary's name come from? As it turns out it has nothing to do with the tucked-away location of Secret Creek. It's a 'secret' because mining had caused the creek bed to crack and the water keeps disappearing.

And how is it that quolls became the focus of Evans' working life? It all started when, as a child, he found a quoll caught in a rabbit trap and then nursed it back to health. "I want to keep them safe for the future," he says.

If you similarly feel compelled to reconnect with native wildlife, then you can sponsor one of Trevor's animals from \$10 per month, or you can join the team of volunteers who keep this special time capsule alive. Come and help Trevor build a new koala enclosure to the soundscape of howling dingoes! (Just don't get in the way of the two emus, Dumb and Dumber!)

To find out more, visit www.secretcreeksanctuary.com.au

Annabel Pettit



Love Makes a Way

I am sitting on a couch, in a simple but beautifully-crafted strawbale home, set on 45 acres in the Kanimbla Valley. It's not quite finished. I'm listening to Matt Anslow. Behind him on the wall are a set of framed works by Banksy – the notorious, but anonymous, British street artist, whose satirical and darkly humorous stencils are copied by graffiti artists around the world. In his stencils, a little girl is letting go of a heart-shaped balloon, while a little boys stands in a field of roughly sketched flowers and fires a machine gun.

Concern for the needs of children clearly permeates this home – from the artworks on the wall to the large bookcase filled with board games. Matt and his wife Ashlee have chosen to work part-time so that they can share the care of their young children on this permaculture farm, nestled into a hillside below the dramatic backdrop of the Blue Mountains. Ashlee is a registered nurse and midwife at Lithgow Hospital, who's also studied International Public Health and Health Security. Matt has been a community educator in the Aid and Development sector, studied theology, has a PhD in Biblical Studies, and co-founded Love Makes a Way, the largest faith-based civil disobedience movement in Australia's history. Its focus is on getting the kids off Nauru.

In 2014, the year before their daughter Evie was born, there were 1138 children in detention.

Two years earlier, Matt trained in non-violent direct action with Justin Whelan and Josh Dowton, and in 2013 was part of a group of 8 who sat and prayed in the Immigration Minister's Office in protest against the government's inhumane policies.

"We got a lot of media and we only decided on the hashtag #lovemakesaway in the 10 minutes before we walked in," said Matt. Five of the group were arrested. A couple of weeks later they did an Easter vigil in the Minister's Office.

Easter Saturday is the day between death and life; grief and joy; despair and hope. This time 125 people joined in.

That night, in response to the many asking how they could get involved, Matt started the Love Makes a Way Facebook group. Hundreds liked the Page in the first 24 hours. The hundreds turned to thousands and today there are over 22,000 who follow the Page. He and Justin Whelan began training groups around Australia in non-violent direct action.

In 2014 they held 22 actions with 200 people. Most were arrested. They were described by the police as "the nicest crimes we've ever had in here".

"Back then the churches were very quiet but since 2014 most major denominations have put out statements condemning the detention of children," says Matt.

In 2015, a group of 40 priests, nuns, Christian leaders, pastors, ministers, and a former Catholic bishop, staged a protest in Parliament House, occupying the foyer and singing songs. The Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia, and the former

Uniting Church president have all taken part in these direct actions.

Matt points out that "non-violent direct action is about dramatization. It's a way of unearthing the tension that exists but that people want to keep quiet. If you dramatize it people can't ignore the tension".

By 2016 there were 56 vigils in a week around Australia at the offices of MPs and Senators. When the Nauru files were leaked, volunteers did 10-hour public readings of the files. Some people chained themselves to Kirribilli House. Over 300 risked arrest and 250 people were arrested.

"People are outraged by what's happened and rightly so – it's a human rights disaster," declares Matt. "Against my expectations I learnt that people are ready to take radical action very quickly if they believe the issue is urgent and if they trust who is alerting them to it. We expected a 50:50 split in the church, but it was more like 95:5. People are more open to non-violent direct action in Australia than we thought."

We go for a walk around Matt and Ashlee's farm and talk permaculture. When they lived 8 storeys up in a unit in Sydney they even grew greens and cherry tomatoes and raised chooks on their balcony. Here they have a proper chook run, goats, a dog and a large Banksy stencilled onto the side of the shed. It's a masked protester, but he's throwing a bunch of flowers instead of a bomb.



Ashlee and Matt Anslow

Matt is deeply inspired by the American Freedom Movement, Martin Luther King and essayist, poet and farmer Wendell Berry, who wrote: "To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival." (The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays)

"You can't love what you don't know," says Matt. "We moved to the Kanimbla Valley to come to know a piece of land over time." As we continue to walk around the farm, Matt reflects that after their years of travelling around Asia they've come to realise that what

"We're learning that you can't muscle the land to do what you want without damage to the source of our life, and embracing the mundane is an incredibly important part of the future we need."

matters is connecting to community and learning to love a place.

"We're learning that you can't muscle the land to do what you want without damage to the source of our life, and embracing the mundane is an incredibly important part of the future we need. The choices we make every day, like what we buy, how we spend our time, how we bring up our kids to not be obsessed with consumerism ... these are the mundane choices that affect future generations."

"There's dramatic action, and there's the boring day-to-day of life. We've recognised the importance of slowing down and observing and carefully waiting."

Prayer vigils continue around the country.

To find out more, visit lovemakesaway.org.au

Blue Mountains Youth are BEE-ing Scientists



'Lets BEE Scientists' at the field day

Ever wondered why bees love basil? What is their favourite colour? What attracts other pollinators to our flowers? I'm joined by enthusiastic high-school aged students as we design ways to test these curiosities in our gardens.

As a young PhD researcher and environmental science communicator, I'm constantly puzzled by the disconnect between ecology 'education', community-led environmental initiatives and university research.

If we are going to learn 'hypothesis testing' and 'research methods', why not learn by doing: going outside, pursuing our curiosities and recognising each other as the scientists we are?

In a collaborative, 8-week course with Living Learning Blue Mountains, 11 home-educated high-schoolers are learning about (and doing!) experimental design in ecology and will be interpreting and communicating their findings in creative ways.

To test pollinator preferences in gardens, we've designed artificial flowers based on flower attributes that we've observed. Ecologists have used artificial flowers to test bumblebee behaviour for several decades, but rarely are these methods used outside.

What elements do we need in our artificial flowers to attract pollinators out in the field? Menindee, who is 15 years old, describes the artificial flower that she co-designed with other high-schoolers: "We thought about what attracts a bee in terms of colours, shapes, textures ... the yellow plate and yellow pipe-cleaners form the corolla. We thought about the centre of the flower, what the bees are attracted to, and so we put the [Eppendorf tube] in the middle and had a cotton bud to act like a feeder."

And it did attract pollinators! Bees and flies were landing on this and other designs before we could even place them in the field. This just goes to show how creative experimentation

with young folk can address gaps in scientific literature. As active learners and doers we are contributing to 'science' in tangible ways ... and having fun!

Julie-Ann Henninger, who co-facilitates the course, feels passionately about creating these experiences: "My daughter and I did pollinator observations with Amelie last summer in Lawson. We really appreciated this opportunity to participate in fieldwork

and it really deepened our connection with the world around us. As home-schoolers, we are super keen to connect with a diversity of people

doing what they love, and to learn by engaging in fun and meaningful work."

From this experience our 'Lets BEE Scientists' collaboration emerged. Julie shares her motivations for the course: "I am so excited for our home-schooling community to experience this hands-on learning and have an opportunity to learn from an ecologist and contribute to the research. Experimental ecology helps us to see more of what is going on around us, to communicate what we find, and to be more connected with the intricacies of the places we love."

And I couldn't agree more! In co-facilitating this course, I'm most excited about creating authentic research opportunities, connecting youth with university resources, and showing the science world how astounding doing ecology with community can be.

So, out to our garden laboratory we leapt!

On November 4 we held our big field day in the Blue Mountains Organic Community Garden in Katoomba. The high-schoolers led the 24 students in the primary aged 'Lets BEE Scientists' course, and their families, in observing native bees and other insect pollinators on both artificial and real flowers in the

"I'm most excited about creating authentic research opportunities, connecting youth with university resources, and showing the science world how astounding doing ecology with community can be."

garden.

Teyo, aged six, a student in the primary course, shares his excitement at discovering a wasp on an artificial flower: “Look at it up close! Wow... Wow... Wow! It looks a bit orange and has a big blue oval-ish wing at the back! There he goes, there he goes!”

Local communities are most in tune with changes in the local environment, and best equipped for ongoing environmental monitoring. Citizen Science groups like Streamwatch, who have monitored local waterways for 28 years, are a testament to this community-led, robust science. With a little access to experimental design training and resources (e.g. microscopes!), co-designed projects with communities and university researchers are possible and happening.

And when it comes to environmental monitoring outside, there is no better field ecologist than our young people. So much of what I do as an ecologist is to observe and question. This takes an inquisitive mind and a lot of patience! When asked about what she learned about ecology fieldwork, Ember, aged 9, a student in the primary course shared: “That it’s really good to stay in the same place for a long time. Because if you’re just there for a short time you’re gonna see one insect, but if you’re there for a long time, you might see loads even if at the beginning you don’t see anything!”

Ember went on to share her excitement when using the microscopes: “I love microscopes – looking at things and you can

see all the little details and if you wanna go back and maybe do a drawing and think of it in your mind you can ... I’m [going to] write a story about a bee and butterfly.”

Scientists have much to learn from these young curiosities and creativities. A challenge for many researchers is translating our ‘findings’ to the ‘general population’ who are our doers and decision makers. Imagine a scientific practice that includes our young folk in the making and sharing of a science that we can

“Local communities are most in tune with changes in the local environment, and best equipped for ongoing environmental monitoring.”

all connect with?

Science can be a deeply empowering process when it is brought back into the hands of the community. I’m hoping this project can grow into a model for more co-design ecology research that acknowledges and respects the curiosity, the creativity and the capabilities of our youth and communities.

By supporting our young people with active learning opportunities and resources to pursue their wonder at the natural world, we can all BEE Scientists.

For more info on ‘Lets BEE Scientists’ and other Living Learning programs, visit:

bluemountainlivinglearning.wordpress.com

To learn more about Amelie’s science communication and research projects, visit crosspollinating.org or [amelie_ecology](#) on Instagram and Twitter.

Amelie Vanderstock

Lucas and Simona Bustamante-Lopez adding sugar syrup to the artificial flowers



Ben Roberts: A Social Enterprise Cafe in Lawson

Tucked away in a Lawson cafe, a small team of dedicated chefs and support workers are making some big differences in the lives of young people with a disability. Ben Roberts Cafe had its opening in March 2018, employing young participants of the NDIS' Cook + Connect program, which gets young people with a disability cooking in neighbourhood centres, in restaurants and at home with a facilitator.

Ben Roberts Cafe is an independent social enterprise run by Karen Frawley – its only external funding comes from Blue Mountains Food Services, which covers the rent and bills. The Cafe supports its own wages and running costs, employing a head chef, five young people on a full hospitality award-wage, as well as two full-time support workers: Leesa Brading and former waitress Delaney Ferguson.

Delaney explained how hospitality is a starting ground for lots of young people, not just those with a disability. The Cafe provides a safe space where employees have the opportunity to work, grow their confidence and social skills, and just hang out without feeling self-conscious – things that every young person is looking for.

However, all the staff agree that the Cafe, being the intersection of three different industries – community services, hospitality and disability support – makes for some real challenges and often amusing contradictions! It's a careful balance of the inevitable time pressures that come with running a cafe, while providing employees with the patience and structure they need. Chefs and support workers would also be approaching the Cafe from different perspectives: "Every meeting on the community services side starts with 'So what are we thankful for today?' and the hospitality staff find themselves looking at their watches thinking 'I could be prepping right now...!'" Delaney says.

Cafe manager Karen Frawley also describes the fast-paced emotional rollercoaster of hospitality, where things have to be spontaneous and everyone has to adopt a 'make it up as you go along' mentality. 'Policy on the run' is how she describes the whole process – standing in stark contrast to the community services industry, which, she explains, spends time consulting and developing services for the community. Despite these differences, the result seems to be a really close, integrated and efficient team over at Ben Roberts Cafe.

"It's no small feat," as Sarah Kelly, the mother of an NDIS participant reminds us. Sarah's son, Caius Kelly, graduated from high school two years ago. This should be a time of enormous new experiences for young people, but Sarah explains how without the Cook + Connect program, it wouldn't have been the same for Caius. After 13 years of schooling, the parent of a young adult with a disability often also becomes an administrator. Having to coordinate their social activities also isn't easy. She tells us: "It can be hard to see a direction for your child when they're young, and it can be terrifying to think: 'Are they always going to be obsessed with Thomas the Tank Engine? What's going to happen to them?'"

The future is a black hole. And as a parent you just need them to have that exposure out in the community, you don't want them hidden away."

Through the Cafe, the five young employees are not only serving and engaging with their community, they are showing other young people with a disability that there are options for their future after high school. One of those employees is Dan, who had his former support-unit class come and visit him at work for a school excursion. For Delaney, this was one of her most gratifying experiences at the Cafe: "Dan served his old teacher, who was proud to see him working away and chatting with customers, and the young students saw that they could succeed in the community and working life after school."

Karen says that she in turn has learnt from her employees' work ethic, saying: "Their desire to learn never ceases to amaze me." We all take work for granted from time to time, even see it as a burden, but for Delaney, a lesson has been learnt from witnessing how the cafe's employees really value work for itself. They see it as an opportunity, and not just to make money. She explains how, regardless of our different abilities, we all need the sense of responsibility that comes with work.

Every young person with a disability who comes to work

Danielle Fletcher and Daniel Kazmierczek



at Ben Roberts has an individual goal in mind, and the support staff agree that it can be challenging to assign tasks based on the different abilities and level of comfort of each employee. Just taking a customer's order can be a confronting task. It can take a bit of practice to build up your confidence with customer service. Delaney, who has a lot of experience in hospitality, admits it can be all too easy to forget how scary it is to interact with customers as a beginner in the trade.

This is why the Ben Roberts Cafe has been valuable to all who have been involved with it – there's learning to be done on both sides, and it connects so many different life experiences in one setting.

Currently, the Cafe is looking for more young employees living with disabilities to add to their existing team of five and would also really benefit from your sponsorship. So if you'd like to get involved with the Cook + Connect program – as a participant or a sponsor – then let Karen know! The Cafe hopes to be self-sustaining soon – covering its own rent, bills, wages and running costs. But the team at Ben Roberts aren't daunted by this challenge. Just before leaving the Cafe, our final question was an open-ended one: "Was it [all of that work] worth it?" The response was a resounding, unanimous, no-brainer: "Yes, every second! We just want to keep it going."

You can find Ben Roberts Cafe at 10 Benang Street, Lawson, open Tuesday to Friday from 7–3, and Saturdays from 8–2.

For more information phone 0434 314 254 or visit www.benrobertscafe.org.au and facebook.com/cafebenroberts

Annabel Pettit

Blackheath Community Farm and the Duke of Edinburgh Award

My name is Tom Delaney and I am 14 years old. I love to play music and sport and am always on the lookout for new opportunities to enrich my future and life as a young person in the community. I have recently started the Duke of Edinburgh Award which has led me to take part in some excellent community activities like helping out at the Blackheath Community Farm. This has allowed me to help the community, as well as giving me a sense of purpose through assisting others in their work and meeting lovely people in the process. I chose to do the Duke of Edinburgh Award because it's a good achievement to have under my belt for later years, and I think it will look good on my CV. I also do it because it gives me more opportunities to connect with social groups and get involved with fun and beneficial activities.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award has four components. First, one must take part in some form of physical recreation at least once per week for three months, in my case, cricket. Second, one must regularly train in some form of skill like a musical instrument, for me, saxophone. Third, one must regularly do community service like helping at a nursing home or local garden. And finally, one must attend two overnight 'adventurous' journeys like bushwalking or kayaking. There are three levels of the award, Bronze, Silver and Gold, each in increasing difficulty. I am new to the program, so I am starting with the Bronze Award.

At the Blackheath Community Farm I've been going along every week and have worked with some of the other 'blokes' on the construction of a large metal frame covering the entire garden. This assembly involved digging holes, raising frame arches, drilling holes in steel pipe, threading wire, levelling beams and much more. I personally spent most of my time threading wire and drilling holes on the frame and I have learned a lot about structural physics; also little tips on things like not pushing too hard on the drill and how to run a proper levelling line. At the garden we also work on harvesting crops, planting fruit trees and vegetables, watering the garden, constructing protection from birds and kangaroos, and nurturing seedlings. Every week we also hold a social lunch where we all stop work, sit around drinking cups of tea, and have philosophical conversations about the state of the world.

A problem in our society at the moment is the fact that people do not have enough opportunities to engage in community



Learning how to build with Don

activities or become involved in new social groups. Initiatives like community gardens are very beneficial in solving this problem. I travel to Blackheath Community Farm once a week to meet with a beautiful collection of people, all with different stories, skills and interests who, without the garden, would probably never have met. All these people come together to socialise and have fun helping each other to grow food. I certainly feel better off from my involvement in these interactions. They have led me to have a broader outlook on life and have given me a very different perspective from which to assess day-to-day events. Thanks to taking part in these activities I now feel like I am much more connected to the community and can have a positive influence on people all over the Mountains, which I find very satisfying.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award, and in particular the community service component, is an excellent initiative and I regard it as being a win-win situation. The participant gets to connect with their community and have fun helping others while the community receives welcome assistance from committed young workers. It has provided me with a better understanding of the benefits of helping the community and working with others in general.

Tom Delaney



Lucas Trihey Transforming Events

On the edge of the Simpson Desert, 35 km from the nearest town, lies the bed of an ancient, dried-out lake which every July becomes home to the Big Red Bash, the largest remote music festival in the world. The festival has featured well-known artists such as Paul Kelly, Jimmy Barnes and Missy Higgins. Now coming into its seventh year, the Big Red Bash sees

involved managing an “ever-growing pool of casuals to come and set up ropes, camps, carry film gear and guide film crews through canyons and in cliff areas”.

In 1997, Trihey was asked to form the Australian climbing and safety team for the Australian Eco-Challenge in Cairns. Through this event he made contact with The North Face 100



Lucas Trihey from Event Safety Services

around 9,000 campers make the trip to ‘Bashville’, two days drive from Brisbane and two and a half from Sydney.

For those campers, it’s easy not to realise the planning involved with making an event of this size go off without a hitch.

The site has to be designed to give easy access to facilities. Water and food has to be trucked in, rubbish and waste trucked out. Electricity has to be generated, volunteers organised, risks and hazards identified and mitigated. Event management is a logistics problem with a thousand variables, and that’s the job of the Event Director, Lucas Trihey, and his team at Event Safety Services (ESS).

Lucas Trihey has been involved in the adventure industry since 1986, being at times an expeditioner, photo-journalist, guide, teacher, publisher, editor and consultant. Through the skills he learned on his personal adventures, and as a climbing trainer, Trihey found work on the sets of films, documentaries and TV programs such as ‘Wild Australia - The Edge’ where he worked as climbing coordinator starting in 1994. Trihey’s work in this area

(now Ultra-Trail Australia or UTA), a 100 km trail running event through Blue Mountains National Park. Trihey is now the medical team director of UTA, overseeing 5,000 participants and a staff of over 60 doctors and nurses.

In 2006, Trihey became the first non-Indigenous person to walk unsupported across the Simpson Desert, through its geographical centre and away from vehicle tracks. For 17 days he carried all his food and water in a two-wheeled cart, from East Bore on the Western edge, to Birdsville in the East, a distance of over 400 km.

Now Trihey and ESS are bringing together everything he learnt on that walk to provide support services and management for events in remote areas. In the case of the Big Red Bash, ESS manages nearly every aspect of the festival, the planning for which can take the better part of a year. This includes site layout, risk management, first aid, organisation of food vendors, potable and wastewater transportation, electricity generation, coordination of 450 volunteers and radio and satellite communication in an area without mobile reception.

“Do what it takes to build your experience so you’re able to make good decisions ... it takes passion and hard work.”

Trihey is always looking for ways to update traditional event management strategies and, in doing so, expose over 9,000 campers to environmentally-friendly alternatives. “We’re not preaching, just showing,” says Lucas, who is currently recycling 10 cubic meters of aluminium cans from the concert area alone. The cans are crushed and sold at a recycling centre in Dubbo rather than entering landfill. Now he’s looking at alternatives for dealing with waste removal, through the use of composting toilets.

At previous Big Red Bash concerts, the typical waste solution was to use chemical toilets, the kind seen at events and construction sites the world over. Each year 100,000 liters of water were brought onto the site for flushing, and 120,000 liters of liquid waste were removed to be processed at the Birdsville treatment plant, 35 km away.

This year, for the first time, these chemical toilets were replaced by 160 composting toilets. Instead of flushing, the composting toilet drops waste matter into standard 240L wheelie bins. After each use, a cup of sawdust, provided in tubs in each cubicle, is enough to prevent the majority of odors. “The public reaction was guarded at first. But when people saw them and used them, they loved the loos.” Trihey even found that they received less complaints than their chemical counterparts.

After the event, the toilet frames were packed up, ready to be used for the next event, while the bins were fenced off and left on site for 8 months to decompose. Trihey related his experience coming back and lifting the lids, being amazed at the lack of any smell: “It’s unbelievable, the natural composting process happens so fast.” The toilets don’t require water, chemicals or further treatment once the composting process is complete: “You’re left

with a rich, fibrous, carbon-neutral compost.”

Now, Trihey is working on his own design for a composting toilet, inspired by the permaculture organisation Milkwood and in collaboration with Ascent Consulting Engineers in Blackheath. During my interview I was able to see the recently completed prototype of the new design, with metal fabrication by Peter Hodgkinson, assembled in Trihey’s own backyard. The design is relatively simple, using a frame of galvanised steel, vinyl siding and a plywood seat and floor making it light, strong and able to be flat packed for easy transportation.

With the design complete, Trihey thinks it will probably be another year to get tests done and sort out legal compliance needs, after which he hopes to rent the toilets out to smaller, local events. “Whenever I see a plastic portaloos, I think, that could be a composting loo.”

“Whenever I see a plastic portaloos, I think, that could be a composting loo.”

I think, that could be a composting loo.”

To some, Lucas Trihey’s success may look like luck, the chance encounters that led him from his passion to a fulfilling career, but in the words of Louis Pasteur: “Chance favors the prepared mind.” Trihey put a lot of emphasis on building skills and experience: “Do what it takes to build your experience so you’re able to make good decisions ... it takes passion and hard work.”

Trihey and his team have already begun work on the seventh Big Red Bash to be held 9–11 July 2019.

Jack Coggins

Lucas placing a wheelie bin under a composting toilet



Jacinta Tobin, The Preatures and Yanada

“Tell me how it was in the beginning of our land,
We’re like in the Dreamtime, shedding our skin again

Yanada yanada yanada-marri yanada / moon, moon, moon
great (full) moon
Gumada, gumada, nula burra-wa / spirit, spirit (here, there
everywhere), in the sky
Yanada yanada yanada, walama yanama-la / moon, moon,
moon, great (full) moon
Gumada, gumada wa nura (Ngurra-wa) / let’s walk with spirit
on country”

Yanada is Dharug for moon, and is the title of the lead single off The Preatures’ second album ‘Girlhood’. Isabella Manfredi (or Izzi) of The Preatures performed Yanada

a desire to learn more about the land she lives on in Sydney. She was inspired by the work of Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones, as well as the theatre adaptation of Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River*, the story of the relationship between a white convict family and an Indigenous woman whose land they steal. Izzi was moved by hearing the Indigenous cast members speaking entirely in Dharug. She tells Triple J: “I didn’t understand any of the language, but it hit me in a place and the sound of the language moved in me, like a fish in water.”

Jacinta shares a connection with *The Secret River*, as a descendant of Yarramundi, the man who inspired her album as well as Kate Grenville’s novel. So when members of the play’s Indigenous cast were being unsettled by unusual weather patterns and persistent rain every show, Jacinta and Aunty Carol Cooper were called down to the Theatre Company to perform and bring



Back: Reyhn Marvin, Jacinta Tobin, Isabella Manfredi, Luke Davison, Jack Moffitt, Thomas Champion; Front: Willem Robert Hendriksen

on the 28th of June this year, as part of an electric show at the Hotal Gearin in Katoomba, where a jubilant, receptive and chaotic Mountains crowd sang along with every word. Amidst such a party, it would be easy to forget the months of community consultation that led up to this moment as Izzi sang Yanada.

As part of this consultation, a co-writer and mentor was Darug songwoman and Blue Mountains local, Jacinta Tobin! Jacinta is a teacher of Dharug and in 2001 released her own CD, ‘Yarramundi and the Four Leaf Clover’. But what kind of complexities arise when a non-Indigenous person sings in languages? Well, Jacinta argues that there shouldn’t really be any, since we all already speak Dharug, oftentimes without even being aware of it. Bondi, boogie board, Coogee, are all Dharug words. Bondi is derived from ‘bundi’ meaning ‘the hard wave’, boogie is ‘to bathe or swim’ and Coogee means ‘the place of rotting seaweed’. Interviewed by Marc Fennell for SBS’s *The Feed*, Jacinta said: “Who’s telling me I can’t share my language? Who asked the French when we all learnt Frère Jacques at school?” Touché!

For The Preatures, the road to Yanada began after Izzi felt

with them white ochre from the country, their visit bringing the rain to an end. This story would come to inspire Izzi, who by this point was already singing the melody of what was to become Yanada. She also knew the story she wanted to tell – about a maternal relationship between an older woman and a young girl. This, she then realised, was an Indigenous story, requiring an Indigenous voice. A cultural consultant for Bangarra Dance Theatre put Izzi in touch with Jacinta, or as Jacinta put it: “I was doing language courses in Sydney, then Izzi came into one of my classes and I kidnapped her up the mountain.” Collaborating in her Blue Mountains home one day, Jacinta recognised Dharug in the made-up words Izzi was using for her melody, telling *The Guardian*: “Language was just trying to come out of her mouth.” It sounded to Jacinta like Izzi was singing ‘yanada’ – moon.

This must have been the key for Izzi – apparently she burst into happy tears at this discovery! The song certainly seems to complement the introspective album ‘Girlhood’. Although in *Dreamtime* the moon is sometimes male or female, depending on the story and country, it holds strong Celtic associations with femininity and transformation. You could create links between

the meaningful symbolism behind Yanada, and the themes Manfredi was exploring through 'Girlhood' – the omnipresence, strength and transformative powers of women and the moon. The moon has long been a muse for creatives – Izzi shared this D.H Lawrence quote to her social media: “The moon is a great nerve centre from which we quiver forever.”

Izzi told Triple J that Yanada is about “doing something out of your comfort zone that leads you to a different way of knowing and understanding the world”. How did The Preatures manage to leave their own comfort zone in the creation of Yanada without imposing on someone else's? How does the respectful intention of a piece like this shine through, and when would it become cultural appropriation? For The Preatures the answers to these questions seem to always be in consultation, collaboration and ensuring that the whole process is a cultural exchange, “rather than taking without understanding”.

For although, as Jacinta argued, Dharug is a language free to be shared and spoken, and the elders that Jacinta and Izzi had consulted with were fully supportive of The Preatures' work, Jacinta told SBS Viceland how she still needed to consult with spirit before going ahead with the song. She explained how the eagle is the highest lore man, and so, when an eagle showed itself to her, it “signed the document”. It was a sign that spirit approved, that “the ancestors were happy for the song to go ahead”.

His significance was made even greater by the fact that he flew up ahead while Jacinta was in Richmond, on Yarramundi's land. Though it was a tense few days for the band, the process of waiting for the eagle to show himself to her was vital for Jacinta, who sought to clarify her purpose in a situation that had become very political, and for some, had reawakened painful discussions. This process also reaffirms that every decision Jacinta made throughout her collaboration with The Preatures was never a result of ego or any other ulterior motive like money – but that she was acting with a full awareness of kinship and the responsibility that comes with it, as well as with a deep connection to the collective consciousness of the land.

Ensuring that their work with Indigenous communities was first and foremost an exchange, The Preatures ran a fundraiser to support the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), focusing on the re-issuing and free redistribution of Professor Jakelin Troy's book on Dharug, 'The Sydney Language'. The AIATSIS documents Indigenous languages, with the largest archive of song cycles in the world. These song cycles hold information on indigenous history, relationships, care for country and lore philosophy (Jacinta explains that lore philosophy is to love, observe, respect and educate). Despite this impressive collection, less than 10% of Australia's languages are comprehensively documented. Over 250 Indigenous language groups covered Australia prior to European colonisation, yet today only 120 are still spoken.



Izzi “advocates for us all to be speaking Indigenous languages, to be hearing them on the radio and acknowledging them as a part of our collective Australian history”

For Izzi, who grew up listening to bands like Yothu Yindi and the Warumpi Band, this need for language revitalisation lies at the heart of her purpose through Yanada. It's why she advocates

for us all to be speaking Indigenous languages, to be hearing them on the radio and acknowledging them as a part of our collective Australian history, telling The Guardian: “Indigenous languages have been systematically oppressed in this country. Now they're in danger of disappearing.” In his 2014 address to the National Press Club entitled 'Before It's Too Late – A Call to Secure Australia's Indigenous Heritage', Chair of the AIATSIS Mick Dodson quoted W.C Wentworth's letter to the then PM Robert Menzies, writing: “If we do not undertake it [preservation of Indigenous culture] now, humanity will lose something of permanent value, and we Australians will lay ourselves [open] to perpetual reproach.” Or as Jacinta told The Guardian: “If the language isn't

spoken, then it simply doesn't exist.” Though later she beautifully rephrased this statement, explaining how the languages are stored in the land, that “the water will always remember the language” even if we forget it. By speaking and singing in languages, we are massaging the land, encouraging the language to live again through us. Along with it, we'd be reawakening Indigenous values of care for land, which we all need to embrace. So what The Preatures are

doing by singing in Dharug, as Jacinta explains, is vibing that same ancient Indigenous

frequency and transmitting it out to us all as a reminder of this collective responsibility.

So let's hope that having The Preatures sing Yanada at the Hotel Gearin is a sign of things to come. Not only that we will experience a greater exposure to indigenous languages, but that Katoomba will host more regional tours of big bands! Last year, Retro Rehash host Willem Hendriksen started a local campaign to get King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard to come and play in Katoomba. More widely though it was a call to put Katoomba on the map as a desirable destination for bigger tours, for these groups to meet with rural creatives and young locals like Reyhn, Sarah and Hannah!

“Their show was absolutely electrifying. They were so tight and had a great stage presence. They really made the gig a party. I hope we get more touring bands out here so they can bring their music to a new audience and gain a bigger following” – Reyhn, 18

“Everyone was just dancing the whole time, and there was a huge encore ... it's such a community force, when we have people come here and play for us and without charging a fortune ... it means the world to us.” – Sarah, 19

“It was amazing to have such a well known band come and play in a smaller venue, especially a place so familiar to us ... they played with such a powerful energy which electrified the audience ... it was a great night.” – Hannah, 18

Annabel Pettit

Living on the Edge

Here in the Blue Mountains, we're living on the edge. In fact, we're living on more than one edge. Edges are just about everywhere to be seen here, between urban and peri-urban Sydney, between National Parks and built environments, the peri-urban and the rural.

Edges are fragile. They can easily be neglected and blurred to the point of being ignored or even disappearing altogether. For artists and creative minds, edges are the place to be. They are where you find out about what is real, new, experimental and cutting-edge. Walter Benjamin went as far as stating that studying the marginal was far more illustrative of true history than studying the mainstream.

For Permaculturalists too, edges are where it's at. When

They were running out of water, their vegetable crops were getting water-stressed, and planting schedules were being further and further delayed. They could not afford to update the inefficient dam that came with their land, and had to find the time to figure out how to raise funds.

Anyone who's had a go at regenerative farming will tell you it's bloody hard work. I cannot think of any other job where there are as many areas to master, or so many unknowns. You are spiritually linked and invested in your land, your crops, your animals, and the natural world around you, and you are also at their mercy.

The closest thing I could relate it to was being a young mum. How easy it is to be so invested and consumed in motherhood that it can become a very lonely affair. If things aren't going

smoothly you can easily feel stressed, overwhelmed, guilty, disconnected and isolated.

This is what I felt was happening to our most wonderful farmers. How could we really, truly reach out and show our love and support? Erika approached me a few days later, asking if it would be possible to gather some experienced gardeners together and help her and Hayden for a day.

I could most definitely do that. The Lyttleton Backyard Grower list was a fantastic place to start and, thanks to our lovely community of gardeners and growers, we



designing a site, they are places where the world is your oyster. You can be as creative as you like, whilst learning how to master the art of stacking functions. A fence can be a trellis, a shade structure, a windbreak, a microclimate and whatever else fits within your context. In Social Permaculture, identifying edges allows for a greater understanding of functional connections amongst communities and social systems.

At Lyttleton Stores in Lawson, we bask in the glory of living on the edge of suburban and peri-urban living. We teach people in suburban and peri-urban backyards to grow their own food and coordinate a system for swapping excess produce for store credit. We are close to the local, rural farmers who supply us with produce. We run workshops studying ecological connections in natural ecosystems, and how we are losing those ecological connections in our social systems. Are we connected enough with the food we eat or even with the people who live in our neighbourhood? Do we notice enough when somebody is feeling sad or unwell?

A few months ago, in the midst of the drought, I noticed lines of worry appear on the faces of many of our friends and suppliers who are local farmers. Amongst them were Erika and Hayden from Epicurean Harvest, who supply us with their beautiful produce, grown regeneratively in Hartley, a rural village within a stone's throw of the Blue Mountains.

managed to get a good group of people together, and what a group!

Ages ranged from 18 to 60. The younger volunteers were keen to get farming experience and learn more about regenerative practices. Older participants were there in part to regain a spiritual connection with their local environment and step out of their beaten path.

The 'people power' was a huge help to Erika and Hayden, who usually manage their land on their own. It only took us a few hours to do what would have been an overwhelming extra couple of days of work for them on their own.

Amongst it all, there was singing, chatting, laughing, and an immense feeling of inter-connectedness felt by participants as well as Erika and Hayden. This feeling of community has become rare and intangible for farmers who are mostly out there on their own. The same farmers we depend on at least three times a day for most of the food we eat.

At the end of our day, we spoke of making this a regular occurrence, and how wonderful an experience it had been. I am looking into making it a regular day out, perhaps every three months, so get in touch if you are interested in coming along to the next one.

Emmanuela Prigioni

Students of the Hawkesbury Reshaping Sustainable Farming

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (SAFS) students at Western Sydney University, Hawkesbury campus have decided to take actions into their own hands and trial some non-conventional techniques for growing food with the hopes of seeking more sustainable means of feeding the rising population. As the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has recently reported, Earth's population is expected to climb to 9.1 billion by 2050 and the current state of the industry cannot support this demand. Vast amounts of arable land are being lost because of poor farming practices and expanding urbanisation, whilst producers are struggling to meet their bottom lines fighting against the variable climate and volatile market prices. As land is a finite resource, producers and scientists alike must develop sustainable and regenerative farming solutions for growing more food on the land available.

A vacant horticultural paddock has been donated to keen horticulture students to enable them to implement the concepts of their lectures and introduce new means of sustainable farming into the Hawkesbury region. Seasonal vegetables were grown here under conventional practices for several years. The first priority of this SAFS Student Farm has been to increase the soil organic matter (SOM) of the sandy loam soil. These soils, whilst capable of retaining organic matter, are notorious for their permeable properties. As sustained water is critically important for seasonal vegetable crops – especially during extreme heatwaves that typically return after the New Year – it is important to maximise the water-holding capacity of the soil. One technique of increasing SOM is the provision of organic matter in the form of compost, which has been provided by the Australian Organics Cycling Association. A more long-term approach is returning plant biomass into the

A snapshot of the 130 tomato plants raised by Student Farm volunteers



Land for experimentation on the Hawkesbury campus soil where it is decomposed by the soil biology. The students are currently planting out a range of vegetable crops that have been grown on-site including tomatoes, lettuce, chives, parsley, mint basil and more. At season's end, these plants will be mowed into the soil and will break down over winter. Here, nature's nutrient recycling systems will naturally build up the fertility of this plot without the need of expensive chemical inputs.

Where the classroom meets the field

The soil rhizosphere, that is, the region surrounding plant roots, houses the second-most numerous population of organisms on Earth, second only to coral reefs. It has been estimated that one teaspoon of poor agricultural soil contains more soil biota than people who have ever lived on Earth! Learning to understand the roles of the soil biology is critical for developing sustainable land management solutions and for ensuring that rising populations can be nourished with nutrient-dense food.

The fungi are the mouths of the soil, known for 'eating' the larger fibrous timber masses found on the forest floor. However, in conventional agriculture, 'fungi' are seen as a serious pest capable of destroying an entire harvest, and an organism that must be destroyed at all costs. We are just beginning to realise that this is not the case. Once the fungi have broken down these larger fractions of organic material, the soil bacteria feast upon them, actively consuming nutrients. These microbes are then consumed by the larger and more famous of the soil animals, the earthworms, which excrete the nutrients into their raw forms.

The future of the SAFS Student Farm is limited only by the breadth of the students' imaginations and the systems ordained by nature. Armed with an understanding of the science and a keen eye, these students are likely to rectify this once desolate paddock and steer it towards a very bright and productive future.

Dylan Fox

Grunt 'n' Groove at Wollemi Common

Nestled into a gorgeous blue-gum-forested valley on the Colo River northwest of Sydney, lies a magical wilderness retreat known as the Wollemi Common. While privately owned, it is being operated on the same sharing principle as a traditional British common, allowing visitors and the 60 or so 'Friends of the Common' to collectively care for and enjoy this communal space, next to what's been described as the last unpolluted river in New South Wales.

The Wollemi Common has rapidly become a magnet for artists and activists who are being inspired by the founders of the Common, environmental scientist and former policy advisor, Tanya Ritchie, and singer and choir director, Suze Pratten.

According to Tanya: "Our inspiration came

from the incredible resilience of the Wollemi Pine. In particular its capacity to withstand climate changes such as ice ages and significant global warming. One of the main purposes of the Common is to build resilience among activists and people striving for a more just and sustainable world."

For the last five years, Tanya and Suze have been working collaboratively with their growing number of visitors to transform a dilapidated old youth camp into a unique and creative community space which is generating community through song.

Visitors learn that the Dharug word 'Wollemi' means 'look around you, be aware of your environment'. For many who are working hard to protect our future, this beautiful place offers a chance to stop and replenish. It does this by helping them connect to nature and their own creativity, with the support of a caring community. As well as having their hope and energy restored through their time at the Common, they've also helped restore the land, with thousands of trees having now been planted as a result of 12 Grunt 'n' Grooves.

At these events, groups spend the day



"One of the main purposes of the Common is to build resilience among activists and people striving for a more just and sustainable world."

included Uke 'n Sing, and the Feminista Vocal Club, in which young and old exchanged songs from the women's movements of the 70s and 80s.

The Wollemi Women's Woodworking Workshop helped them build the extension on the bunk-house which now sleeps 15.

They've also launched Alice Hungerford's

'UpRiver: untold stories of the Franklin River activists' and have hosted numerous activist groups like Friends of the Earth and the Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN).

Tanya describes the Common as a place for 'sustaining the changemakers'. She finds herself inspired by them in return: "I'm blown away by how intelligent and effective activists now are, particularly the young ones. Their insights and passion have been heartwarming and empowering for me. In the 70s we spoke about ideals like collectivism, consensus decision-making and providing safe spaces. Now those ideals are a reality."

Song has been important at these gatherings too, and Tanya talks about how the uplifting nature of song has historically inspired and united communities, helping them to galvanize around common messages.

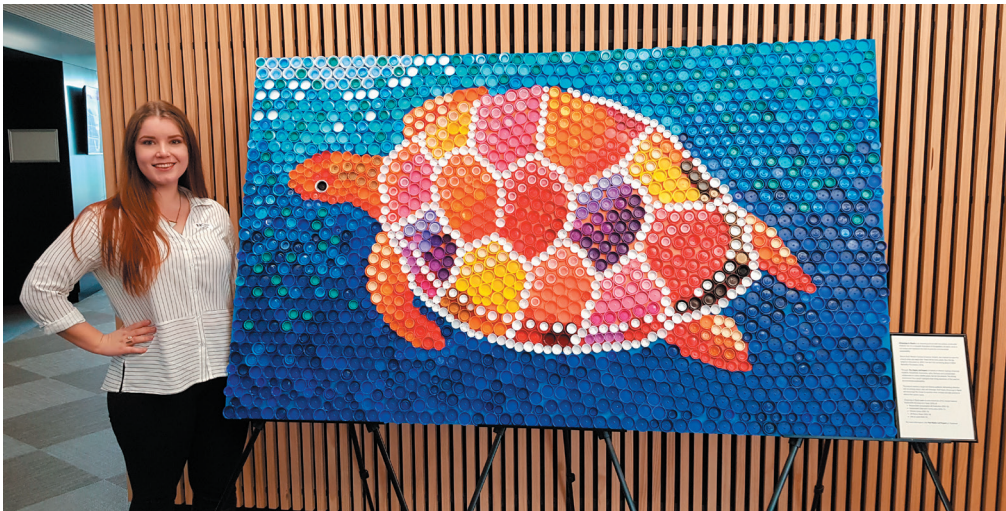
Frogwash performing at Wollemi Common



The hopes and dreams of these energised young people and 'changemakers' who've passed through Wollemi Common are now being spread in the songs and actions rippling around our country.

To find out more about Wollemi Common you can ring Tanya on 0425 350 119.

The Plastic Lid Project



Naomi Kroll

Recently the world has woken up to the dreadful pollution being caused by our excessive global consumption of single-use plastics. So much so, that in 2018 the Collins Dictionary word of the year became 'single-use'! This word has seen a four-fold increase in usage since 2013.

To stem the flow of plastic waste, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in October for an EU-wide ban on single-use plastics by 2021, and individual countries, like Iceland, have recently announced that they intend to completely or partially ban the sale of these plastics even earlier. The first supermarkets with plastic-free packaging zones have opened in Amsterdam and London.

Awareness of the need to avoid, reuse and recycle has grown significantly, but even amongst those keen to do the right thing, there is still a lot of confusion about what can and can't be recycled.

Take the issue of plastic lids for example. According to the United Nations, around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute. While drinking bottles can be recycled, until recently all the lids of these bottles couldn't.

Ask anyone you know about whether you can recycle plastic lids and they'll probably give you a different answer.

On the NSW Return and Earn website it says that it is preferable to dispose of loose bottle lids before you leave home, but it also says: "Bottles with lids can go through Reverse Vending Machines without difficulty. The lids are a valuable resource and will be recycled too. We don't want lids ending up as litter."

Planet Ark's 'Recycling Near You' suggests that you check with your council for any specific local advice around recycling plastic lids. In general, they advise the following:

- Ensure the plastic bottle is empty, and crush the bottle if possible. The lid may then be screwed lightly back onto the bottle and placed in the recycling bin.
- Plastic lids on their own are too small for current recycling technology to sort so do not place them loose in the recycling bin.

Just a short trip around the internet to find the answer is bound to give you a headache!

Thankfully, one young Western Sydney University student, Naomi Kroll, decided to kickstart conversations around this issue. Now 23, she recalled how the extent of our environmental crisis really hit her when she was 18 and she wondered if it could ever be fixed. She recalls: "I realised I couldn't just sit here complaining. If I didn't do something, it would impact my children, and my children's children. It was a 'do or die' moment."

And do something she did! She decided to focus on one small thing to start with – plastic lids. She also chose to use lids as a way to draw public attention to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal number 12, 'Responsible Consumption & Production'. And so began The Plastic Lid Project!

"I had an epiphany about how art is powerful in sharing stories, so in September last year [2017] I began collecting lids and ended up collecting 20,000 lids in total." These came from Western Sydney University students collecting lids across campuses, from Pacific Hills

Christian School, from Church youth groups and from three music festivals.

With some of these lids Naomi produced an artwork called 'Drowning in Plastic' which has now been viewed by around 28,000 people at a range of venues including Sydney Olympic Park, Hawkesbury Library, Penrith's Real Festival and during the Youth Eco Summit (YES).

The additional lids collected have been made into school packs with Art Activity Plans for teachers (available on The Plastic Lid Project Facebook page).

Moving beyond plastic lids, Naomi is now inviting the public to enter artworks in an exhibition called 'Creating Our Future'. Its mission is to raise awareness of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Australia and to encourage creativity as a way of sharing stories and ideas. Each artwork in the upcoming exhibition will correlate to one of the SDGs.

Throughout the project Naomi has been encouraged to see how many people want to collaborate and contribute. "It's been really inspiring and increased my faith in people," she says. As she moves on to this next big project her main goal is to encourage people to seek out where there's a need in the world, and then do something to become the change they would like to see. "When I started I had no idea what was going to happen. I discovered everything doesn't have to be perfect, you just have to start."

And the good news is ...

The Big Fix has contacted Lithgow, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith Councils and they all recycle plastic lids, so feel free to include them in your yellow-top bin.


Creating Our Future Exhibition

The Creating Our Future Exhibition will have an Under 18 and an Open category, with 34 artworks in total. The exhibition will start with an opening night event at the end of February in Sydney.

Artists and groups are encouraged to submit an artwork or performance depicting one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals they are passionate about (eg. SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, or SDG 13: Climate Action).

Applications will close on the 31st December 2018 at midnight. Visit www.creatingourfuture.com.au for applications and more information.

Meet the Fixers



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Mountains Christian College

At Mountains Christian College, we're part of a community where Christian values are taught in a nurturing environment. The College sits on 40 acres of natural bushland, spilling out onto the escarpment of the Kanimbla Valley, and we make part of this land available to residents of the Blue Mountains who run Blackheath Community Farm. Our students benefit from having hands-on experiences at the Farm. We also provide a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen for our students and offer Pre-Kindy to HSC.



We are located at 60 Thirroul Avenue, Blackheath. For further information please contact our office on 4787 8645



Christa Tootell - Blackheath Mitre 10

Our Blackheath store is the only family-run Mitre 10 in the Mountains and staff like Christa Tootell always go the extra mile for our community. She's been at Mitre 10 Blackheath for over 5 years and just loves helping people with paint advice – especially how to negotiate the difference between various brands.



We've been operating the timber yard since the late 1920's, and the hardware store since the 1940s, and the whole ethos of our business is centred on supporting our community via our staff, our sponsorships and our free delivery for locals. Come in and say hello!

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