

THE APSLEY Advocate

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Life membership for Vicki

Walcha Hospital Auxiliary members Vicki and Peter McIvor attended the 89th Annual State Conference of the United Hospital Auxiliaries of NSW in Sydney last Wednesday and Thursday. Vicki and eleven other members from around NSW were presented with Life Membership awards by The Honorable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of NSW and Patron, and was accompanied by her husband Mr Dennis Wilson.

Vicki has been in the Walcha Auxiliary for 35 years and said that it is such an honor to receive this award.



Twenty years of selection for Sculpture by the Sea

Renowned Walcha artist Stephen King has been recognised at this year's Sculpture by the Sea with not one, but two awards!

Staged on the spectacular Bondi to Tamarama coastal walk, Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi is one of Sydney's most popular events, with 500,000 visitors viewing over 100 sculptures by artists from around the world.

The event has been held for the past 25 years and in that time Stephen's sculptures have been chosen in 20 of the 25 exhibitions, meaning this year he joined the 'Double Decade Club'. "When I heard of a new sculpture exhibition at Bondi back in 1997, I had no idea what an impact Sculpture by the Sea would have on my work practice," Stephen said.

"Making and exhibiting a large scale work every year since then has provided the opportunity to show my work to a huge audience and meet many other sculptors from Australia and other countries," he said.

Sculpture by the Sea has grown over 25 years to be the largest annual sculpture exhibition in the world, with the 2022 event currently on exhibition until 7 November.

Stephen was also honoured this year to be awarded one of two Helen Lempriere Scholarships for senior sculptors. The scholarship is designed to advance an individual artist's career by enabling them to travel, study and undertake opportunities to further their artistic development.



*Stephen's Sculpture in this years
Sculpture by the Sea 'Grid Study IV'*

Photo: Henri Fanti



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around the traps



By BRUCE RUTHERFORD

It is now as wet as it was dry back in 2019 in my view. I have been away from the desk for a month or so and while travelling around the southern eastern states I have not seen a dry paddock. The wet weather has actually made some aspects of travel quite difficult with road closures and cancelled travel routes, frustrating many travellers. However, it was good to get away and the frustration for travellers does not compare with the frustration many farmers are feeling right now.

The rain just keeps falling. I can't believe how wet the country is wherever you go, and it is certainly claiming some victims in the cropping world. For many (but not all) farmers in the west, this weather is a real disaster with Canola crops in some areas as good as you would ever see them, but with no chance of harvesting them. When I say no chance, I mean no chance. I am aware of farmers in the north west who have just had to write their Canola crops off because they have no chance of getting onto paddocks with the window to harvest them so very tight. I have been speaking with others who are still hoping to salvage something, but that hope is fading with every drop of rain that falls. Winter cereals are going to be the next crisis unless there is a change in the weather patterns. There are a lot of cereal crops out there still standing and looking quite good but standing in water and desperately needing some sunshine in the coming weeks before machinery can traverse the country. One farmer in the central west sent me photos of carp swimming amongst his wheat crop! In fairness, that was adjacent to a water course which is normally dry, but currently full and does demonstrate just how much water is getting around. You get a real sense of the problem when flying over southern NSW and Victoria this week. There is water sitting on cropping country as far as the eye can see.

There does not appear to be any relief from this weather in sight, but I guess at this time of year anything can happen. I was reading a Canadian weekly publication on line and they are certainly hoping this LaNina event will go away as it is now entering its fourth year in North America and that means more drought for them. As long as records have been kept a LaNina event has never spanned four years. The document highlights how critical the Mississippi River is to the US grain industry as about 60% of their grain and 70% of Soybeans are moved as many as 2340 miles down the river in barges and low water levels are causing a lot of concern. The river height at one point last week was .46ft as opposed to a normal height at that point of 7.7ft.

Having a look through some market results this last week and numbers of livestock being processed are on the increase since early October. Numbers of sheep being processed are at their highest point since the same time last year at 138,000 head. Lamb numbers have also increased to levels similar to those of last year with NSW not quite there and Victorian numbers in excess. Numbers of lambs being processed have not yet reached the mid July levels but by the look of the line on the graph it won't be long. Rain has interfered with cattle numbers being processed and in the eastern states those numbers are still behind the slaughter levels on late winter at around 85,000 for the week. As far as a comparison with last year is concerned, cattle throughput is very similar. The EYCI is currently sitting around 1040 c/kg which remains at historically elevated levels. This is undoubtedly the pressure being applied by restockers to fill some paddocks where pastures are going gangbusters.

I had a quick look at market results on the Auctions Plus platform for last week to get some sort of idea about restocker and feeder interest in cattle. There were just over 14,000 commercial cattle offered on Auctions Plus last week for a clearance rate of 66% and an average sale price \$272 above reserve price. That all sounds fantastic but when you read the rest of the report values are all over the shop. Values decreased for increased numbers of medium steers while values for the lightest steers increased. Clearance rates were down, highlighting a more selective buying field. A smaller offering of heifers resulted in three out of five categories selling to a cheaper trend. Again buyers being more selective although clearance rates for heifers were higher. The real attention seemed to be given to the PTIC females where values for selected lines were much dearer with 2111 PTIC heifers averaging \$467 higher than the previous week. There are interesting times ahead with a huge spring looking like drowning while temperatures remain very low.

Come and
meet authors
and illustrators



Authors and illustrators from across NSW will be appearing at Walcha Central School's Literary Festival on November 7 and 8. Students will have the opportunity to meet well-known authors and illustrators, and learn from some of our state's most talented.

School-aged children are invited to the Walcha town library this coming Monday and Tuesday afternoon at 4pm to chat with authors Samantha Turnbull and Rowan McAuley.

A service of remembrance for those who are grieving

Wednesday 16th November, 5:30pm-6:30pm
Walcha Anglican Church

From Rev. Ben France

I am certainly no expert, but when speaking to someone about grief who is qualified in the area they said it can be helpful to liken grief to seasons.

Just like we move through seasons so too we move through emotions and feelings. We won't stay sad forever but our emotions will change as time moves on. Sometimes our feelings come upon us like waves and we all grieve in different ways. Grief is a reality for all of us for various reasons and we experience it in different intensities.

For many in our community 2022 has been a year consistently punctuated with grief. At times it has been a year of intense grief.

In recognition of this, the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches are holding a special service for those who are grieving to come and remember their loved ones who are no longer with us.

This time is not limited to people who have lost loved ones in the past year, but is open to anyone who would like to come and remember those they have lost.

Our time together will begin over afternoon tea with the service itself having times of prayer, bible readings and songs of reflection as well as a short bible reflection.

There will be no pressure to participate in any part of the service.

However, people are encouraged, if they would like, to bring a photo of the person or people they are there to remember as well as have the opportunity to come forward and light a candle in memory of them.

Some great resources on dealing with grief can be found at goodgrief.org.au.

All enquiries can be made to Reverend Ben France at the Anglican Church on 67772543



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Introspection Meditation6th December

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letters to the editor



Renewable Energy in Southern New England

The Friends of Kentucky Action Group (FOKAG) would like to respond to Katrina Blomfield's 'letter to the editor' on 19 October.

We were heartened by the 'mature conversation' that is developing in our community about the potential flood of mega scale renewable energy projects proposed for the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ).

FOKAG is a group of more than 40 families and businesses around Kentucky who understand the need for everyone to participate in the inevitable transition to renewable energy, but we are not of the same opinion that mega industrial scale 'wind farms' flooding our landscape is a 'reality we need to accept'.

We agree with the sentiment that these 'old power plants should be replaced', but not with the 'cheapest option to keep the lights on', instead, we propose the 'best option to keep the lights on'.

We all know our energy transition is urgent, due to State and Federal government's inaction over the past five decades. Indeed, the need for the transition to renewables was raised by Professor John Bockris while at Flinders University in 1973! (Source: Australia, If You're Listening S06 E8 - 'The 49-year-old energy prophecy that is finally coming true'.)

FOKAG sees a simple, fast, and more compatible renewable infrastructure solution to most of our immediate energy needs, that would also boost the local economy and maintain the natural capital that supports our farming and tourism industries.

It is a solution that does not have the same social, environmental, and climatic impacts, as the currently proposed industrial scale developments: solar panels and small-scale latest technology wind generators on every existing rooftop across the country, connected through microgrids.

Prof Alistair Sprout from the University of NSW School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering has said that large scale wind installations are not the most efficient form of renewable energy, and that small to medium scale are better options (NSW Farmers Energy Forum Armidale, April 2022). He also said that community led Embedded Microgrids are most efficient. They would also profit regional Australia rather than large overseas corporates.

This solution would include every rooftop in the city, creating a fair and equitable system. After all, the natural capital such as agricultural soils and biodiversity under that existing building, is already lost.

This solution would ensure we lose so much less of our natural capital, the loss of which on a global scale, has been one of the root causes of human induced climate change. Do we see the paradox?

Domestic and business energy customers have been gearing up for a solar solution for decades. It is an already established infrastructure.

Why are our governments not having a 'mature conversation' with the Australian people about community led embedded microgrids as a part of the energy crisis solution? Is it not on the table because it does not fit the current established market structure for our energy supply? Is it due to the lack of planning by our state government to implement the necessary 'poles and wires' for this solution? Who knows why? We don't, because a 'mature conversation' is not being had about small to medium scale solutions.

Community led embedded microgrids would 1. reduce the need to construct massive new transmission infrastructure across farmland to deliver energy to where most consumers are; 2. significantly reduce biodiversity loss across the state, and the nation; and 3. Share proportionately between the city and the bush the requirement to participate in the energy transition.

For the last several years, our community group has been advocating for regional scale land use planning with and for regional communities, as a pre-requisite to any NSW REZ implementation.

We consider it an insult to regional communities that the NSW Government has decided to declare and site REZ's, without having a comprehensive plan to base their locations on. It is also an insult that the NSW Government did not seek to achieve social licence from our regional communities prior to the creation of the REZ's.

Secondly, the density of proposed developments in our region is overwhelming. In NSW cumulative impacts 'may be' addressed within each project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). There is no clear method for assessing district/regional scale cumulative impacts of all stages, including the operational stage.

Our group is advocating for responsible action by the NSW Government, that is, to implement a moratorium on any further renewable energy development approvals (particularly large-scale wind projects) until region-wide cumulative impact assessment is comprehensively carried out.

We, FOKAG would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Walcha Community who supported our opposition to the Thunderbolt Energy Hub earlier this year.

It has assisted us to demand more comprehensive due diligence to be carried out by NEOEN, the developer. We plan to do the same for the Walcha community, when the numerous opportunities arise to respond to the Environmental Impact Statements yet to be released.

Tess Dawson and Karen Zirkler, FOKAG

Reporting storm, rain and weather damage to Council

When natural disasters and emergencies happen, Walcha Council relies on the community for valuable information to help council.

It is very important, especially now more than ever, that council receive information and reports from the community around loss of stock, loss of fencing, damage to roads or private infrastructure assets and are informed of the impact on community from weather events or natural disasters. Another example of impact to community is a group of houses being isolated due to rising water/river, or road being washed away.

The primary industries natural disaster damage survey is a simple online survey Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Local Land Services (LLS) staff, farmers and agricultural industry representatives can use to record damage to primary production and animals from natural disasters such as floods, fires and storms. The damage survey allows you to:

- complete a simple survey: the number of crops, animals, infrastructure and other primary industries damaged in a single event
- add photos to the assessment
- see the severity of damage in your area

Please complete the survey online, submit a survey or go to <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/emergencies/emergency/community/primary-industries-natural-disaster-damage-survey> for more information.

Such information assists council, state and federal government to tally a "cost of impact" to our local government area which then in turn may trigger a "Natural Disaster Declaration" and subsequent access for individual, community and council funding.

Council encourages primary producers to also report primary production impacts to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) using an online survey through their website.

For further information or assistance, please contact Walcha Council via email on council@walcha.nsw.gov.au or phoning 6774 2500.

letters to the editor



Update on EIS public display, for the Winterbourne Wind Project

Dear Walcha Community,

We have been informed by the Department of planning that the EIS will be on public display on 14 November 2022, for 28 calendar days. This will be the ONLY opportunity for the community to respond to the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). Gather your thoughts for your submission, and talk to your friends, family and peers about their submission also. The voice of the community matters.

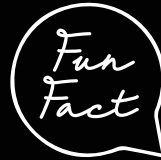
Critical: You need to complete your surveys as soon as possible. If you have already, make sure everyone in your house and family has also completed them. If they have already, you don't win a prize, but we are VERY impressed.

The survey is online. No need to print, or email back. <https://voiceforwalcha.com/survey/>

Why is this important? Because the council need to know what the community feels, and so does the NSW Planning Department.

Thank you,

Voice for Walcha. www.voiceforwalcha.com



"There is 4.7GW of wind and solar planning coming from the Walcha Energy office alone. This is sufficient for 2.5million homes, or 30% of NSW"

Based on correspondence from Walcha Energy to AEMC, and using the Vestas claim that the 700MW Winterbourne project will power 275,000 homes

Lets discuss if this is **proportional and appropriate** for our town.



LADIES TRADIE DAY

By Donna Davidson

Twenty five keen ladies came to Woolbrook Hall on Saturday morning and enjoyed a morning of sunshine, good food and sharing some garden tools and small engine knowledge for the Ladies Tradie Day.

"No question is a silly question," was the motto for the day, with the ladies getting hands on knowledge and instruction from Peter Berry and Dave Ledingham around chainsaw maintenance, fixing a tyre puncture, sharpening a chainsaw chain and the new battery range of equipment available.

Thank you to Brooke Jeffery Community Recovery Officer, Peter Berry, Dave Ledingham, Walcha Council and the Woolbrook Hall committee for their assistance with such a successful event.



Ladies Gingerbread House decorating afternoon

Ladies get your friends together and order your kits - gingerbread house decorating is returning on Sunday 27th November, 2pm - 4pm at the Anglican Church Hall, South St. Women of all ages and girls aged 10 and above are invited to come along.

Gingerbread kits include your icing, a generous bag of decoration lollies, base board, wrapping, expert instruction and plenty of design ideas. The afternoon will also include a delicious afternoon tea with a guest speaker.

Order your kit for \$30 either by direct deposit to 'Anglican Parish of Walcha' BSB: 932 000, Account: 703607 (Reference: GB + your name) or cash payment into this account at a Regional Australia Bank branch.

After you've paid, please email or text the name/s of the person attending and number of kits purchased to Marg Wellings on 0484 557 099 or mygunyah53@gmail.com (if you're sharing a kit with a child or friend, please indicate this).

We warmly welcome those who would like to join us for a relaxed afternoon but don't wish to create a gingerbread house too.

The women of Walcha Anglican and Presbyterian churches would love to see you there!

Young People can join Rotary Interact in Walcha

Do you want to be part of a group of young people and do something special for your community and internationally?

If you are between 12-18 years old and want to make a difference locally and in your world then Rotary Interact is for you!

The Rotary Club of Walcha is looking young people to volunteer to set up this internationally recognised program, already with more than 250,000 members worldwide. Interact club membership is FREE, and is a branch of the Rotary Club of Walcha, so you will be given all the support, continued mentoring and advice you need to start and maintain this club, and it will be run by you. It's time for young people to help make this World a better place.

Interact meetings are held fortnightly on Fridays from 5pm to 7pm, at the Walcha Rugby Club starting this Friday 4 November. Apart from helping the community, there will be supervised fun activities, light refreshments and the opportunity to connect with other like-minded young people.

- Be part of something bigger by joining the Walcha Interact club (a branch of Rotary).
- Meet 1st and 3rd Friday of each month, participate and connect with other young people
- Make friends with other young people from Walcha and internationally
- Have lots of fun along the way
- Make a difference by doing projects for Walcha and the World

If you are interested then please come along this Friday 4 November to the Walcha Rugby Club at 5pm (or thereabouts), bring your parent/carer if you are under 16 years old, parent/carer is welcome anytime. If you want to learn more then please contact James or Aurora Reilly on 67772713. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Walcha Garden Club Clippings

With the current weekly rain events gardeners are all experiencing various garden growing situations that are very challenging to say the least. Excessive runoff has caused some plants to wither and die while others have turned to jelly. There has been a benefit too from so much rain in that some of our gardens have seen exceptional growth so far this spring. A five year old deciduous red horse chestnut tree (*Aesculus x carnea*) here has grown nearly 15cm in 2 weeks. The "English" weather is providing the perfect conditions for exceptional growth. Mature trees have slowly come into leaf due to lack of soil warmth and sunny days. Naturally the weeds have taken off in leaps and bounds as well.

Walcha township has been experiencing a profusion of colour these past few weeks. A big thank you to the Walcha Council Town Beautification Committee and Council gardeners. The colourful roundabouts and park gardens have been exceptionally pretty this year. We mustn't forget the Lions and Quota gardens as they are also very well maintained. Congratulations to the volunteers who are involved with their care. Visitors to Walcha are also enjoying all this hard work too.

If you are new to Walcha then it is really is worth taking a drive around to see what type of plants or trees you would like to have in your garden. Currently flowering are beautiful iris, lilacs, rhododendrons, dogwood trees and clematis in flower. Colourful accent trees include *Gleditsia Tricanthus* "Sunburst" with its striking frond like yellow leaves or the bright pink leafed *Cedrela*. The latter can become a nuisance plant if not kept under control. Both these trees can be seen in south Thee Street. The Judas trees "Forest Pansy", along the Oxley Highway just west of Walcha, have pink flowers along their trunks which are followed by burgundy leaves. Garden plants flowering include the grey leafed, white flowering "Snow in Summer", *Aquilegia* or "Granny's Bonnet's", Red, Pink or white valerian, *Viburnum Opulus* or "Snowball" shrub and the beautifully scented *Viburnum Burkwoodii*. Various coloured wisterias are also flowering. There is an extensive colour range to choose from. Their colours range from purple, mauve, pink, white and blue with some varieties having flowers "racemes" measuring up to a metre. A strong structure is required for wisteria and avoid planting anywhere near

water pipes. Like all rambling plants they will require pruning to keep under control throughout the growing period.

In the veggie garden its time to plant our nearly all your summer growing plants. If you have started plants from seed and have had them fully protected from the elements, then place them outside in a shaded protected area on warm days, bringing them in at night. Each day increase the amount of sunlight for a week or so prior to planting them. This is called 'hardening off'. Avoid putting your seedlings outside if it is windy or threat of frost. Soil warmth also plays a large part in plant growth. Soil needs to be about 17-18C for pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, and marrow seeds to germinate.

The next meeting of the Walcha Garden Club is being held this Friday 4 November at Rob & Katrina Blomfield's garden, "Eagle Ridge", 370 Table Top Rd, Walcha, commencing with morning tea. Cars will be departing McHatten Park at 9.30am, Please BYO chair, cup and lunch. Enquiries: D.Lisle 0429799083 or M.Cawley 0428876769. New members welcome.

thumbs



👍 To Jess, Megan and Trish for a great trip to the peony farm. A big thank you.

👍 To the beautiful gardens at the Walcha Telecottage and Linden House offices. Thank you to Lois Hoare who set up the lovely gardens some years ago they look stunning this year.

👍 To Brooke Jeffrey, Perc Berry and David Ledingham for organising the fantastic Women's Tradie Day at Woolbrook last Saturday.

Contributions will be received in person, by phone or email and must be accompanied by your name and contact details. They will be printed at the discretion of the editor.

Walcha Support Group Luncheon

It was smiles all round as the Walcha Support Group enjoyed their first annual luncheon in three years following COVID.

The luncheon is an opportunity for members to join together with organisations who provide

support during the year and thank them for their generosity.

The Bowling Club staff catered for the luncheon with around 50 people in attendance.



Lunar Eclipse this weekend

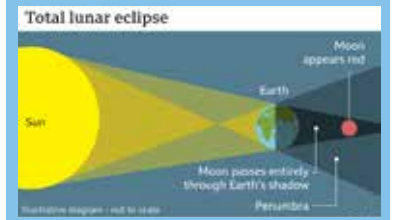
From Chris Wyatt

This Saturday will see a Total Lunar Eclipse which can be viewed at the following times: Partial Umbral Ingress stages begin about 20:10 (8:10pm) AEDST, with Totality starting at 21:17 (9:17pm) and ending at 22:40 (10:40pm) with Partial Umbral Egress ending at around 23:50 (11:50pm).

The eclipse occurs when the Moon passes through Earth's shadow and is totally safe to view.

During Totality the Moon will turn a copper-red colour.

Get out and enjoy!



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letters to the editor



I happened to be in Walcha on an unplanned visit on Wednesday 19 Oct and took the opportunity to attend the public meeting held for Professor Drew to communicate the findings of his review into Walcha Council's Financial Sustainability. I did not think it appropriate to ask questions or make any statement at the meeting as I had not read Professor Drew's report or the information provided to the public and any comment at that point may have been misinformed. I have since reviewed the Report and I agree that Council's financial position is in a grim state and there is probably no other option but to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation. An increase in rates will not be enough without improved financial management.

In April I submitted a letter to the Editor questioning some statements made by the Mayor, to which a response has not been forthcoming. I have reproduced the letter below as I believe the questions should be addressed as part of this Review. The majority of Prof Drew's own graphs presented to the meeting related to the last three years. Council's financial position and performance is measured by a set of standard NSW Local Government industry ratios. Producing graphs based on the approved industry standards, over the full 10 year period, would have given a clear picture of the trends. Prof Drew stated that there has been a steady decline for at least 10 years - this is not the case.

I also challenge Professor Drew's statement that "Mainly for political reasons Walcha managed to avoid forced amalgamation in 2016." This is misleading and offensive not only to the staff and the councillors of that period, but more importantly to the community of Walcha who banded together to fight against amalgamation. Of course, there's an element of politics in these decisions, but Walcha Council was in a solid financial position and was a 'good horse to back'. The community of Guyra were not as fortunate in their fight against amalgamation and I don't believe they would agree with Professor Drew's comment! Politics didn't save them.

I found it ironic that Prof Drew referred to "a figure of around \$5 million" in unrestricted cash would be considered financially sustainable for a Council of this size. Council's unrestricted cash as per audited financial statements in 2019 was over \$5 million.

It was refreshing to read the Mayor's Column 25/10/2022 where he acknowledged some of the achievements of previous Council Administrations. It is worth noting that these and many other major projects, were achieved despite rate pegging and without the need to borrow, except for a small loan for the Woolbrook Bridge. Robust financial management and project management ensured projects were delivered for the community without detrimental effect on Council's financial position or performance.

In answer to a question raised at the meeting, Professor Drew asserted that he was "receiving nothing" but that his University was being paid for his work. On Wednesday 27 April 2022, Council passed a resolution approving a budget of up to \$120,000 for the Review, to be funded from the Infrastructure Replacement Reserve (minute 174). This is cash reserves that had been set aside to fund, in part, projects such as the upgrading of the road entrances to town.

It is distressing that this Review is even necessary and even more distressing that under previous administration a project of this nature would have been funded in the normal budget cycle. If it was an unexpected project post budget, it could have been funded from the available working funds – of which there was \$1,259,000 in 2019. In the current circumstances this cannot happen as the working funds, according to the draft financial statement as at 30 June 2022, had reduced to a negative \$2,807,000. A decline of over \$4,000,000 in the last three years.

AGAIN, I ASK WHERE HAS ALL THE MONEY GONE. THE WALCHA COMMUNITY DESERVES TRANSPARENCY.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR 27 April 2022

I write in response to the Mayor's column titled "Financial Sustainability of Council being Reviewed" which appeared in the *Apsley Advocate* on 13 April 2022. The column lacks context, is misleading and is extremely disappointing not only for myself, but for the management and Councillors who have served Walcha Council over the past 11 years and have put countless hours into ensuring that Walcha Council is financially sustainable and can stand alone. The Mayor's column cannot go unchallenged.

In the opening paragraph of the column, the Mayor has noted that IPART has recently granted a 0.7% rate cap increase for councils in NSW. I agree that the rate cap being set at 0.7 percent makes it very difficult for councils to balance the budget. However, I can assure you after my 35 years in NSW local government, low rate caps are not new and have been the case for a number of years. Local Government as a whole need to continue to lobby the State Government for a more realistic rate cap.

In the third paragraph of the Mayor's column, he refers to natural disasters that have occurred over the last 5 years putting pressures on reserves, and that these reserves have proved inadequate. Like the rate cap, natural disasters are not new and have not been confined to the last 5 years. Another disaster that occurred, the management of which is worthy of note, was the Global Financial Crisis. I agree that the funding arrangements are not ideal, but I can assure you that prior to 2019, Council was able to manage these events without a detrimental effect on Council's financial position, as demonstrated below.

I respectfully disagree with Professor Joseph Drew's view which he has formed after 'delving' into the last 11 years of Walcha Council's finances that, and I quote "a pattern of a decline in council's financial stability has emerged" and "I'm going back eleven years in financial data and can confirm for you that this problem is at least 11 years in the making, it is not something that has suddenly arrived over the last 3 years". During my time as General Manager, Walcha Council's finances were under enormous external scrutiny including a number of Boundaries Commission Hearings, a Fit for the Future examination by the Office of Local Government and a substantial Promoting Better Practice Review by the Office of Local Government. All rural councils face financial pressure from time to time, however after all this scrutiny, Walcha Council was deemed financially sustainable and able to stand alone, an outcome which is in vast contrast to Professor Joseph Drew's "desktop review". Had Walcha Council not had quality governance and proven financial management, I have no doubt that Walcha Council would have been amalgamated.

The Mayor's comment in the fifth paragraph of the column and I quote "Over a minimum of these 11 years council has maintained a tenuous financial position through the revaluations of assets, conversion of assets to cash and reduction in unrestricted cash", does not make sense. Each year Walcha Council is required to complete an audited set of financial statements. These accounts amongst other information include a set of financial performance indicators and, without complicating the issue, one of these indicators is "Unrestricted Current Ratio", which I believe the Mayor is referring to when he states "reduction in unrestricted cash." This Unrestricted Current Ratio is used to assess the adequacy of working capital after excluding all restricted assets and liabilities. The benchmark set by the State Government is greater than 1.5:1.

I have reproduced the ratios below for the last ten years, from Council's publicly available financial statements. The Mayor's statement is confusing to say the least.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
3.6:1	2.78:1	2.57:1	2.59:1	4.59:1	4.54:1	6.48:1	3.96:1	3.28:1	2.69:1

In the sixth paragraph of the Mayor's column he continues to say and I quote "from 2014 to 2019 our staff increased by 33%." There is very little context to this comment. The staff numbers did increase over this time for a number of reasons, the most significant being Council was successful in gaining a multi-million dollar, multi-year grant to upgrade the Thunderbolts Way. An assessment of the workforce was undertaken to ensure we had the additional skills and labor required to deliver the project. This assessment also took into account potential staff retirements, to ensure that when the funding ran out Council was not over staffed and as valued employees retired, transfer of knowledge and consistency within the workforce was maintained. I do not believe that Walcha Council was over-staffed in 2019.

Unfortunately, in the past 3 years Walcha Council has lost the majority of the engineering team as well as a number of long-standing employees. The loss of corporate knowledge that goes with these resignations is immense. In this time there appears to have been a need to supplement the workforce with a number of consultants. Perhaps the Mayor can provide greater details of the budget overruns in employee benefits and oncosts of \$750,000 and in administration costs of \$287,000 in the financial year ending 30 June 2021? While I do not have access to the workings of Walcha Council's finances for the last couple of years, I believe these overruns and those of the previous year may go some way to explaining why, in the last published set of Financial Statements, Walcha Council had a negative working funds balance of \$2,459 million.

In the ninth paragraph of the column, the Mayor goes on to state that "Of higher concern is Walcha's submission to the IPART Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposal in 2014. Under sustainability it states, "In its proposal, the council relies on the successful application for and adoption of a permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) from 2016 to 2017 of 15.6% cumulative over 2 years (10.5% above rate peg)". As the lead time for a SRV is around 2 years this should have been started in 2014. If this proposal had been implemented as stipulated by council's submission and documented by IPART many of the current issues would have been averted."

I agree that the potential SRV was a part of the Fit for the Future submission, however a number of strategies were proposed and implemented to increase Council efficiency and negate the need for higher rates. These strategies are documented in Council's submission to the Boundaries Commission in 2016 regarding the proposed merger of Walcha Council with Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra Shire & Uralla Shire Councils which stated, "these improvements have resulted in Walcha Council no longer requiring the proposed special rate variation that was included in its Fit for the Future submission to IPART". Over the last five years 83 New South Wales councils have applied for a Special Rate Variation both Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Councils are amongst these. Our modest infrastructure backlog and lack of need for a Special Rate Variation is a strong testament to our strong capacity in financial and asset management. Over the last five years 83 NSW councils have applied for a Special Rate Variation, both Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Councils are amongst these. Our modest infrastructure backlog and lack of need for a Special Rate Variation is testament to Council's strong financial and asset management at that time."

My last task in my role as General Manager was to present, in conjunction with Councils External Auditor the 2019 "General Purpose Financial Statements" to Council. This statement included the following cash backed reserves, which is cash set aside for future use. On top of these reserves, Council also had a working funds balance of \$1,259,000.

Plant and vehicle replacement	\$ 1,453,146
Infrastructure replacement	\$ 1,570,807
Employees leave entitlement	\$ 757,607
Housing Investment	\$ 251,251
Landfills upgrade	\$ 11,113
Preschool	\$ 58,833
Quarries remediation	\$ 312,922
Tip site remediation	\$ 161,602
Project Development	\$ 100,000
Total internal restrictions	\$ 4,676,824

Walcha Council may not have been the "richest" Council in the State, but I believe cash reserves of over \$5.9 million at 30 June 2019, would be seen as more than adequate going forward. It is extremely disappointing, given the above facts, that a review of Council's Financial Sustainability is now deemed necessary.

I appreciate these figures may be confusing and I am more than happy to discuss this issue with staff, past councillors, present councillors and more importantly any member of the community.

Jack O'Hara (0427 772 086) B.Bus. MBA(acct), GAICD, FIPA



At the 19th

The annual Bywell Cup 4BBB event for trophies donated by Tim and Janie Fenwicke was played last Sunday where the consistent duo of Dion Bird and his partner Mel Clark accumulated 43 stableford points to win the competition. Runners-up were Drew Bird and Sue Partridge on 39 points while the remaining sweepstakes prizes went to Simeon Cross and Michael Stackman 38, Allan Green and Jenny Lisle 36 on countback from John McCormack and Brian Lynch. Sharpest shooter at the third pin was Andrew Robertson whereas no player was clever enough to reach the beach on the 18th.

Only one player out of the 10 who teed off in the weekly Saturday 9 hole competition managed to reach double figures. Men's winner Bryan Lynch who racked up 11.

Runner-up was Max Holstien on 9 points but only after counting out Crichton Barr. Ladies winner was Pauline Carter on 9 points, runner-up was Jenny Lisle on 8 points whereas Crichton Barr hit the most accurate tee shot at the third pin.

This Sunday is the first round of the Patrons trophy donated by Margaret Davidson and Col Berry and is scheduled in conjunction with a prize supplied by Lee Fletcher for the opening 18 holes. The second round is set down for Sunday November 20th, a fortnight after the first round.

Wednesday Golf

The heavy conditions on Wednesday made it a hard slog playing stableford for the Patrons trophy. Marg Parsons was the winner on the day with 31 points and sweepstakes went to Polly Locke with 30 points and Jenny Lisle with 28. Sue Partridge was NTP on hole 3 and Jenny Lisle produced the best second shot on 7. Today we are playing a par event for Cathy Lisle's trophy. Also a big thank you to all who helped with the Wood raffle ticket selling on Friday.

Bowls

Results from the weekend: A grade singles Final K. Goodwin defeated S. Goodwin 31-15 and thank you to Garth Clare for marking.

No bowls draw for this weekend.

Dads Army: The rain held us up, but we eventually got our full 18 ends of bowls in.

As twelve players nominated we had two games of triples. Both games were very close with only 1 and 2 separating them. In the first game Noel Goodwin, Barry Hoad and John Watts come from 6-7 down to sneak home 14-12.

According to the score card, Barry Kliendienst, John McCormack and Peter Hayes defeated Matt Andrews, Eric O'Keeke and Dacian Andrews 14-13. However I thought it was Eric who held the last shot.

Noel, Barry and John won the chooks and the raffle was won by B.K.

Ladies Bowls

Congratulations to Esther Hunt who defeated Margaret Tickle in the Ivy Makeham Memorial Trophy 23-10. Pat Laurie and Jan Cross had a win against Lyn Bumell and Janice Rizzi 19-10 in a game of triples.

Our street stall is 25 November and Christmas party 15 December.

There will be social bowls tomorrow 9am for a 9.30am start.

Back in 1982 Walcha Council Health Inspector John Kite approached me about taking on the position of pool manager and after I accepted the opportunity before being appointed, the following letter to Walcha News editor Earl 'Blue' Hogan was published.

'Sir, in spite of objections from many individuals by phone calls, letters and petitions to Council, the Planning Committee has persuaded Council to accept their recommendation on the Pool Management. I am now wondering who this council purports to represent and why they take no notice of community opinion particularly of those parents vitally concerned for the safety of their children. One would expect to see the resignations of the Planning Committee Councillors and/or the Council on a whole since they override in public affairs and thus become a dictatorship? In the interest of personal safety as highlighted by abusive phone calls already made on this issue I must remain anonymous. Signed by a 'Concerned Parent'

Footnote: I, A.J. Cross, always maintain that if you aren't prepared to sign such a letter don't write it in the first place.

...

The support I received after the letter was published was incredible through Letters to the Editor, including from my mother Colleen, and having conversations with locals who wished me all the best. One of the pleasing parts of the job was teaching kids (and a few adults) to swim, but I'm not sure how many because sadly I have misplaced a couple of my early Swimming Lesson Participation books. There was plenty of job satisfaction witnessing all the kids swim across the pool for the first time. Thanks heaps for the wonderful support I have received during my 39 years as Pool Manager.

...

Last Friday evening Robyn Broadbent and myself were treated to a few farewell beverages and gifts by the Walcha Council Social Club which we both appreciated. It was a good night at the Newie although I did make one ordinary mistake when I downed a 'Fruit Tingle' cocktail that Robyn took two sips out of and refused to drink the rest. It may or may not have something to do with my bike losing traction at the back of my house on my way home. One thing is for sure, the dismount certainly loosened up a few of my ribs.

...

Talk about rotten luck! Last week local axeman Austin Scrivener received an email congratulating him on his selection in the Australian U/21's team to travel to New Zealand early next year to take on the Kiwis. Unfortunately just before Austin received the good news he was bucked off the quad bike he was riding, snapping his collarbone when he bit the dust, and has had to pass on the trip across the ditch.

...

Don't know if you watch 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' where a couple of former Walcha Road school house residents appeared within 24 hours of each other. Kelleher sisters Jenny Smoother and Eileen Love along with their respective husbands Geoffrey and Colin, were on the show Tuesday and Wednesday last week where the girls both passed and didn't get back to the hotseat.

...

Walcha Rugby League held their Annual General Meeting last Sunday at the Bowling Club where President Michael Aspinall was returned unopposed despite whispers Harley Cox may have been going to put his hand up for the job. Vice Presidents are Barry Partridge, John Byrne and Stephen Haslem, while Treasurer Sally-Ann Hoy and Secretary Emma Hillier remain in their positions as does Publicity Officer A.J. Cross. Ground Managers are Barry Partridge and Dal Evans.

...

Due to the ongoing inclement weather and the state of the playing fields, Armidale District Cricket postponed the commencement of their junior and senior cricket seasons last Saturday which two combined Walcha/Uralla teams have registered in. With a bit of luck they may get a start this Saturday. Best of luck boys.

...

Walcha Touch kicks off tomorrow, Thursday 3 November with President Ben Ussher predicting a cracking season while thanking all teams that have registered so far. Ben did request that any intending teams that haven't registered should do so via the 'mysideline' link posted on the Walcha Touch Facebook page by 6pm tonight Wednesday 2 November so a draw can be made for the opening rounds of all competitions.



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His legacy: he selected, grew and planted the cork trees in South Street.
RIP

Anniversary

**50th Wedding Anniversary
Judith & Murray Lockyer
4-11-2022**

Wishing you both the best on your 50th wedding anniversary. We wish you many more years of happiness and good health. Congratulations from Helen, Debbie, Leanne, Garry and grandchildren.

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Lane Pittman & Santa at a Family Christmas Afternoon 26 November from 2pm at Woolbrook Stampede Grounds. Free!!

WALCHA COUNCIL

Junior Sports Coaching Clinic Grants



Applications are now being sought for the Junior Sport Clinic Grants for 2022. Grants are available to assist with the cost of providing instructors/coaches to run junior clinics. Application forms and guidelines are available from Walcha Council during office hours and on our website:

<https://www.walcha.nsw.gov.au/news/2022-junior-sporting-coaching-clinic-grants.aspx>

Applications close on:

Wednesday 9 November 2022.

Barry Omundson General Manager
Walcha Council, PO Box 2, Walcha NSW 2354

Events/Courses @ "Taylors Run" Kentucky

- Gallagher Sheep Handler, WEID & Fencing Demo Day. Date to be advised. Free event, smoko & lunch provided.
- Low Stress Stock Handling School with Grahame Rees. Sheep & Cattle. Subsidised Course. 5-6th Dec 2022.
- RCS Australia Field Day with Matt Barton. Pasture management, soil health, feed budgeting, Jan 21st, 2023. Free event.

For more information or to RSVP contact Katie Barnett on 0431 636 545 or katiebarnett66@gmail.com

Extreme Bean Machine Operating Hours:
Mon – Tues: closed. Wed – Sun 6.00am to 2.30pm. Coffee, pies and sausage rolls.

Meetings

Walcha Jockey Club AGM 7.30pm, Tuesday 22 November 2022 at Council Chambers, Hamilton Street, Walcha.

Agenda:

- Election of officer bearers: President, Vice Presidents (three), Secretary, Treasurer, Patrons (two)
 - 2023 Race Meeting
 - Financial statements for the previous year
- Jim Nivison President.

Meetings

Amaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council
General meeting 10th November, 11am at Amaroo LALC Board Room – 36N Derby Street, WALCHA NSW 2354

AGENDA:

1. Welcome & apologies
 3. Minutes of previous members meeting
 4. LALC Operational Report
 5. Financial Report
 6. Community Land & Business Plan update
 7. Memberships
 8. Other business placed on the agenda prior to the commencement of the meeting.
 9. AGM and next members meeting – Confirmation of date, venue and times
- All questions about this meeting should be directed to the Chairperson, Alena Stackman at the Amaroo LALC Office (02) 6777 1100 or via email amaroolalc@gmail.com during business hours.

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church notices



ANGLICAN

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Walcha: Sunday – 9.30am Everybody welcome to join us. For info call Graham Barnes 6777 2539

CATHOLIC Sunday 10.00am Mass



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