



Central Coast Council Dramas – Ratepayers pay the price

Council's Administrator, Mr Dick Persson, has handed down his report.

It's worse than we thought. These figures are from Council's website.

Since amalgamation:

- Accumulated losses have reached \$232 million.
- Debt has risen from \$317m to an estimated \$565m
- Staff numbers have increased by 242
- Restricted reserves of around \$200m have been used unlawfully to fund Council opportunities and capital works.

"It will take urgent and strong action to turn things around. Tough decisions need to be made immediately", said Mr Persson.

Mr Persson has made the hard call and outlined a series of measures to achieve the necessary turnaround, among them significant asset sales and a major reduction in staff. Not surprisingly, Central Coast residents will be sluggish with a substantial rate increase and an increase in some Council charges.

Who gets the blame for this blunder of magnificent proportions?

The suspension of Central Coast Councillors is, in our opinion, a knee jerk reaction that is more about being seen to be doing something. The CEO and the Chief Financial Officer have paid the price for not meeting their responsibilities, others will follow.

The shame of this is that in all the Avoca Beach Community Association's dealings with Council, we have found the workers such as project managers and heads of departments to be competent, caring, and keen to do a good job. The great work on the foreshore development (pictured below) on our beachfront is testament to this. Our ward councillors, Jane Smith, Jeff Sunstrom and Rebecca Gale Collins have always been available, interested, and aware of local issues.

We wish Dick Persson the best of luck in sorting this mess out!

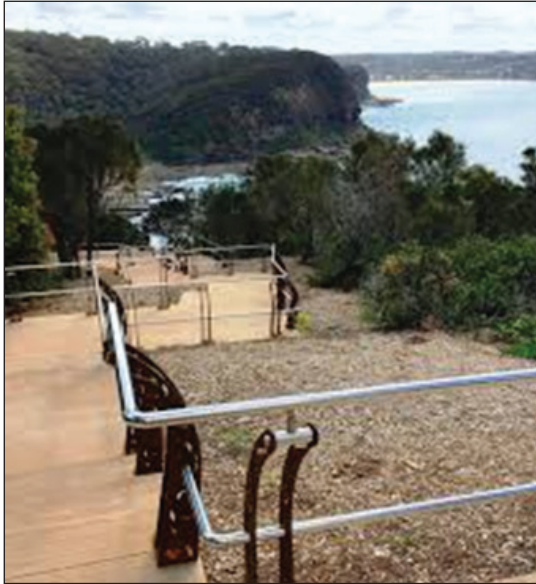
Steve Fortey



Winney Bay Walkway

Winney Bay is a picturesque headland between Copacabana and Avoca Beaches. It is a natural bushland setting with beautiful views. The walkway is a part of the annual and extremely popular Five Lands Walk. The walkway is currently being upgraded.

Stage 1, completed in 2018, attracted plenty of controversy. The photo on the left shows part of Stage 1. The second photo shows a different option. Council's website gives alternatives for Stage 2.



There is plenty of history and drama in this story, with passionate supporters for and against plans for Stage 2. Being aware of this, Central Coast Council is putting plans on display with different options for Stage 2 out for public consultation. The public gets to vote. It's a democratic process aimed at pleasing the majority.

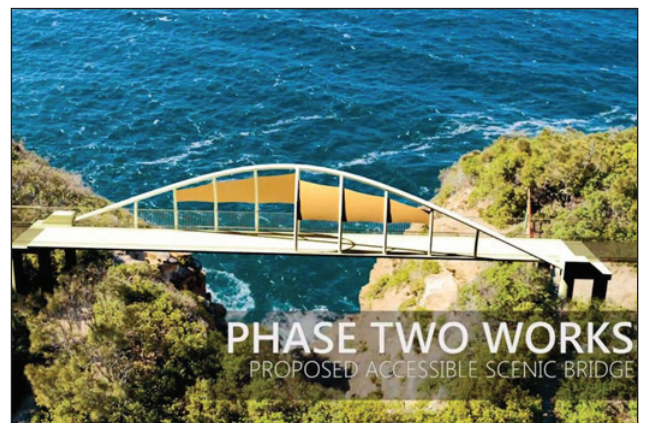
Three Options – have your vote!

Deadline to vote is 15th December. If you would like to have a say, here's how to do it:

The easiest way is to put "Winney Bay Clifftop Walk Phase 2" into a search engine. It will take you to the Council website and give you 3 options to look at, after which you can register to your vote.

You will also be given a few options for improvements to the nearby Captain Cook lookout.

The ABCA is not taking sides in this exercise, simply because good people on both sides have strong, persuasive views. It is our aim to represent community views, in this case it seems impossible, previous meeting have been split. So, the best we can do is encourage you to get involved and vote.



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President's Report

Summer's here! Good weather, warmer water and some friendly waves are all working their magic. The beach is filling up and holiday accommodation is pretty much booked out. The incredibly unique winter of 2020 is now behind us and many have been through difficult times. Hopefully, we can look forward to better days ahead.

Lockdown at Avoca Beach? Sometimes it's hard not to feel guilty enjoying the sun and the surf when so much of the world is in pain. It just reinforces how lucky we are to live where we do. Still, like Australians all over the country, we should still do our bit to ensure Covid-19 safe procedures are followed wherever we go.

Council's financial woes have dominated local news lately as our front-page article describes. How does this affect Avoca Beach? We are about to learn the effect on rates and services. But the good news is that much has been done recently with state and local government grants to improve our facilities. Recently the change rooms in the surf club received a desperately needed makeover and members now have state of the art facilities, even though they are still a little cramped. If you add this to the work done on the Kayak Club building, the Rugby Club, the pathway by the lakes edge and the children's play area, all at Heazlett Park, the community has done pretty well. The rock wall on our beachfront, now a couple of years

old, remains a huge bonus for beachgoers. The wish list remains quite long, however. An upgrade on the South End Park car park is high on the agenda, although more sewerage/drainage work needs to be done beforehand, Council tell us.

A shout out to all our school students, especially those who did their HSC this year. The ones I know have handled their difficult circumstances incredibly well. If resilience is such an important part of life, they have it in spades. Good luck come result time! A big thanks to the teachers who were asked to double their already demanding workload at some stages.

Fire season? A scary thought. Recently our south coast fire victims were having a week's respite at Avoca courtesy of some very generous holiday homeowners and Michelle Harvey from George Brand's. They made the comment that Avoca, Macs and Copa are remarkably like south coast areas that were hard hit by last season's fires. The message from this? Do not take things for granted, make sure you fire-proof your home as much as possible. We've already had 40-degree days and strong winds.

Big thanks to all our contributors to this issue, especially Mike Rubbo, Kristy McQueen and our excellent photographer David Benson.

From the ABCA, we wish you all a happy holiday season!
Steve Fortey

Editorial credits: Steve Fortey: Editor | Julie Pickett: Advertising

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Also if you'd like to contribute to the newsletter, get in touch.**

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Innovators amongst us



You've certainly seen Howard and Jenny driving around Avoca in their green beast, the 1926 Dodge Brothers convertible they call Betsy. You won't find much on Howard Chandler in Wikipedia, other than a lot of patents, 38 in total, as he prefers to keep a low profile, but if you've ever taken a bowel cancer test, he might have saved your life and he lives amongst us!

Howard started life on a farm outside Melbourne at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges. He has fond childhood memories of picking daffodils on his father's flower farm in the 1950s. That memory and tearing around the farm in the forerunner to Betsy, a 1924 Dodge that he bought for £5 at the age of 14 and drove around the property, contributed to a happy childhood. He loved the simplicity of the Dodge.

After graduating in agricultural science, Howard worked at the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, CSL in Melbourne. Snakebite of course is a great Australian fear and at CSL Howard developed a simple blood test which allowed you to quickly tell what sort of snake had bitten a victim, it being vitally important to know which anti venom to administer.

He tells the story of a life his test saved, certainly among many of others. A young girl in W.A. was found in a coma in her bed. With no obvious cause, she was rushed to hospital where, as part of a battery of tests, she was tested for snakebite with Howard's new test. This revealed that she had been bitten by a brown snake. The proper anti venom was administered and the girl recovered. Better informed, her parents lifted the covers on her bed and found the brown snake the poor girl had been sleeping with!

Soon after that he and Jenny left for Canada. There, he became a Principal Scientist at a Toronto company called Allelix, where he developed a rapid pregnancy test, the forerunner of such tests today. Howard's testing innovations kept coming including inventing a test for strep throat, a blood test for stomach ulcers and probably most importantly, new tests for bowel Cancer, identifying

lower intestinal bleeding, which is now the standard way of screening for bowel cancer.

All these tests reached the market. One bowel cancer test was launched via Enterix, a company Howard helped create in 1997. This led to a test you can still get from your doctor, chemist or mail order. This test, called InSure, has seen over 50 million manufactured and its early detection of cancer has enabled millions of lives to be saved in Australia and the US.

Recently, in August 2020, the American pharmaceutical company, Abbott, introduced a rapid test for Covid-19 which is based on a test for strep throat, the annoying sore throat we all know so well, that Howard had developed in the 1990s.

This is leading to his latest venture. Now, in his late 70s like Betsy the Dodge, Howard keeps on going. With two colleagues he has formed a London based company called Health First labs to develop a Covid-19 test which is faster, less expensive and safer than the Abbott test. If all goes well, you'll be able to administer this test yourself at home or front up to an ATM type of machine which will test and deliver results to your smartphone within minutes.

This, according to Howard, will be a valuable breakthrough because it has the potential to eliminate lockdowns as we face the ongoing virus, or new variations on it which are likely to emerge. Healthy people will be able to go about their ordinary lives with other healthy people, knowing that they're not infecting anybody, whilst those who've found themselves to be positive can be quickly isolated and treated.

The nightmare that Victoria has just been through may be eliminated Howard hopes. The funding for this new venture is in place. It is high risk, he says, but well worth the effort. Meanwhile, he and Jenny continue enjoying life at Avoca Beach in their comfortable anonymity, only celebrated media wise in the ground-breaking Avoca Beach News.

Mike Rubbo.

Yellow-bellied Gliders, true locals



Yellow-bellied Glider *Petaurus australis*

Yellow-bellied gliders are super cool - they are large, vocal and charismatic flying mammals, just what many kids dream of being!

They are the chattiest of the gliders and have a very loud, murderous call that starts off high-pitched, then simmers to a throaty rattle. These distinctive, piercing noises, which can be heard from up to 500m away, aren't distress calls, but simply gliders communicating with their mates. An added bonus is that the call scares predators away. Their gliding membrane extends from the wrist to the ankle and as they glide from tree to tree, up to an astounding distance of 100 m, they flatten their body and spread their little arms and legs and soar.

The Yellow-bellied glider is one of the larger glider species (second to the Greater Glider) and it lives in family groups of up to six individuals. During the day the family "den" together in tree hollows neatly lined with fresh leaves, and at night they come out to feed on insects and tree sap by biting into trunks and branches, leaving a distinctive "V" shaped scar on the tree. Trees containing hollows are very important to this species as they nest in hollows. Without hollow bearing trees, this species cannot complete its life cycle of mating and breeding, so the loss of hollow-bearing trees is a contributing factor to the species decline throughout the state.

Locally, Yellow-bellies occur in Bouddi National Park and Kincumber Mountain, but they also occur in bushland between the two - this includes Macmasters, Copacabana, Kincumber and Avoca. This suburban bush link is vital as it maintains a connection between two strongholds. In cases where the bush connection

gets a bit thin, it can create a barrier to movement and a subsequent decrease in genetic fitness followed by a rapid decline in numbers. In our local community, the bush connection gets a little thin between Boundary Road, Kincumber and Pickets Valley Rd. This includes the land where development consent for over 50's living was recently refused (no doubt the Yellow-bellies breathed a sigh of relief over that!).

So, while the doom and gloom of the current state of our environment can become overwhelming, there is something very simple that we can do to make a difference - plant a tree in the backyard and choose to retain trees where possible, particularly hollow bearing trees. Suburban tree planting, while seemingly inconsequential, can help maintain vital fauna links in addition to contributing to carbon absorption.

Yellow bellies are listed as vulnerable under NSW legislation, but we still have a decent population close by - let's do our bit to keep them.

Kristy McQueen

On a separate note, if you are a budding frogger, naturalist or just looking for an interesting night out, you are most welcome to attend the Green and Golden Bell Frog Community events which are held monthly on Avoca Lagoon (meeting at the end of Tramway Rd, North Avoca, commencing at dusk for approximately 1 hour - kids welcome). For more information or to register via Eventbrite, go to <http://www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/avocabellfrogs>

Summer's Here!



Finally after a COVID delay the cricket season has again commenced. Kincumber Avoca once again has the highest numbers of participation with over 300 kids through out our junior teams. Following on from a successful 2019 / 2020 season things are looking bright for the future of Kincumber Avoca cricket.

We have our young Junior & Master Blasters (over 100 boys & girls) at Erina every Saturday morning of which has been rated the benchmark for junior cricket development.

Kincumber Avoca also has 22 junior teams in various boys / girls' competitions the highest amount in the Central Coast Association.



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New for the Community



Everyone is wondering what is this Christian meditation Centre that's popped up next to the post office? A strange coincidence brings it to us. Last year, as the little church, St David's on Cape Three points sat empty, the Community Association developed the hope that it could be moved to another location to become a community hall, something we sorely need. But it was found to be really old, the owner, fearing it might be heritage listed, freaked out and it was quickly demolished.

Someone else was deeply saddened to see it go. Stephanie Hall who's spent a life in Christian work having created schools and taught in Africa, had a dream to start a Christian meditation Centre on the Central Coast, a peaceful place where people of all faiths or no faith, could come to meditate or contemplate.

She knew about the need for a community space in Avoca. When she saw the church come down she thought a space that doubled as a community hall and meditation centre might be possible. Luckily at about the same time as the church hall came down, the cafe next to the locksmith came up for lease, a beautiful space much smaller than the church hall of course, but perfect for what Stephanie had in mind. But how would she afford the rent Derek the locksmith wanted, \$1500 a week?

Then by chance Derek turned up at her house to fix a lock problem and she had a chance to explain her vision. He liked it, claimed that meditation was a great idea, that everyone was into mental health and he didn't want it to be another café.

She wanted it to be registered with the World Christian Meditation Organisation based in London. She wrote a proposal and sent it to her local bishop of the Anglican Church, since she wanted his approval and blessing. She got that approval but his blessing would not pay the rent especially since it wasn't going to be a profit-making business. But then miraculously she received a substantial gift, and she knew what she was supposed to do with the windfall. It was just enough to kick start her dream as a not-for profit.

By March, she had been honoured by a visit from Bishop Peter, had received several other donations, and was registered and ready to go with a six week's course in meditation. But then Covid 19 came along. She got a depressing email from the church. "You can't open". Time to stop and think since she was not interested in running her courses on zoom. People actually coming together in a communal space, is very important to Stephanie.

By the time she was able to open, many ideas were emerging. People started coming in off the street and soon there was talk that it could be a place for the many things we've wanted to do. A rehearsal space, the choir we've dreamt of forming, small chamber orchestra concerts (the acoustics are excellent) storytelling, poetry nights, , all sorts of activities we've been hoping to house in our community hall might happen here in the smaller space which seems perfect for the times of virus and until we do get our hall.

We do hope that Stephanie will be able to keep it going with grants and a financial support group she's forming. She is a very open-minded person and, whilst her overall aim is to bring people closer to God through meditation, you don't have to be of a particular faith or religious to use and enjoy the space.

Whilst Christian meditation has been upstairs, artists were looking at the lower space as perfect for small shows, a place to share/display their work. In October local artist David Charles exhibited seascapes and this November my wife, Katya Rubbo, has filled the walls with her floral art. The space is free to everyone with a modest percentage of art sales going to the centre to help cover the rent.

In December, I'm using it myself to display my paintings of our town and will run all month. This show is called; Avoca Impressions, 22 years of painting our village. In February well-known local artist, Margaret Fortey will exhibit.

So if you have ideas of how you would like to use this miraculously acquired community space, talk to Stephanie. Mike Rubbo



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She'll give it a go

Kylie is modelling her business, The Endless Summer on her own shopping impulses which sounds a bit risky, but she talks as if she knows what she's doing. She is selling what she calls fast fashion, clothes and jewellery by her friend from school days, Virginia Riley. She is also adding homewares. Fast Fashion are clothes you buy on a whim apparently.

The location used to be a physio. Was there much work changing it over? She has a clever boyfriend, Geoff, she says. He got rid of the carpet and supplied the eye-catching Combi front which you see in the photo. Geoff made this wrap around Combi counter himself and had thoughts of marketing them, but they turned out to be too expensive to make so Kylie is the beneficiary of the prototype.

"I used to go to the butcher's for steak and I'd end up at the 'Summer Summer' Shop next door and come home with a dress and sausages instead. That's the customer I'm aiming at." So, everything will be under \$150, priced for impulse buying. There'll be fresh stock every Friday, a chance for the girls to drop in, browse and have a glass of champagne.

She really loved the Summer shop and was sad when it went. Kylie has taken a short term lease and is expecting



'The Endless Summer' to have a bumper season with many people unable to travel overseas and unsure about interstate holidays. So they should be mobbing us here. "If I can't make money this summer, I'll never make it."

Good luck Kylie.

Mike Rubbo

The New Beans on the block

We have a new cafe in Avoca, yet another place to get your hit. It's called the Social Junction and I find out to my surprise that Jacob, the owner has way more experience than his youthful looks would suggest. In fact, along with other family members, he co-owned the well-known Gnostic Mana cafe in Woy Woy for 17 years. Jacob and brother Caleb are the children of Chris Holstein, the former Mayor and Councillor. Caleb, who is helping out with the set-up, also has a coffee roasting business in Sydney, called Coffee Curators.



Aren't there already too many Coffee shops in Avoca? I ask. "The more the better," Jacob says. People see the village as a coffee hub and so competition doesn't hurt if you are realistic. "Coffee is much more complicated

than it used to be' he adds "These days you have to ask a customer 10 questions when you take the order. Like what sort of milk they want.

They're taking it easy in this first period keeping the menu simple working out what people like." I'm not going to write five-page menu," he says, "when it's better to have five good items that really will work and then add to them as we grow."

At the moment they're only open from 6 am until 12 but will extend to 2 when they get the feel of things and go even later when the school holidays start, he predicts.

They're using local ingredients, getting their baked goods from Ludos, Ham from the local butcher and bread from a supplier in the Woy Woy area they've used for years. The big cost is staff. The aim is to employ locally. The woman with the freckles in the striking mural is local." That's our Pauline. A customer said the artist had given her too many freckles. But I like freckles. I'm covered with them. That's our signature picture. "

You never thought of going into politics I asked like your dad, Chris the former Mayor? "It's going to take more than 30 grand a year to get me to give my phone number out to the whole Central Coast," Jacob says with a laugh

He and Caleb seem like fun people to have in town and the place may well live up to its name, Social Junction.

Mike Rubbo.

Dancing through life



I'm talking to Avoca resident, Maureen Fyffe. She has spent her life teaching and judging highland dancing. When she hears the bagpipes playing, she says the hairs stand up on the back of her neck, with the thrill of the sound, I gather.

Maureen started Highland dancing when she was seven. You see her at that age in the photograph with her brother. The family was Scottish. The grandfather had come from a tiny island called, Ailsa Crag on which there were just four houses

Until the virus hit, Maureen would be off at least four times a year, all-expenses-paid and a stipend to boot, to judge dancing competitions. The Scots are good at keeping up their culture all around the world and fanatically support competitions which show off that culture. Dancing and pipe bands are a big part of the fun.

Sometimes the dancing she is judging is within a larger Highland Games. She told me with a laugh about the Grandfather Mountain Games in North Carolina. Wild men in a wild place, apparently, more Scottish than Scotch. It was a dry area, but guns were everywhere and the spectators, all Braveheart fans, had faces painted, half Celtic and half American Indian. "We had to be sure that the dances were out of range of the hammer throwers," she said.

Maureen finds herself judging hundreds of young dancers in the four Highland dance categories. Reels, the Sword Dance, the Fling and something called the Chartreuse, all with no other accompaniment than the pipes. Pipes all day!

Maureen danced competitively till she was 19. Then she switched to teaching under the mentorship of Australia's greatest teacher at the time, Dorothy Kerr. Her first gig as a judge was a bit of a disaster. Dorothy sent her to far north Queensland. The dances were in full swing, all went well until Maureen perched on a table which suddenly collapsed and, with her skirt ripped, she had to keep on judging sprawled on the floor.

What's the fascination, I wondered, going to the Internet to have a look at Highland dancing. It's always on a sprung floor, Maureen had explained, and I could see why. The dancers seem to have springs in their toes, they bounce so high and so cleanly. Whether it be the Reel, the Fling, or the sword dance, the upper body is held very stiff and straight, the arms adopting the regulation poses which include one arm up in the air as if announcing something important, and another where the fist is on the hip, the elbow bent in a sort of 'what you think of this' posture. Meanwhile, the legs are going like scissors, the pointed toes, a bit reminiscent of ballet. Complimenting all of this, the tartan skirts, above the knee and pleated, are swinging in the most marvellous way to the drone of those pipes.

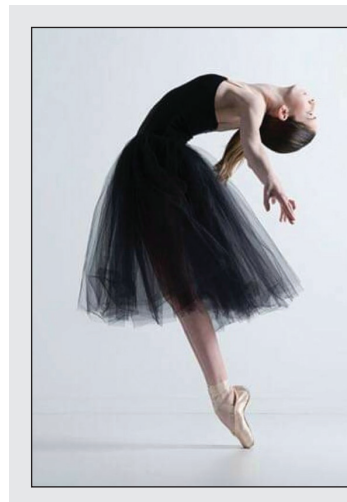
Given today's dancing, which I see in my gym on the monitors, mostly offers sexual gyrations, bums in your face, and fingers poking at you, there is something refreshing and charming about this traditional way of dancing. I found I liked it a lot and could see how it might become addictive.

The most fascinating dance I found was the sword dance where the competitors place on the ground two swords, blades crossing each other, and then proceed to deftly dance in and around those blades, never touching them. It's as crisp and sharp as the blades themselves, delightful.

As well as adjudicating, Maureen has always taught with much of the teaching happening downstairs in her house at Avoca. She has taught generations of dancers and now with reduced classes, is teaching the grand children of some of her first pupils.

She's adapting to the situation of the times, doing reduced teaching via zoom, the overseas trips for this year having all been cancelled. As well as this strange life she's lived, Maureen is highly active in cancer fundraising, a passionate activity for her. I loved meeting this charming lady and discovering that I rather liked highland dancing although I think it's a bit late to start. Check out what it looks like on YouTube.

Mike Rubbo



Isla Roebuck, Maureen's granddaughter, is a product of her highland dance school, has gone on to become a highly talented ballerina. She is currently studying at the Royale Conservatoire of Scotland, in Glasgow.




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