

HD 1000 Mandelas

WC 2,584 words

PD 1 May 2014

SN The Northern Rivers Echo

SC APNNRE

ED Main

PG 20

LA English

CY Copyright 2014 APN Newspapers Pty Ltd. All Rights Reserved

LP

1000 Mandelas

I HAVE been coming and going from the camp at Bentley for four weeks now, and have been excellently impressed with how well it is organised, down to traffic control, sterilisation in boiling water of mugs and to even how clean the toilets are kept. Not only that, the attitude and behaviour of the people there has been the best I have found anywhere in Australia.

TD

I know you don't want the camp there because it hinders your plan to open the whole of Richmond Valley to fracking and you think that gas production is an easy answer to your financial troubles, and perhaps to those of your farmers.

I believe it is only the start of them. Just the day before yesterday, a family in the USA was awarded \$3 million for damages done by fracking. Do you think the people opposed to fracking are groundless in their fears? Why was this appeal awarded? Why is there such strong opposition to fracking? Is it because it uses so much good water? Is it because the produced water it brings back up to the surface is full of pollutants? Is it because it easily pollutes our ground water and aquifers which most of our farmers depend on, and which are linked across vast regions of Australia, the driest continent on Earth?

Is it because fugitive gas escaping through the landscape and waterways is 13 times more effective as a greenhouse gas than CO₂? Is it because fracking creates an industrial landscape, full of roads and pipelines, and rigs, accompanied by the noise and air pollution of these and the many trucks coming and going to them? Is it because the workers in these mine fields are exposed to dangerous chemicals day in and day out? Is it because the gas so produced is only to be sold off to China anyway? Is it because at this time of climate change, even preschoolers know that renewable energy is the way to go, not more outdated fossil fuels?

We live in heaven here in the Northern Rivers – truly a blessed place. What person in their right mind would think about destroying such a landscape to allow a dishonest few to run away with a handful of dirty cash, and leave us with the resultant mess – that cannot be easily – if ever – cleaned up?

Trying to shut down the camp site will not work – it will just create the media response we want – more drama, more people hearing about fracking and wondering why such people are opposed to it – and more public opinion on our side.

The result of oppression has always been the opposite of what the oppressors wanted to create – look at the story of Mandela – thrown into prison for doing what was right, only to later become president and one of the most loved men of our times.

By attempting to shut down our camp you will be creating thousands of Mandelas. Go ahead. We are caring, well-informed, intelligent, non-violent and we are waiting for you.

Kerrie Pimm, Lismore

Unhappy camper

IT'S TIME a modicum of truth and proportion was brought to the issue of Richmond Valley Council's refusal to accept the renewal of the Bentley protectors camp (NS24/4/14).

It is totally untrue that "people were peeing on canvas" at the camp. In fact, I'd have to ask what substance was Mr Walker imbibing to come up with such a bizarre claim? Yes, there was music at the camp, but only low level acoustic. Unless music has now been banned in Richmond Valley, I believe that acoustic music is perfectly legal in a primitive campsite.

I am not aware that anyone at the camp would be so unthinking as to use detergent in the creek.

If this did happen I would like Mr Walker to produce evidence, because based on his other allegations I find it difficult to believe.

Let's compare some of Metgasco's activities with Mr Walker's allegations.

Metgasco is still being investigated for its handling of its Kingfisher well. Kingfisher was its only well similar to its proposed Rosella well at Bentley. According to Mine Safety Unit of NSW Trade & Investment there was a "high risk incident".

"On 14 July 2013, about 200m of pipes and drill collars were rapidly ejected from the Kingfisher E01 gas well, into the air, and landed in the vicinity of the drill pad and a number of workers. No one was injured as a result of the incident; however the safety of the workers was affected. The risk to which the workers were exposed is considered by investigators to have been very high. There was also significant equipment damage associated with the incident," (Mine Safety Unit report).

There are numerous other failures by Metgasco detailed on the departmental website.

Metgasco has also had a \$5000 fine imposed on it by the NSW Environmental Protection Agency and it has been found to have illegally dumped produced water from its wells into the RVC sewerage treatment works.

The consequences of Metgasco's actions have been far more serious and harmful than any of Mr Walker's allegations against the Bentley camp, yet Mr Walker remains an ardent supporter of Metgasco. Isn't it time that Richmond Valley Council called on the State Government to close down this invasive industrial miner which is threatening our land, water and in fact the lives of its workers and the public?

Cr Simon Clough

Lismore City Council

National Chair – Lock the Gate Alliance

John and the jack-boots

ATTENTION John Walker. It appears you are trying to find anything in the book to stop the CSG protesters completing their vigil. Now you know what it is like for those citizens trying to find a way to block CSG pollution.

Are you afraid these sincere citizens could win? It will be more than music, singing, a little detergent in the creek and temporary human waste in a paddock with Metgasco's permanent water table destruction and fragile holding pools.

CSG mining noise and lighting pollution is worse than any happy camp song you'll ever hear. It is just too coincidental you've waited this long until Metgasco's presence is imminent. You are playing into Henderson's hands or are you just playing his hand for him? You allowed the protesters to peak too early with your devious solution. What obscure law would you propose if all the 98% of locals went out there to protest? If people are not allowed to sing or disagree with you, what next? Jack-boots and book burning?

Geoff Goldsmith, Clunes

Attack of the Leo

THERE has been a marked change in the federal treasurer's persona since assuming office. Gone is the jolly giant, replaced by a sweating tyrant who avoids looking at the audience and whose delivery is uncertain, indicating a preoccupation with some unresolved issue. This behaviour will culminate in a typically leonine attack (Joe Hockey is a Leo) on the weakest in society, the aged and infirm, as he acts out the primitive doctrine of the survival of the fittest, or as the Liberals put it, market forces. The assets of aged pensioners will be closely scrutinised and the sick turned away from treatment if they cannot pay.

As Hockey regularly says, those who cannot contribute will not receive. The logical question is, why then doesn't he support euthanasia? The answer is because conservatives don't operate from logic, but from imitating the past.

Hockey is no innovator. Although he may have correctly identified the debt problem, his solutions are drawn from a past that is irrelevant, thrusting him into engagement in a millennial conflict where he has transgressed the 21st century values of an anthropocentric society which dictate that concern for humanity is paramount. His uncertainty indicates he senses he is entering a trap.

He has not taken into consideration the reduction in expenditure resulting from employing green technologies, which do not require ongoing expensive input, either from fuel or infrastructure.

The path of economic growth he is pursuing headlong is not shared by leading economists, making him somewhat of an embarrassment on the world stage. The OECD for example, has accepted the global economy has entered a new low-growth era. The fact is humanity has reached a turning point in economic history. The expansionary trajectory of industrial civilization is colliding with non-negotiable natural limits.

Australia can thrive during the transition if it sets goals that promote human and environmental well being, rather than continuing to pursue the unattainable "prize" of ever-expanding GDP.

P. Griffin, Lismore

Cut and paste job

AT A private meeting with some from Lock the Gate on March 18 about the Development Application (DA 2014/171) for Metgasco's Rosella Temporary Camp site, when asked about the approved plan attached to that DA, which was officially stamped and had a bar clearly marked on it, Mr Walker (GM of RVC) said "there's no bar" and repeated this later as documented in the Minutes of the Council meeting that night. He claimed the plan was "probably a cut-and-paste" by the consultants, but there was no condition of consent stipulating that no alcohol was to be sold on the site. Whilst the applicants would have to apply for a liquor licence, approval of a bar by the council would support such an application.

By comparison, the plan submitted and approved for the protectors' temporary camp at Bentley has on it a kitchen, but the conditions of consent exclude preparation and cooking on the site. It seems like different treatment for different applicants. This is at least very sloppy work, inconsistent and, arguably inequitable. It begs the question of how many other plans submitted by applicants to RVC are just "cut and paste" and slip through without proper scrutiny.

At a meeting on April 7 between John Walker, two RVC senior staff and four representatives of Lock the Gate, John Walker declared he would approve the DA for the extension of the temporary camp at Bentley. He and his staff identified issues in regard to structures on the road reserves, made suggestions to us about traffic management at the site, and said RVC would place iridescent tape on the road side of the pole across Gate A to ensure it could be seen at all times.

We left feeling confident that RVC was, as described by Mr Walker, "just doing their job and not taking sides", and immediately implemented their suggestions about traffic management. RVC did not place the tape on the pole at Gate A.

Since then, despite he and his staff telling us they thought the camp was clean, neat and well-managed, publicly Mr Walker has made numerous negative and incorrect comments about the camp. Respect and promises seem to work one way only. Given RVC's most recent actions, it seems John Walker's words are worthless, and he and his complicit councillors are simply doing the work of Metgasco and the NSW Government. Yet another stone in the wall against democracy in Richmond Valley. What a shame.

Ros Irwin, Caniaba

Selling off our water

THERE is something quite wrong with our political system.

How can a group of politicians who come into power temporarily be given the mandate to make decisions that affect all Australians in the long term? How dare they sell off the long-term security of our water resources to Chinese (and other foreign) interests, for short term profit?

If there is any risk of water contamination by CSG, then it too is big a risk. And already contamination has occurred in the Pilbara.

Who is going to be personally responsible for this 10 years down the line when these politicians are retired and out of the spotlight? No one.

The people who are against CSG are many.... certainly if a referendum was taken, in local areas and across the country, the opposition would be clear. The people who are protesting represent just a small section of those who oppose this mining. And they are not extremists by any means.

They are teachers, doctors, farmers, landowners, mothers, children, grandmothers, tradesmen, businessmen.

Who is looking after our interests? And if our government is not, how do we get things right again?

There are plenty of better ways of raising state revenue – there are some dodgy deals going on Australians. Beware.

Barbra, Wilsons Crk

Dear Premier Baird

I AM a 66-year-old grandmother, writer and academic who is concerned for the future of this country.

I believe there are so many unanswered questions in mining for coal seam gas that a moratorium should be taken immediately and continued until the people of this state can be assured of their safety as the use of chemicals and fracking practices are known to be extremely destructive of the environment.

I am fearful for the safety of the community in regards to what is happening out at Bentley, just 12 kilometres from where I live in Lismore, a major city of NSW. It is a beautiful area with an unusual cross section of people involving farmers, small **business** owners, students, tradespeople and professionals as well as a growing tourism industry and includes a wide range of cultures such as indigenous Australians, new immigrants and agricultural workers with generations on the land.

We are all out at Bentley because we are concerned about mining practices that threaten the viability of our community.

Across the Northern Rivers people have voted overwhelmingly for a gas field free environment, with statistics being painstakingly collected via surveys and referendums.

There is an overwhelming sense that we have to stop these mining practices and we are not just people causing trouble for the mining workers, the council workers and police who are forced into opposition to us. I do not relish facing riot police, I am a peaceable person, who believes in peaceful resolution. More than 80% of the larger community of my region feels the same and we will show up continuously at Bentley, still hoping for that peaceful resolution, and put ourselves on the line and our lives on hold until those who are supposedly governing for us have the good sense to take a step back from the tearing at the fabric of life that this mining represents. Water is life, Premier Baird, and the people of the community of the Northern Rivers and NSW are concerned about their lives, the quality of their lives and their livelihoods.

I have heard you talk about governing for all the people, that you strongly believe in preserving the beauty of our state for future generations, that global warming and the environment are important and that this needs to be looked at on a risk management basis. Well, Premier Baird, I also believe this and that's why I will be down at Bentley, along with thousands of other concerned citizens, facing however many hundreds of riot police that your government may use.

Surely as a Christian you cannot condone that we the citizens are looking after the future of our country rather than our government. That to me will erode public confidence more than any furore over a bottle of **wine**. It saddens me that it has come to this and I hope you will treat this letter with the seriousness it deserves.

Dr Janie Conway-Herron, Lismore

IN ifrack : Fracking | i1 : Energy | i13 : Crude Oil/Natural Gas | ibasicm : Basic Materials/Resources | iextra : Natural Gas/Oil Extraction | imet : Mining/Quarrying

NS cnatrd : Natural Reserves/Resources Discovery | c24 : Capacity/Facilities | ccat : Corporate/Industrial News

RE austr : Australia | nswals : New South Wales | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

PUB APN Newspapers Pty Ltd

AN Document APNNRE0020140429ea5100035