

Wednesday 10th April 2024

BARRABA COMMUNITY NEWS

COMMUNITY OWNED AND EDITED

FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER



PUBLIC MEETING



Photo credit Paula McIver

A meeting will be held at the Barraba Bowling Club on Tuesday 16th April to form a committee to coordinate the celebration of the centenary of the opening of the Barraba Memorial clock.

The Memorial clock was officially opened on the 11th of November 1924, and it is planned to hold a celebration on that date.

If you are interested on being a member of this committee or would like to contribute to this event, please attend this meeting.

The meeting will commence at 6.00PM sharp. If you have any questions, please contact 02 67 821403.



To coincide with Anzac Day there will be a Boer War, WW1, WW2 and Korean War display from Wednesday 10th April to Saturday 18th

May at 111 Queen Street, next door to the chemist.



**ST JOSEPH'S
PRIMARY SCHOOL
BARRABA**

We would like to Welcome Families Past, Present and Future to visit our School.

ST JOSEPH'S BARRABA OPEN DAY

Friday 10/5/24
3:30pm to 6pm

Our enthusiastic teachers provide a variety of rich learning experiences, in a small and collaborative environment.

For more information Contact the School Office on
67821685 or
baradmin@arm.catholic.edu.au



Alfie, Felix, Josh and Georgie – Small School Relay Team completed at the NSWCPSS Swimming Championships and placed 5th.



Welcome to
Barraba RSL
and Recreation Club

BARRABA RSL & RECREATIONAL CLUB LTD

Phone 67821379

For the information of members and guests.

THIS WEEK

THURSDAY 11th April

Bingo from 6pm

FRIDAY 12th April

MEAT RAFFLES

Tickets on sale from 5.30pm

MEMBERSHIP DRAW \$1700

Sunday 14th April

ANGLER CLUB RAFFLES

Membership Draw \$2000 (4 draws)

BISTRO HOURS

Phone 0427330808

DINE IN OR TAKEAWAY

DAILY BLACKBOARD SPECIALS AVAILABLE

ALSO PIZZAS MADE TO ORDER

MONDAY/TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY: CLOSED

THURS/FRI/SAT: LUNCH 12-2PM

DINNER FROM 6PM

SUNDAY: 12-2PM



At The Playhouse Hotel

Open Saturday and Sunday

8am to 2pm

**Breakfast, morning tea, brunch
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Shelley on 0488192256

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

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Provide transport to individuals or groups of older persons

COMPANION INDIVIDUAL
Spend one on one time with a GoCo client in their home or out in the community

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Deliver fun activities to our clients such as bingo or mystery tours!!

MEALS ON WHEELS DELIVERY
Deliver meals to clients straight to their door

GET IN TOUCH AND START VOLUNTEERING TODAY! 6740 2240 OR SEE JODY AT OUR QUEEN ST OFFICE

GARAGE SALE

Sat 13th and Sun 14th April, 9am to 4pm

At 30 Fitzroy Street, (cnr Edward)

Lots of cool female clothes and household appliances. Ph Kerry 0416557355

COUNCILLOR CATCH UP

Come along for a chat with your Councillors about local issues that matter to you

www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/connect

Come along and chat to [Councillor Russell Webb Mayor of Tamworth](#), Councillor Helen Tickle & [Councillor Judy Coates](#) about local issues that matter to you!

WHERE: Barraba Historical Museum Markets

WHEN: Saturday 13 April, 10am-11am

This initiative has come from an action in the Tamworth Regional Council Communications Strategy. To provide a dedicated approach to communicating and engaging with the community.

To find out more or when and where the next catch up will be head to <http://tamworth.nsw.gov.au/connect>



Barraba High Country Music
Musta
Sunday 14th April 2024. 1pm start.
FREE ENTRY
Walk-up artists welcome

Barraba Bowling Club

Warialda RC Model Aircraft
FUN FLY
Sat & Sun 13-14 April 2024
Warialda Airstrip - Camping \$5 Per Day
Nominations - \$20 *any no. of planes
Toilets * Showers * Catering Available at the Airfield
Jets - Electric Gliders Various Models
MAAA MEMBERS ONLY
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Phone: 0459 192 265
Email: admin@barrabaveterinaryservice.com
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 Mon to Fri 8:30am – 5.30pm
 Closed from 1-2pm

After Hours service available for emergencies only.

Offering veterinary services within the Barraba district for small and large animals in clinic or on farm.

Cat & Dog Boarding available for short or long-term stays.

Ecological Burn Notice

Please be advised that Whitehaven Coal will be undertaking Burn Preparation and a cool season Ecological Burn on the following Biodiversity Properties “Wirradale, Mt Lindesay and Coonor,” between 8 April and 31 May 2024. For further information, please contact Whitehaven Biodiversity on call 0488 407 000.



Barraba Museum Markets

Will be held this Saturday 13th April from 8.30 a.m.
 Plants, cakes, sewing, gift cards, books timber/glassware and all the usual attractions.
 Museum Open



History Notes

I hope readers enjoyed the photos of the Barraba Hotels as much as I did- they came up very clearly and the history for the most part was correct. However, I cannot help but make a couple of changes.

Barraba Inn with James Sinclair in 1860 - alcohol was provided at the McKid business at first, then James Sinclair and a few short- term owners until it became Tattersall's in the 1890's. It was burnt to the ground in 1898, then rebuilt on the block next door as the Royal (this allowed the store next door to be built in 1908). Sadly, the pub was burnt to the ground in 1935 leaving a spare block on the corner until the Commonwealth Bank built there. The Post Office moved there when the bank left town.

Across the street, the Court House was known as Wilkinson's hotel while the coaches stopped there. They moved to the Commercial in October, 1894, and the name reverted to Court House until the re-construction about 1905 when it became the Central Hotel.

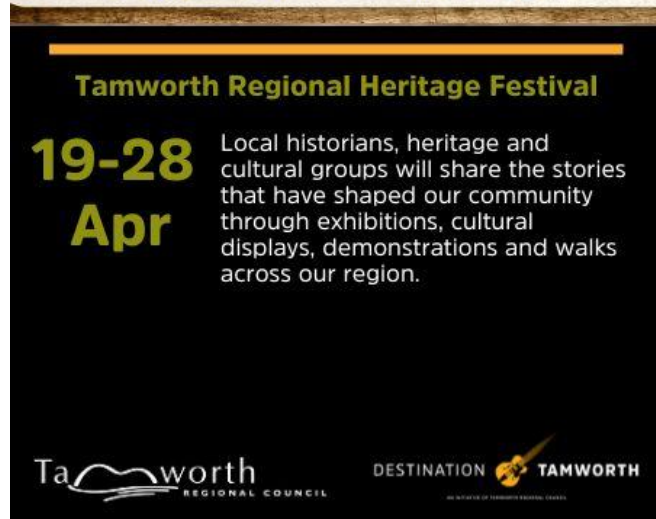
The My Venture Hotel was a later pub, even later than the Eulourie which ran as the Horton Inn from September, 1874, until at least the early 1880's. Otto Rabe may have been at the Horton but I have no reference to it. He ran the Commercial Hotel in Barraba for a few years, also ran one of the Bingara Hotels for a while, had a tobacconist business for a lot of years in Barraba. He died on 29th March, 1925 at the age of 60 years. He would not have been old enough to run the Horton Pub pre-1880.

The Horton hotel was run by the Gainen family for most of its history. The Maitland Mercury in 1878 described the Upper Horton as a small village with 2 stores, a butcher's shop, one hotel and two bakeries. The Gainen family moved to the village in 1880, taking over the hotel almost immediately and running it with its own bakery and post office for many years. John Gainen was also a landowner, owning some 500 acres on the western side of the river and some more on the eastern side.

The Horton Hotel continued under various owners - Miller, Russell and O'Brien kept it going for another 25 years. It closed down on 27th, November, 1941, and the building has been demolished.

This weekend is a Market Day weekend with all the usual attractions and of course chairs and tables so people can sit and chat and/or eat. We will be visited by a couple of councilors as per last week's advertisement so come along and ask them a few questions.

2024 Tamworth Regional Heritage Festival



Discover our region's rich heritage during the Tamworth Regional Heritage Festival from Friday 19 April to Sunday 28 April.

Local historians, heritage and cultural groups will share the stories that have shaped our community through exhibitions, cultural displays, demonstrations and walks across our region. Watch the mighty John Fowler steam engines in action at the Tamworth Powerstation Museum, connect with Australia's wool heritage at the award-winning Nundle Woollen Mill, be fascinated by the historical memorabilia and archives at the Manilla Heritage Museum and Machinery Shed, and discover Tamworth's history along the Memories from Marius Street Walk with the Tamworth Historical Society Heritage Walk.

You can also hear some tales about Australia's country music history with multi-Golden Guitar award winner, Pixie Jenkins at the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame, and join the Tamworth Regional Film And Sound Archive to be one of the first to see Electric Lamp Manufacturers documentary with footage on site in Newcastle's Hamilton North just before it's closure in early 2002.

There are over stacks of events and exhibitions throughout the 10-day festival, with things to see in Manilla, Moonbi, Nundle and Tamworth. View the full program at www.tamworthheritagefestival.com.au

BARRABA UNITING CHURCH NOTICES

Sunday 14th April
Barraba service 10:45am
All Welcome

ANGLICAN CHURCH TIMES

St Laurence's Barraba

Sunday service at 10.00am
Woodsreef 2nd Sunday of the month at 11.30am

CATHOLIC CHURCH TIMES

Barraba 1st Saturday evening Mass 5pm
2nd 3rd 4th and 5th Sunday 9am

'Reflecting on Easter'

A message received from Fr. John Curran, Manilla/Barraba

Each year I am regularly asked this question; *'Why does the day of Easter vary each year?'*

So, after some research I hope that these answers will be of value. *'Easter Sunday coincides with the first Sunday after the paschal full moon after the vernal equinox.'*

The word *equinox* originally is a Latin word that refers to something being of equal or even and in this case, it is the amount of day and night in the northern hemisphere. It was the Council of Jerusalem in the year 231 that set the equinox on March 21 each year. So, from that year Easter Sunday could fall as early as March 22 and as late as April 25. Tradition has it that the word *Easter* comes from *Eastre* who was an ancient goddess of fertility and spring.

It was the English Congregational minister J.S. Whale (1896-1977) who wrote these profound words about the Easter event that recalls and celebrates the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth; *'The Gospels do not explain the resurrection rather it is the resurrection event that explains the Gospels. Belief in the resurrection is not an appendage of the Christian faith it IS the Christian faith.'*

The great enduring message of Easter I believe is so well put by Saint Paul of Tarsus in his letter to the Corinthians; *'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. Then our preaching is empty, and we are false witnesses.'* Fr Martin R Maunsell



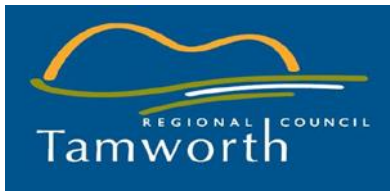
Mason, Preston and Angus 'Holy Thursday' 4/5/6 Re-enacting Stations of the Cross



Kevin, Chastity, Ava-Jane, Neveah, Courtney, Parker, Josh, Oliver, Felix, Ruby and Jax

*Yesterday is history
Tomorrow is a mystery
Today is a gift
Harmony*

From Betty Graham



School is out, creativity is in, these holidays

Primary school students will have the chance to get hands on with arts and craft activities at the Tamworth Regional Gallery and several libraries this upcoming school holiday period. From Monday 15 April, Tamworth Regional Council will start its school holiday program in Tamworth, Barraba, Kootingal and Nundle.

Tamworth Regional Council's Coordinator for STEAM – Childhood Literacy Planning & Compliance, Jonathan Stilts, said that there was a particular focus on expanding the offering of activities outside of Tamworth. "We wanted to utilise library facilities within the region to make sure our school holiday activities were as accessible as possible, which was a key focus when planning our program", said Jonathan. "While all of our events are free, it is important that parents book their child in ahead of time as there are limited spots". Making dream catchers, animal mosaics, science experiments and a scavenger hunt are just some of the activities planned by the library team.

Tamworth Regional Gallery Director, Bridget Guthrie, believes the quality of artists who run their school holiday workshops contributes to the success of their activities. "Having access to a high calibre of local artists who love to work with our program participants is really special," she said. "Each of the workshops aim to be engaging as possible while focusing upon a particular art medium or skill for children to develop".

Simon Munro will specialise in the creation of artefacts in one class, while Tania Hartigan will help children master still life painting. Other activities planned at the Gallery include drawing and portraiture work, watercolour painting and collage. Events tailored towards high school students will commence from Monday 15 April in celebration of Youth Week. This includes a skateboarding workshop run in collaboration with Totem, and a Youthise Open Day on Saturday 21 April. More details will be available soon.

For more information about Council activities for the school holiday period, visit

www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/schoolholidays.

Youth Council Meeting Outcomes Thursday, 4 April 2024

☐ The Youth Council discussed Tamworth Regional Council's Youth Strategy Action Plan that was recently adopted by Tamworth Regional Council. Councillors will work together in the coming weeks to confirm their 2024 priorities in line with key focus areas of the Strategy: Life Ready, Wellbeing, Access and Connectivity, Community and Identity.

☐ Youth Councillors have agreed to distribute promotional material for Tamworth Regional Council's Autumn School Holiday Program. The school holiday program will feature activities and events at the Tamworth Regional Gallery and in libraries across Manilla, Kootingal, Nundle and Tamworth. A drop-in service will be available at The Youthise from 12 noon – 7pm, Tuesdays to Saturdays.

☐ The Youth Council would like to encourage participation in Tamworth Regional Council's 2024 Youth Week events. Youth Week aims to encourage those aged 12 – 24 years to get together, celebrate and share their ideas or concerns to improve youth wellbeing in the community. The 2024 theme of Youth Week is "Express, Empower and Get Loud". The two events that will be held in the Tamworth region are "Skate, Create, Empower" – in collaboration with TOTEM – on Monday 15 April at Viaduct Park, and a Youthise Open Day on Saturday, 20 April from 12pm. These events have been supported by \$3,870 in funding from NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice, which has been matched by Tamworth Regional Council.

☐ Youth Councillors have pledged to provide a letter of support to the "Fair Treatment for Tamworth Campaign". The campaign aims to improve the level of resources available to youth affected by drugs and alcohol abuse in the Tamworth LGA while advocating for funding to service providers.

☐ The Youth Council approved a motion to investigate ways to enhance youth connectivity through social media. A motion was also passed to create a Tamworth Youthise Instagram page, which was identified as the most frequently used platform by youth in the region.

☐ Youth Councillors put forward a motion to request annual funding from Tamworth Regional Council to the amount of \$10,000 to enable the Youth Council to deliver priority actions from Council's recently adopted Youth Strategy.



Calling time on two decades of politics next month

I have announced I will draw my 20-year career in public office to a close next month and will be stepping down from State politics. I will formally hand my resignation as the Member for Northern Tablelands to the Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly on 13 May, some 11 years after I was first elected to the role. This is not a decision I have made lightly, but it's one I'm now very comfortable with. Put simply, I feel it's time for me to move on and take up new challenges. Coming into this role 11 years ago, it was never my intention to stay forever, believing that our region is best served by those prepared to get in, give it everything they have and then pass the baton on to fresh hands. Hopefully I have done this.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my years in public life serving the communities of Gunnedah Shire and now the people of the Northern Tablelands, as a Councillor, Mayor, State MP, and a Minister. Their support for me has been overwhelming and heart-warming. It's been an honour and a privilege to serve rural communities and country people and I thank them sincerely for that opportunity over the last two decades. We have achieved some incredible things together and I will always cherish the friendships I have made and the interaction I have had with people during my time in the role. Post politics, I intend to pursue opportunities in the corporate world and in my own personal life. This is a demanding and all-consuming role to do properly, and it inevitably takes its toll. I've come to the conclusion that despite absolutely loving our region, its people and my role as a local State MP, I cannot put this move off any longer.

This will be the end of representative politics for me. While there will be plenty of time for reflection over the next five weeks and beyond, for me, I'm firmly focussed on the work I still have to do, which I intend to carry out with the same enthusiasm and energy as I always have.

Port of Newcastle unshackled with \$13 million IPART determination

I have welcomed a decision by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which will allow the Port of Newcastle to be unshackled with a \$13 million one-off payment to the State. It is terrific news for the region and would mean the new container terminal at the Port of Newcastle could proceed, allowing for hundreds of millions of dollars of extra investment and export opportunities. This is brilliant news for our region and one of the final hurdles the Port had to jump over to get the green light to build a container terminal. Our grain growers have a gateway to world markets on their doorstep, and with IPART's determination today, it will mean the Port of Newcastle is well and truly opened for business. Establishing a new container terminal at the Port of Newcastle has the potential of cutting the cost of grain rail freight by \$16 to \$22 per tonne, putting huge dollars back into the pockets of growers and the local economy.

The push by industry to unlock the Port was spearheaded by Independent Lake Macquarie MP Greg Piper, with his bill, *The Port of Newcastle (Extinguishment of Liability) Bill 2022*. This bill was crucial to finally break the impediments placed on the Newcastle Port and was considered in IPART's determination. When the Port of Newcastle was privatised in 2014, a Port Commitments Deed required the operators to reimburse the State Government for any compensation paid to the operators of Kembla and Botany. These provisions made establishing a container terminal and increasing capacity at the Port of Newcastle unviable – until now.

The Port of Newcastle was a shining regional jewel and a natural gateway to many parts of New South Wales. Our state has now opened up to more investment and export opportunities, backing in our hundreds of millions of dollars of investment into the regions.



Mostyn Makes It

From The Squiz

Prominent businesswoman and gender equality advocate Samantha Mostyn will become Oz's next Governor General with a kick-off date of 1 July. The 59yo will replace incumbent David Hurley - a former Chief of Australia's Defence Force - who has been in the role since 2019. Mostyn is the second woman to take up the position and the 28th GG since Australia became a thing in 1901. PM Anthony Albanese says she's a modern and optimistic person whose "leadership reflects our enduring Australian values of equality, fairness and a responsibility to build a better future for the next generation". And for her part, Mostyn says she's "deeply honoured" to represent the "values, hopes and aspirations of all Australians."

Umm, remind me who she is...

We've got you. A lawyer by trade, Mostyn's held a lot of fancy public and private sector roles spanning business, sport, climate change, and the arts. She's been on a lot of boards - her most notable current engagement is as the chair of Citi Australia's consumer bank. And she's the president of Chief Executive Women, "the pre-eminent organisation representing prominent and influential women leaders". Mostyn was also the first female commissioner of the AFL - she held that role for over a decade until 2017 and Albanese yesterday noted that she remains a "strong advocate" for the women's competition. All of that and her work in the charity sector has seen Mostyn recognised with numerous accolades, including the Order of Australia for "distinguished service to business, community and women".

And what is the gig exactly?

The Governor General is technically appointed by the Crown - aka King Charles as the head of the Commonwealth - but he makes that decision based on advice from Australia. That means Mostyn will be the King's representative here and she'll have a role overseeing some pretty important government things. So, given all that, Mostyn's suitability for the role has been raised... Conservative campaigners yesterday questioned her support for our constitutional monarchy - one of those was Matthew Sheahan from Advance, who said Albanese has "rewarded a republican with a \$500,000 a year salary to represent an institution she doesn't believe in." Mostyn wouldn't be the first GG to support the idea of Australia becoming a republic - former GGs Bill Hayden and Dame Quentin Bryce were all for an Aussie becoming our head of state.



SATURDAY NIGHT TENNIS – COMPETITORS WANTED

The third night of the Barraba Tennis Club Saturday Competition is coming up this Saturday 13 April at 6.30 pm.

The first two nights were great fun – come along for the April comp and enjoy three sets of competitive tennis. You choose a partner, enter as a two person team, nominate your grade (A, B, or C), and see if you can win. There is even a prize for the Best Dressed team – I think it went last month to a very exquisitely dressed pair of fairies! Cost for the night is \$20 for current Tennis Club Members, and that includes a meal after. If you are not a Member, \$10 buys you a Social Membership.

Why not give it a go? If you haven't played for a while, but would like a good night out, here's a chance to have a game on the new courts. Send a message to the Barraba Tennis Club Facebook page, or phone/text Amie 0409 879 093 or Heath 0427 070 374 to book in.



- 1 Consisting of nine giant buoyant reef sculptures and planted coral, the newly opened Wonder Reef dive site is situated off the coast of what Australian city?
- 2 Spam musubi – a slice of Spam on a block of rice and wrapped in seaweed — is a much-loved “delicacy” in which US state?
- 3 Also the name of the company that produces Bula Bitter Brew beer, in which country does the phrase 'mukosinga' colloquially mean 'killing time'?
- 4 The home of Schonbrunn Palace and the ImPulsTanz International Dance Festival, what is the city of Wien better known as?
- 5 Worth about ten Australian dollars, what is the lowest value Japanese yen banknote currently in circulation?
- 6 In which country can you see the “big five” game animals in Akagera National Park, and eat your igisafu ria besides Nyarutarama Lake in the capital, Kigali?

Answers on page 9



Rod Bonner

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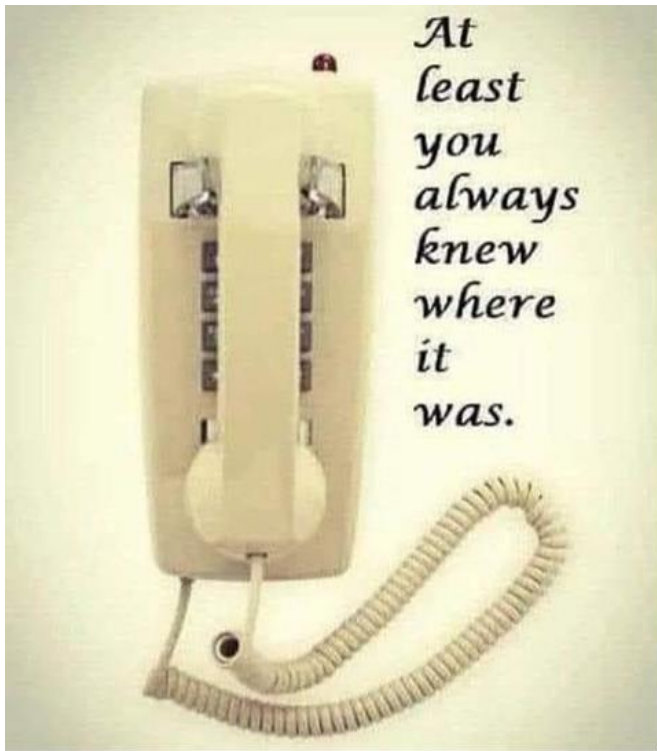
“Just cleared out some space in the freezer” sounds so much more productive than “I just polished off another pint of ice cream.”



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Trivia Answers
1 Gold Coast
2 Hawaii
3 Fiji
4 Vienna (Austria)
5 ¥1000
6 Rwanda

From The Conversation

About 200 dead whales were towed out to sea off Tasmania – and what happens next is a true marvel of nature.

Culum Brown, Professor, Macquarie University

Australians watched in horror when 230 pilot whales became stranded at a beach near Macquarie Harbour on Tasmania's west coast. Some whales were saved, but the vast majority died. This left a big problem: what to do with all the rotting whale carcasses? Authorities decided to tow the dead animals out to sea, hoping they'll eventually sink to the seafloor.

Such mass whale strandings are sad to witness. But in this case, the aftermath presents a fascinating opportunity for scientific discovery. As the dead whales decompose, an astonishing and rare chain of events is likely to flow through the marine ecosystem – ultimately leading to an explosion of activity and new life.



Authorities decided to tow the dead animals out to sea, hoping they'll eventually sink to the seafloor. Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

A 600-tonne problem

Mass whale strandings happen fairly regularly – especially in Tasmania – yet no one really knows why. Days before this latest incident, 14 sperm whales became stranded off King Island, northwest of Tasmania. And in 2020, about 470 pilot whales became stranded at Macquarie Harbour. While many were pulled out to sea, some of those carcasses washed up and were left to rot on the beach – an entirely natural process.

However, pilot whales are big animals. Males weigh up to 2,300kg, which means they take a long time to decompose. The smell of two tonnes of rotting whale blubber soon becomes unbearable, so carcasses are frequently buried.

This time around, authorities decided to tow the dead animals out to sea. The ABC reported local salmon farm workers took almost 11 hours to dispose of 204 dead whales with a combined weight of between 500 and 600 tonnes. They were tied to a 400 metre-long rope and towed by boats for 40 kilometres, before being dropped into deep water in the Indian Ocean. Some carcasses may wash back to shore, but most are likely to disperse with the tides and currents.



Mass whale strandings happen fairly regularly, yet no one really knows why. Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Shark bait? Probably not

The big question is: what happens to all that whale mass dumped at sea? Initially, a dead whale tends to float to the surface as it begins to decompose and its innards expand with gas. As this happens, ocean scavengers such as sharks and seabirds are likely to feast on the remains.

Some people can be concerned that whale carcasses attract sharks that might pose a risk to humans. Granted, encounters between sharks and humans, are on the rise in Australia and elsewhere. But they're still very rare.

A report to the Western Australian government in 2012 found whale carcasses were a risk factors associated with shark attacks, and said caution should be exercised near a dead whale in the water. But the same report noted that of 26 shark attacks investigated, the highest number occurred more than a kilometre offshore. While there is no doubt sharks are attracted to dead whales, the data is not clear on whether a whale carcass leads directly to an increase in shark attacks on people.

Research has shown the likelihood of whale carcasses washing towards shore, where shark scavenging can be observed, is low. So as long as the carcass is taken far from shore and people keep their distance from it, the threat to humans from shark encounters appears to be exceedingly low.



Dead floating whales provide a feast for animal scavengers. Pictured: seabirds feed on a large whale carcass floating off Spain in 2018. EFE/SASEMAR

From death comes new life

Inevitably, the whale carcass will start to sink. Most life in the ocean is found fairly close to the sea surface, so if the water is relatively shallow much of what's left of the carcass will be quickly eaten by scavengers once it reaches the sea floor. But these carcasses have been disposed of in deep water. The deep ocean can be a barren place, where rich food sources are rare. So, the appearance of a single whale carcass can supercharge an entire ecosystem.

New life and activity can erupt around the dead animal in very little time. This process is known as "whale fall" and has been studied by scientists, sometimes using remotely operated vehicles. On the seafloor of the North Pacific, whale fall has been found to support the survival of at least 12,490 organisms of 43 species.

Deep sea sharks will make the most of the carcass. A host of other animals including hagfish, octopus, crabs, lobsters, worms and sea cucumbers will join in too. All the while bacteria work away quietly in the background.

According to Britain's Natural History Museum, a single whale can provide animals with food for up to two years during the scavenging stage. Other animals and bacteria survive off the chemicals produced from the rotting carcass. These organisms, known as "chemotrophs" were thought to be unique to underwater volcanic vents, where they use hydrogen sulphide as the principal energy source. Research has shown a similar suite of animals recruit around dead and decaying whales – generating a completely independent ecosystem based on a gas that smells like rotten eggs.

Only a few organisms can break down the bones that remain, in a process that might take up to ten years.

So, take a moment to consider the effect of 204 whale falls in a small part of the ocean off Tasmania. Right now, they are probably generating interconnected marine metropolises, the likes of which are rarely seen.

From The Conversation



Divna Haslam, Senior Research Fellow, Queensland University of Technology

A special episode of the hit kids show Bluey will premiere on April 14. The episode will run for 28 minutes, which is four times the usual length of a Bluey episode. My kids are excited. In fact, I am too. As a parenting researcher and a mother, I am a big Bluey fan.

If you're feeling guilty about letting your children watch yet another episode of Bluey, you shouldn't. Bluey is a valuable show for kids and families, promoting a variety of positive messages.

Before we get to these, an important caveat. Parents get lots of messages about limiting screen time. Excess screen time is linked with poor outcomes including lower levels of parent-child interaction and poorer cognitive and socio-emotional development for children.

So, following the guidelines on screen time is important (this includes no screen time for children under two). I'm not endorsing unlimited Bluey, but a couple of 7-minute episodes, and even the new 28-minute episode, fit within recommended guidelines.

Why is Bluey good for families?

First, it models present, calm, engaged parents. Children benefit from positive parents who show affection, set consistent boundaries, and use assertive, non-violent forms of discipline. It's particularly nice to see Bandit as a hands-on dad, even if mum Chilli seems to carry most of the mental load.

Second, it normalises the realities of parenting we all face. The show depicts the joys of parenting but also the challenges. For example, in the episode Sheepdog we see mum saying she just needs 20 minutes by herself. Every parent can relate to needing a break. And even better, she actually takes the time. Looking after ourselves is vital. Kids benefit when their parents' own needs are met.

Third, the show tackles important issues such as infertility and male mental health. This provides a context for parents

and general viewers to talk about these topics. You'd be surprised how many non-parents have watched Bluey.

Finally, it pushes gender norms. Those unfamiliar with the show often assume the main character is a boy, and are surprised to learn that both Bluey and Bingo are girls. A children's show with two female protagonists that's popular globally with children of all genders is a big step forward for gender equality.

5 tips to get the most out of watching Bluey

1. Watch it with your kids

I don't mean catching up on work emails while it's on in the background. I mean actively watching it with your kids. While it's tempting to use your children's screen time to catch up on tasks, research has shown co-viewing high-quality shows is linked with better language skills and may mitigate some of the negative effects of screen time.

2. Talk about the show

Every episode has a multitude of conversation starters. Talk to your children about what's happening during the episode. Ask why characters are making the decisions they're making. Discuss how different characters might be feeling and why.

Research suggests talking with children about shows and books can help develop children's empathy and emotional understanding. It also helps children see situations from other people's perspectives, which is an important life skill.



Watch Bluey with your child, and talk to them about it.

3. Use it as a springboard for imaginative play

Play is important for children. It helps develop executive function (the ability to plan, focus and juggle multiple tasks) and prosocial behaviours such as sharing, turn taking, and showing kindness and empathy.

You are not limited to the games Bluey and Bingo love like "shadowland" (where children can only walk on shadows) and "restaurants" (where children pretend to run a pizza shop), but you can start with these if this style of play is new for your family. The best types of imaginative play are child-

led, so encourage your child to determine the rules of the game. Start by asking "what shall we pretend today?"

4. Reflect on your own parenting

Chilli and Bandit are good models of positive parents. They use evidence-based parenting strategies such as calmly responding to misbehaviour, giving clear instructions and showing affection. But they're not perfect, and neither are we. They get tired and they make mistakes but most importantly they learn from them and try to improve.

This is a key lesson for us all. No parent is perfect all the time. What matters is doing our best, looking after ourselves and getting support when needed.

5. Highlight behaviour you want to see

Bluey and Bingo are generally good role models for kids. To encourage similar behaviour in your children, comment on positive things Bluey and Bingo do, noting what you admire about their actions (for example, "wasn't that great how Bingo waited for Bandit to finish talking?"). Then look out for opportunities to praise your child when you notice them behaving well in real life. Praise works best when you're specific about what you like and are being genuine.

A final word

While watching an episode or two of Bluey should be guilt-free, it's important to engage in variety of physical and intellectual activities with children.

If you're going to watch Bluey or another programme with your kids, it's especially important this doesn't come at the expense of reading with them, which is enormously beneficial for children. Research comparing reading with children and co-viewing TV shows shows reading is associated with much richer language interactions between parents and children, which may improve language development. For bonus points, add some Bluey books into bedtime reading.

BARRABA COMMUNITY NEWS

COMMUNITY OWNED AND EDITED

**Published by Community College
Northern Inland Inc.**

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Printed on site at the Community College. Free publication by email or collection from local Barraba main street businesses